





# An Investigation of Married Individuals' Relationship Maintenance Strategies in Terms of Gender and Gender Roles Attitudes

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the behaviors of married individuals to maintain relationships according to their gender and gender role attitudes. The study group of the study consisted of 177 (52.8%) females and 158 males (%) aged between 24 and 50 ( $\bar{x}=30.2$ ), residing in İzmir, and having a relationship period of 2 to 20 years ( $\bar{x}=5.9$ , 47.2), a total of 335 heterosexual married people. As data collection tools in the research, "Relationship Maintenance Strategies Scale", "Gender Roles Attitude Scale" and "Personal Information Form" were used. Two-way MANOVA method was used in the analysis of the data. Findings from the two-way MANOVA analysis show that gender and gender roles have an impact on relationship maintenance behaviors. In this context, it has been determined that gender roles have a higher degree of influence than biological sex in maintaining relationships. According to the findings of the study, it was determined that female participants exhibited relationship-maintaining behaviors more frequently than male participants. In terms of gender roles attitude, it has been determined that the participants who have an egalitarian gender role attitude exhibit more frequent relationship maintenance behaviors than the participants who have traditional gender roles attitudes. As a result, gender and gender roles have a significant effect on relationship maintenance strategies.

Keywords:

Relationship maintenance strategies, gender, gender roles attitudes, egalitarian, traditional

## 1. Introduction

Romantic relationships constitute an indispensable part of life for the individual as a social being. Individuals tend to establish relationships throughout their lives and tend to exhibit certain behaviors to maintain their relationships. Weiser and Weigel (2016) state that maintaining relationships plays an important role in the foundation of stable and happy relationships. Relationship maintenance refers to individuals; behaviors aimed to keep their romantic relationships in a desired state (Dindia & Canary, 1993). Dindia (2000), on the other hand, considers maintaining a relationship to be the behavioral dynamics that ensure the preservation of the relationship.

*Behaviors of maintaining relationships:* What is valuable is the behaviors exhibited to ensure the continuity of the relationship, to prevent the weakening of the relationship, to repair the weakened relationship and to ensure the re-establishment of the relationship (Canary & Stafford, 1994). Stafford and Canary (1991) developed a typology that includes the most commonly used relationship maintenance behaviors. Canary and Stafford (1992) considered relationship maintenance behaviors in five types: positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and task sharing. Positivity means interacting with the romantic partner optimistically, cheerfully, and uncritically. Openness includes self-disclosure: talking about the current relationship, the expectations of the partners from the relationship, and the decisions made in the relationship. Assurances are measured with

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concepts such as relationship commitment, love, and loyalty. Social networks include involving partners in each other's social circles (such as making plans with the partner's friends and visiting family). Task sharing involves sharing duties equally and fulfilling responsibilities. These behavioral patterns are discussed in the context of positive, functional relationship maintenance behaviors. Differences can be observed in the display of relationship-maintaining behaviors. Relationship maintenance behaviors can be exhibited both routinely and strategically (Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Duck, 1988). Routine behaviors include behaviors that involve daily interactions that are independent of the purpose of maintaining the relationship. In contrast, strategic behaviors include behaviors exhibited for the purpose of maintaining the relationship (Canary & Dainton 2006; Dindia, 2000). In other words, individuals can maintain their relationships both by using approaches that they believe will contribute to the continuation of their relationships and by exhibiting certain routine behaviors that include daily interactions.

Relationship maintenance behaviors can serve at different levels depending on the relationship context, relationship duration, and type. As a result of their research, Canary and Stafford (1992) determined that engaged or married individuals were more assured by their partners than dating individuals. Dainton and Stafford (2000) state that the individual's perceptions of their partner's behavior have a more effective role on behavior than the type of relationship (such as dating, romantic relationship, marriage). Although openness is among the strategies used to maintain relationships, openness is not related to positive relational characteristics, but negatively related to satisfaction and commitment (Stafford, Dainton, & Hass, 2000). Dainton (2000) and Ogolsky (2009) determined that there is a negative relationship between the maintenance of relationships and the duration of the relationship, while Dailey, Hampel, and Roberts (2010) determined that there is no significant correlation between relationship maintenance behaviors and the duration of the relationship.

