

Chapter 12

DO MARRIED AND DIVORCED INDIVIDUALS DIFFER IN THEIR PREMARITAL STAGE PROBLEM AWARENESS ACCOUNTS?¹

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INTRODUCTION

Although marriage rates are on the fall, marriage is still an important social institution in most societies in the world. According to OECD (2018), Turkey has one of the highest marriage rates after China and Russian Federation. However, throughout the world, divorce is also a widely observed phenomenon. For example, in America, almost half of the married couple will break up in some time of their marriage life (Cherlin, 2009). Turkish divorce