The concept of maintaining relationships is applicable to married couples (Adams & Baptist, 2012; Dainton, 2007; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2008), same-sex couples (Haas, 2003; Ogolsky, 2009), family relationships (Vogl Baurer, 2003), sibling relationships (Myers & Goodboy, 2010) and friendship relations (Dainton, Zelle & Langan, 2003; Oswald & Clark, 2006). Weiser and Weigel (2016) determined that maintaining a relationship increases relationship satisfaction and plays a mediating role in the connection between relationship satisfaction and self-efficacy in romantic relationships. Stafford and Canary (2006) determined that the partner's relationship satisfaction is related to positivity, openness, security, social networking, and task sharing behaviors. In addition, relationship maintenance behaviors are associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2008). Researchers ascertained that relationship maintenance balanced relationship goals, disappointment, and relationship satisfaction (Weigel, Weiser & Lalasz, 2017). Ogolsky and Bowers (2013) conducted a meta-analysis study in which they evaluated 35 studies dealing with relationship maintenance in different contexts. All of the relationship maintenance strategies have a positive correlation with love, mutual control, commitment, interest and relationship satisfaction. Relationship duration negatively correlated with positivity, openness, and assurances, while there was no significant relationship between social networks and task sharing.

Functional behaviors are very effective in establishing and maintaining healthy romantic relationships (Eşici, 2014; Ogan & Öz Soysal, 2022). Gender is seen as an important variable in the initiation and maintenance of romantic relationships (Haas & Lannutti, 2022). At this point, the concept of gender is more prominent than biological sex (Aylor & Dainton, 2004). **Gender**: is formed in the context of the roles, duties and responsibilities of female and male as determined by society. In contrast, **Gender roles**, include roles that are deemed "appropriate" for female and male socially and culturally (Fisher, 2013). Gender roles can be both "traditional" and "egalitarian". Gender roles are present in every sphere of individual life, including both the business sphere and the personal sphere. Within the scope of romantic relationship, individuals with traditional gender roles have traditional perceptions. For example, a "female's main duty is motherhood, and a male's main duty is to provide for the house". On the other hand, individuals with egalitarian gender roles could perceive that "both partners should undertake the responsibilities of the house, and decisions should be taken jointly in the family" (Zeyneloğlu & Terzioğlu, 2011).

Today, many relationships are based on need rather than satisfaction (Impett et al., 2010). Many individuals maintain relationships with low satisfaction levels due to obstacles arising from internal factors, external factors, or both (Bradbury, Fincham & Beach, 2000). Furthermore, the variable of gender also correlates to the

maintenance of relationships. Researchers concur that individuals with traditional gender roles will have a higher tendency to maintain relationships with low levels of satisfaction than their egalitarian counterparts. In healthy romantic relationships, individuals holding to egalitarian gender roles maintain relationships in higher numbers than those who hold to traditional gender roles. Note that in Turkey, there are a limited number of studies on relationship maintenance behaviors in the literature. In these studies, the relationship between relationship maintenance behaviors (Ertürk, 2022; Güngör, 2021; Kılınc & Akyol, 2019; Ogan, 2021; Ogan & Öz Soysal, 2022; Öz Soysal, Uz Baş & Aysan, 2019), attachment styles (Ogan, 2021), romantic relationship satisfaction (Eren, 2019; Ogan, 2021; Ogan & Öz Soysal, 2022), self-efficacy in romantic relationships (Ogan, 2021; Ogan & Öz Soysal, 2022), romantic beliefs (Eren, 2019), relationship commitment (Çelik, 2018; Eren, 2019), and marital satisfaction (Akçabozan Kayabol, 2017) were investigated. In addition, the relationship maintenance behaviors were examined in the context of the investment model. The effect of the relationship maintenance skills psycho-education program on relationship stability was also examined. Conscious efforts to maintain relations, the quantity of these efforts, and the quality of these efforts may vary due to cultural influences (Yum & Li, 2007). Canary and Yum (2015) emphasize that it is both important to make cross-cultural comparisons in relationship maintenance behaviors and to identify their differences and similarities. One of the biggest indicators of a society's culture is its gender role attitudes (Savaşkan, 2019).

A limiting factor to this study is the few existing studies focused on the variation between relationship maintenance strategies in Turkey and the global research at large. Moreover, of the few studies available, the findings varied considerably. The difference in findings draws attention to the limitations of the studies carried out on the subject and necessitates the conducting of new studies. In addition, there is no study in the related literature examining the joint effect of gender and gender roles attitudes on the strategies of maintaining relationships. In this context, it is thought that the study will contribute to the related literature. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship maintenance behaviors according to the gender and gender role attitudes of married individuals. This study will answer the following questions: (i) Do sub-dimensions of married individuals' relationship maintenance strategies show a significant difference according to gender? (ii) Do sub-dimensions of married individuals' relationship maintenance strategies show a significant difference according to gender roles attitudes? (iii) Do gender and gender roles attitudes have a considerable effect on the scores of married individuals' relationship maintenance strategies?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research Model

This research utilizes a descriptive survey model. The main purpose of a descriptive survey model is to accurately portray the characteristics of a situation or phenomenon. In the field of education, a descriptive survey model is used to learn people's attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and demographic characteristics (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). In this study, the strategies of married individuals to maintain relationships were examined in terms of gender and gender attitudes.

### 2.2. Research Sample

Participants were determined using the convenience sampling.

**Table 1.** *Descriptive statistics of the participants of the working group*

Variables		f	%
Gender	Female	177	57.8
	Male	158	47.2
Age	24-30	208	62.1
	31-37	83	24.8
	38-44	37	11
	45-50	7	2.1
	1-4 years	256	76.4
Relationship Duration	5-8 years	47	14
	9-12 years	9	2.7
	13-16 years	23	6.9

The study group of the research consisted of 335 heterosexual married people, 177 female and 158 male, aged between 24 and 50 ( $\bar{x}$ =30.2,  $SD$ =5.4), and a relationship duration between 2 and 20 years ( $\bar{x}$ =5.9,  $SD$ =4.5).

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools

*Personal Information Form:* It was designed by researchers to collect information about participants' gender, age, and duration of marriage.

*The Gender Roles Attitude Scale:* "The Gender Roles Attitude Scale" developed by Zeyneloğlu and Terzi (2011) consists of 38 items and five dimensions (egalitarian gender role, female gender role, gender role in marriage, traditional gender role, and male gender role). The total internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.92. A score of 95 and above, to be taken from the total of the scale, indicates egalitarian gender attitudes, and a score below 95 indicates traditional gender attitudes. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .89.

*The Relationship Maintenance Strategies Scale:* The "Relationship Maintenance Strategies Scale" (RMSS), developed by Canary and Stafford (1992), consists of 29 items. The scale items are a Likert-type scale, scored between 1 (strongly disagree), 5 (neither agree nor disagree), and 7 (strongly agree). The scale has five sub-dimensions. These dimensions are positivity (joyful and positive behavior towards one's partner), openness (opening up and talking about the relationship), assurances (commitment, love and loyalty), social networks (being with friends to provide support and make the relationship fun), and task sharing (fulfilling responsibilities to maintain the relationship) (Canary & Stafford, 1992). According to the sub-dimensions of the scale, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .89 for positivity, .86 for openness, .79 for assurances, .85 for social networks, .91 for task sharing, and .95 for the total scale (Canary & Stafford, 1992). The high scores obtained from the scale indicate a high level of relationship maintenance behaviors. Öz Soysal et al applied the scale to Turkish culture (2019). The reliability coefficient is .95 for positivity, .96 for openness, .95 for assurances, .95 for social networks, .97 for task sharing, and 0.98 for the total scale, respectively (Öz Soysal et al., 2019). In this study, the reliability coefficient of the scale is .93 for positivity, .94 for openness, .94 for assurances, .95 for social networks, .96 for sharing tasks, and .92 for the total score of the scale.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

The study used a two-way MANOVA to examine whether there was a significant difference between the scores of married individuals in the sub-dimensions of the strategy of maintaining relationships (positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and task sharing) according to their gender and gender role attitudes. In addition, through this analysis, the Researcher determined whether gender and gender role attitudes had a significant effect on relationship maintenance scores. Before starting the analysis of the data, the Researcher coded participants' gender role attitude scores of 95 and above as egalitarian gender role attitudes, and the scores below 95 as traditional gender role attitudes. In addition, the Researcher examined normality, equality of covariance matrices, and homogeneity of variances to investigate whether the assumptions required for the analysis of two-way MANOVA were met (Keselman et al., 1998; Konietzschke et al., 2015). The Researcher analyzed the normality test of the data with Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk. The Researcher examined equality of covariance matrices with Box's M statistic and utilized Levene's Test to examine the homogeneity of variances. The results of the normality test are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Test of Normality

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	p	Statistic	df	p
Positivity	0.048	335	0.06	0.993	335	0.11
Openness	0.043	335	0.2	0.993	335	0.11
Assurances	0.040	335	0.2	0.993	335	0.12
Social Networks	0.042	335	0.2	0.992	335	0.06
Task sharing	0.043	335	0.2	0.992	335	0.08
Relationship Maintenance Strategies Total Score	0.045	335	0.9	0.994	335	0.25

Table 2 shows the scores obtained from the dependent variables of the research ( $p=0.11$ ,  $p>.05$  for positivity;  $p=0.11$ ,  $p>.05$  for openness;  $p=0.12$ ,  $p>.05$  for assurances;  $p=0.06$ ,  $p>.05$  for social networks;  $p=0.11$ ,  $p>.05$  for task sharing and  $p=0.25$ ,  $p>.05$  for total scale) are normally distributed. Equation of covariance matrices, (which is one of the other assumptions required for Manova analysis), Box's M test was examined, and Box's test and results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *Box's M Test Results*

	Box'M	27.030
	F	1.196
	Sd <sub>1</sub>	19
	Sd <sub>2</sub>	3240
	p	0.2

Table 3 shows that the covariance matrices are equal ( $F=1.196, p>.05$ ). The homogeneity of the variances was examined with Levene's Test and the test results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** *Levene Test Results*

Variables	F	Sd <sub>1</sub>	Sd <sub>2</sub>	P
Positivity	0.134	3	331	0.94
Openness	0.089	3	331	0.96
Assurances	1.047	3	331	0.37
Social Networks	1.647	3	331	0.18
Task sharing	1.193	3	331	0.32
Relationship Maintenance	0.779	3	331	0.57
Strategies Total Score				

Table 4 shows that the variances were homogeneous ( $F=0.134, p=0.94, p>.05$  for positivity;  $F=0.089, p=0.96, p>.05$  for openness;  $F=1.047, p=0.37, p>.05$  for assurances;  $F=1.647, p=0.18, p>.05$  for social networks,  $F=1.193, p=0.32, p>.05$  for task sharing, and  $F=0.779, p=0.57, p>.05$  for total scale).

## 2.5. Ethical

This study was received from Dokuz Eylül University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee on 12.04.2021 with the application number "4".

## 3. Findings

Table 5 presents statistics quantifying the effect of gender and gender role attitudes on the sub-dimensions of relationship maintenance strategies, (positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and task sharing).

**Table 5.** *Descriptive Statistics Obtained from Positivity, Openness, Assurances, Social Networks and Task Sharing Scales by Gender*

Variables	Gender	n	$\bar{x}$	df
Positivity	Female	170	30.2	4.8
	Male	165	22.8	5.9
Openness	Female	170	28.8	4.5
	Male	165	20.8	5.8
Assurances	Female	170	25.1	5.3
	Male	165	17.7	5.7
Social Networks	Female	170	24.9	5.5
	Male	165	17.5	5.8
Task sharing	Female	170	25.1	5.5
	Male	165	17.8	5.6
Relationship Maintenance	Female	170	134.2	21.9
Strategies Total Score	Male	165	96.6	24.4

Table 5 illustrates that female participants have higher scores on positivity ( $\bar{x}_F=30.2, \bar{x}_M=22.8$ ), openness ( $\bar{x}_F=28.8, \bar{x}_M=20.8$ ), assurances ( $\bar{x}_F=25.1, \bar{x}_M=17.7$ ), social networks ( $\bar{x}_F=24, \bar{x}_M=17.5$ ), task sharing ( $\bar{x}_F=25.1, \bar{x}_M=17.8$ ), and total scale scores ( $\bar{x}_F=134.2, \bar{x}_M=96.6$ ) compared to male participants. Table 6 shows the sub-dimensions of strategies for maintaining relationships and total score descriptive statistics of gender role attitudes.

**Table 6.** *Descriptive Statistics Obtained from Positivity, Openness, Assurances, Social Networks and Task Sharing Scales by Gender Roles Attitudes*

Variables	Gender Roles Attitudes	n	$\bar{x}$	df
Positivity	Egalitarian	176	30.9	4.4

Openness	Traditional	159	21.6	4.8
	Egalitarian	176	29.4	4.3
Assurances	Traditional	159	19.9	4.8
	Egalitarian	176	25.6	5.1
Social Networks	Traditional	159	16.9	5.1
	Egalitarian	176	25.3	5.5
Task sharing	Traditional	159	16.8	5.1
	Egalitarian	176	25.5	5.3
Relationship Maintenance	Traditional	159	17.1	4.9
	Egalitarian	176	136.8	20.4
Strategies Total Score	Traditional	159	92.6	22.1

As Table 6 shows, the positivity ( $\bar{x}_E= 30.9, \bar{x}_T=21.6$ ), openness ( $\bar{x}_E= 29.4, \bar{x}_T=19.9$ ), assurances ( $\bar{x}_E= 25.6, \bar{x}_T=16.9$ ), social networks ( $\bar{x}_E= 25, \bar{x}_T=16.8$ ), task sharing ( $\bar{x}_E= 25.5, \bar{x}_T=17.1$ ), and total scale scores ( $\bar{x}_E= 136.8, \bar{x}_T= 92.6$ ) are higher for the participants with egalitarian gender role attitudes than for those with traditional gender roles attitudes. The Researcher applied two-way MANOVA to the data to determine whether these differences between the mean scores were statistically significant. The Researcher interpreted the data's findings by individual relationship maintenance strategy sub-dimensions, (positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and task sharing) along with the variables of gender and gender roles attitudes. The results are given in Table 7 and Table 8.

**Table 7.** Two-Way MANOVA Results on Positivity, Openness, Assurances, Social Networks, and Task Sharing Scores by Gender and Gender Roles Attitudes

Effect	$\lambda$	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p	$\eta^2$
Intercept	0.049	1277.240	5.0	327	0.00	0.951
Gender	0.944	3.89	5.0	327	0.00	0.06
Gender Roles Attitudes	0.704	27.492	5.0	327	0.00	0.296
Gender * Gender Roles Attitudes	0.045	3.046	5.0	327	0.01	0.05

According to the multidimensional MANOVA results, the effect of gender on positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and task sharing scores, (the subscales of strategies to maintain relationships), is significant ( $\lambda=0.94, F_{(5)}= 3.89, p<.05$ ). In addition, the effects of gender role attitudes on the scores of positivity, openness, assurances, social networks and task sharing, (the subscales of strategies for maintaining relationships), are also significant ( $\lambda=0.704, F_{(5)}= 27.492, p<.05$ ). When the partial eta square values were examined, the gender value ( $\eta^2 =0.06$ ) had a moderate effect according to Wilk's lambda test, while the gender role attitudes ( $\eta^2 =0.296$ ) had a strong effect. In addition, the joint effect of both independent variables ( $\eta^2 =0.05$ ) was found to be moderate. The results of analysis of variance are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8a.** Variance Analysis Results for Positivity, Openness, Assurances, Social Networks and Task Sharing Scores by Gender and Gender Roles Attitudes

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	p	$\eta^2$
Corrected Model	Positivity	7417.66	3	2472.55	118.75	.000	.518
	Openness	7848.09	3	2616.03	132.48	.000	.546
	Assurances	6602.77	3	2200.92	88.814	.000	.446
	Social Networks	6307.81	3	2102.60	76.209	.000	.409
	Task Sharing	6311.59	3	2103.86	82.126	.000	.427
	Relationship Maintenance	57220.21	3	19073.40	633.78	.000	.557
Total	Strategies Total Score	171660.64					
Intercept	Positivity	116111.86	1	116111.86	5576.77	.000	.944
	Openness	102951.12	1	102951.12	5213.79	.000	.940
	Assurances	74720.74	1	74720.74	3015.19	.000	.901

	Social Networks	73272.02	1	73272.03	2655.75	.000	.889
	Task Sharing Relationship Maintenance Strategies	75364.48	1	75364.48	2941.90	.000	.899
	Total Score	2190923.49			5096.68	.000	.939
Gender	Positivity	110.37	1	110.37	5.30	.022	.016
	Openness	290.32	1	290.32	14.70	.000	.043
	Assurances	232.181	1	232.18	9.37	.002	.028
	Social Networks	313.74	1	313.74	11.37	.001	.033
	Task Sharing Relationship Maintenance Strategies	241.56	1	241.56	9.43	.002	.028
	Total Score	5781.71			13.45	.000	.039
Gender	Positivity	2460.90	1	2460.90	118.19	.000	.263
Roles	Openness	2108.64	1	2108.64	106.79	.000	.244
Attitudes	Assurances	1858.35	1	1858.35	74.99	.000	.185
	Social Networks	1575.48	1	1575.48	57.10	.000	.147
	Task Sharing Relationship Maintenance Strategies	1719.39	1	1719.39	67.18	.000	.169
	Total Score	48309.36			112.38	.000	.253
Gender *	Positivity	255.03	1	255.03	12.25	.001	.036
Gender	Openness	264.48	1	264.48	13.39	.000	.039
Roles	Assurances	80.84	1	80.84	3.26	.072	.010
Attitudes	Social Networks	79.014	1	79.02	2.86	.092	.009
	Task Sharing Relationship Maintenance Strategies	104.96	1	104.97	4.09	.044	.012
	Total Score	3643.15			8.47	.004	.025

**Table 8b.** Variance Analysis Results for Positivity, Openness, Assurances, Social Networks and Task Sharing Scores by Gender and Gender Roles Attitudes

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	p	$\eta^2$	
Error	Positivity	6891.62	331	20.82				
	Openness	6535.89	331	19.75				
	Assurances	8202.64	331	24.78				
	Social Networks	9132.27	331	27.59				
	Task Sharing Relationship Maintenance Strategies	8479.43	331	25.62				
	Total Score	14228.89						
	Total	Positivity	250226.00	335				
		Openness	222461.00	335				
Assurances		170111.00	335					
Social Networks		167618.000	335					
Task Sharing		170312.000	335					

	Relationship Maintenance Strategies Total Score	4810116.00	335
Corrected Total	Positivity	14309.28	334
	Openness	14383.98	334
	Assurances	14805.42	334
	Social Networks	15440.09	334
	Task Sharing	14791.03	334
	Relationship Maintenance Strategies Total Score	313948.53	334

When Table 8 is examined, there is a significant difference between the scores of positivity ( $F_{(1,331)}=5.3, p<.05$ ), openness ( $F_{(1,331)}=14.7, p<.05$ ), assurances ( $F_{(1,331)}=9.3, p<.05$ ), social networks ( $F_{(1,331)}=11.3, p<.05$ ), and task sharing ( $F_{(1,331)}=9.4, p<.05$ ) according to gender. Furthermore, there is a significant difference between positivity ( $F_{(1,331)}=118.1, p<.05$ ), openness ( $F_{(1,331)}=106.7, p<.05$ ), assurances ( $F_{(1,331)}=74.9, p<.05$ ), social networks ( $F_{(1,331)}=57.1, p<.05$ ), and task sharing scores ( $F_{(1,331)}=67.1, p<.05$ ) according to gender role attitudes.

In the analysis, effect by gender was found to be  $\eta^2= 0.016$  for positivity,  $\eta^2= 0.043$  for openness,  $\eta^2= 0.028$  for assurances,  $\eta^2= 0.033$  for social networks, and  $\eta^2= 0.028$  for task sharing. The results show that gender has a weak effect on positivity scores, medium effect on openness scores, weak effect on assurance scores, moderate effect on social networks scores, and weak effect on task sharing scores. According to gender role attitudes, effect was  $\eta^2= 0.26$  for positivity,  $\eta^2= 0.24$  for openness,  $\eta^2= 0.18$  for assurances,  $\eta^2= 0.14$  for social networks, and  $\eta^2= 0.16$  for task sharing. Therefore, gender role attitudes have a great effect on the scores of the dependent variables. In addition, the joint effect of gender and gender role attitudes was  $\eta^2= 0.036$  for positivity,  $\eta^2= 0.039$  for openness,  $\eta^2= 0.010$  for assurances,  $\eta^2= 0.09$  for social networks, and  $\eta^2= 0.012$  for task sharing. The joint effect of gender and gender role attitudes is medium on openness and positivity scores, and weak on assurance, social networks and task sharing scores.

The Researcher performed the Bonferroni Test to control the type I error for two-way Manova and to examine the source of the difference. Pairwise comparison results based on the Bonferroni Test of positivity, openness, assurances, social networks and task sharing scales by gender are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Bonferroni Test-Based Pairwise Comparison Results of Positivity, Openness, Assurances, Social Networks and Task-sharing Scales by Gender

Dependent Variable	(I) Gender	(J) Gender	Mean Difference (I-J)	SE	p
Positivity	Female	Male	1.680	.730	.022
	Male	Female	-1.680	.730	.022
Openness	Female	Male	2.725	.711	.000
	Male	Female	-2.725	.711	.000
Assurances	Female	Male	2.437	.796	.002
	Male	Female	-2.437	.796	.002
Social Networks	Female	Male	2.833	.840	.001
	Male	Female	-2.833	.840	.001
Task Sharing	Female	Male	2.486	.810	.002
	Male	Female	-2.486	.810	.002
Relationship Maintenance Strategies Total Score	Female	Male	12.16	3.31	.000
	Male	Female	-12.16	3.31	.000

Table 9 illustrates that female scores on positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and task sharing scales are higher than the male counterpart. The Bonferroni Test-based pairwise comparison results of positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and task sharing scales according to gender role attitudes are presented in Table 10.



**Table 10.** Bonferroni Test-Based Pairwise Comparison Results of Positivity, Openness, Assurances, Social Networks and Task-sharing Scales by Gender Roles Attitudes

Dependent Variable	(I) Gender Roles Attitudes	(J) Gender Roles Attitudes	Mean Difference (I-J)	SE	P
Positivity	Egalitarian	Traditional	7.934	.730	.000
	Traditional	Egalitarian	-7.934	.730	.000
Openness	Egalitarian	Traditional	7.344	.711	.000
	Traditional	Egalitarian	-7.344	.711	.000
Assurances	Egalitarian	Traditional	6.895	.796	.000
	Traditional	Egalitarian	-6.895	.796	.000
Social Networks	Egalitarian	Traditional	6.348	.840	.000
	Traditional	Egalitarian	-6.348	.840	.000
Task Sharing	Egalitarian	Traditional	6.632	.810	.000
	Traditional	Egalitarian	-6.632	.810	.000
Relationship Maintenance Strategies	Egalitarian	Traditional	35.15	3.31	0.00
Total Score	Traditional	Egalitarian	-35.15	3.31	0.00

Table 10 shows that individuals with egalitarian gender role attitudes have higher scores on positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and task sharing scales than individuals with traditional egalitarian gender role attitudes.

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

This study examined married individuals' relationship maintenance behaviors according to their gender and gender role attitudes. Upon evaluation of the study's findings, female participants scored higher than their male counterparts in their positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, task sharing and total scale scores. It is evident that gender has a moderate to significant effect on the sub-scales of maintaining relationships (positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and task sharing). These findings are supported by the following existing studies: Weiser and Weigel (2016) and Baptist et al. (2012) found that females reported more positivity, openness, reassurances, social networks and task sharing than male. In addition, in the study conducted by Stafford et al. (2000), task sharing; in the study conducted by Ragsdale (1996), social networks; in the study conducted by Ogan (2021), it was determined that task sharing with social networks differed in favor of female according to gender. However, there are also studies indicating that the strategies for maintaining relationships do not differ according to gender (Canary, Stafford, L., & Semic, 2002; Torun, 2005) specifically regarding positivity (Aylor ve Dainton, 2004; Ragsdale, 1996; Stafford et al., 2000). The fact that females utilize relationship maintenance strategies more than males can be explained by the fact that females are more aware of their efforts to maintain the relationship than males (Stafford & Canary, 1991). In addition, varied perceptions of maintaining a relationship may be a factor in the differentiation of relationship maintenance behaviors according to gender. Females and Males display variation in expectations of marriage roles (Ulu Ercan & Uçar, 2021). Researchers concur that culture and gender roles affect marriage roles and impact relationship maintenance behaviors. Considering the relatively high number of findings that social networks and task sharing, (sub-dimensions of maintaining relationships), differ according to gender, it is clear that this finding stems from gender role attitudes rather than biological sex. The study presents a masculine majority attitude that home-related responsibilities belong particularly to the female in marriage.

The concept of gender refers to the expectations from the individual in the social order and the position of the individual in society (Vatandas, 2007). Gender roles are the roles imposed on male and female by society. Attitudes of individuals towards all biological genders are shaped in the context of the roles of "femininity" and "masculinity", a task imposed on them by the social environment in which they live (Yıldız, 2022). Emotions and relationship styles expected to be expressed by males and females differ considerably based on the culture in which they live. A female subscribing to traditional gender roles might expect the male to be strong and protective, indicating that she equates masculinity with competence and authority. Likewise, in this framework, females can be expected to fulfill secondary and submissive roles (Pietromonaco et al., 2021). In a family operating under traditional gender norms, females are assigned roles such as giving birth to children, taking care of housework, putting their careers in the background, and giving priority to their spouses and children. Simultaneously, males are assigned roles such as being responsible for the livelihood of

the family, making decisions, and obtaining financial resources. In contrast, within an egalitarian gender rolestructure, similar roles are assigned to females and males, and it is emphasized that they should be equally responsible in work, home, and family life (Regan, 2011, pp. 114-15). In the current study, gender, positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, task sharing and total scale scores were higher for the participants with an egalitarian gender role attitude than scores of the participants with a traditional gender role attitude. It is clear that gender attitudes strongly impact the sub-scales of relationship maintenance, (positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and task sharing). Additionally, the joint effect of both independent variables was moderate. According to Moss and Schwebel (1993), the present study finding can be explained by the "reciprocity" element, which is one of the elements of romantic relationships. Reciprocity refers to when the responsibilities and efforts of partners in romantic relationships are mutual. When the partners have an egalitarian attitude, the element of reciprocity is ensured. They can exhibit high-level relationship maintenance behaviors, because partners have a balance of giving and receiving in the relationship. In the event that this balance is disturbed, partners may question the level of investment they have made in their relationships and may invest as much as their partner offers to them.

. The current study finds that gender role attitudes are more influential than gender in relationship maintenance behaviors. These findings are confirmed by Stafford et al. (2000). In their study to determine whether the differences in relationship maintenance behaviors are attributable to biological sex, Stafford found that gender role is a superior predictor to biological sex. It is evident that being female as a biological sex explains only a small percentage of the variance in maintaining the relationship. A limited number of studies deal with the effects of gender roles on maintaining a relationship. Gender has a weak correlation to positivity scores, a medium correlation to openness scores, a weak correlation to assurance scores, a moderate correlation to social networks scores, and a weak correlation to task sharing scores. On the contrary, gender role attitudes have a strong correlation to the scores of the dependent variables. The joint effect of gender and gender role attitudes is medium in relation to openness and positivity scores, while it is weak in relation to assurance, social networks and task sharing scores.

Individuals have a motive to establish and maintain close relationships (Baumestier & Leary, 1995). Determining the motivation to maintain the relationship and the variables that affect the relationship is important in the development and maintenance of healthy and satisfactory relationships. Ogolsky and Bowers (2013) conducted a meta-analysis study in which they evaluated 35 studies dealing with relationship maintenance in different contexts. All of the relationship maintenance strategies have a positive indication with love, mutual control, commitment, interest, and relationship satisfaction. While, relationship duration was negatively correlated with positivity, openness, and assurances, there was no significant correlation found between social networks and task sharing. However, this study determined that individuals with egalitarian attitudes utilized the relationship maintenance behaviors of openness and positivity the most. The present study finding are supported by the equality theorists' findings in relationship maintenance. Equality theorists state that equality and satisfaction support the continuation of the relationship, which in turn serves to maintain the level of commitment to the relationship (Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013). Individuals with egalitarian gender roles use relationship maintenance behaviors more frequently.

## **5. Recommendations and limitations**

This research has some limitations. The most important of these limitations is the collection of data from a single province in the west of Turkey. Conducting future studies in different regions of Turkey will provide more information on the subject. Another limitation is that only the effect of gender and gender roles on maintaining a relationship was examined. Many individual, social, and societal factors affect the maintenance of relationships and marriages. Factors such as the female's active business life, having choice in marriage decisions, choosing one's own spouse, the working status of the partner, the perception of marriage, and the perception of masculinity and femininity can positively or negatively affect partner harmony in marriage life (Akin, 2008; Erci, 2009; Yaktıl, 2006). In order to determine the motivation for maintaining a relationship, it is important to examine different variables such as marital adjustment, relationship maintenance behaviors, and gender. Considering the limited existing literature on maintaining relationships, conducting more studies on the subject will aid in understanding the dynamics for maintaining relationships. The Researcher recommends conducting longitudinal studies to determine whether these strategies change during the relationship period

and over time, as well as qualitative research to gain in-depth information about the strategies to maintain relationships.

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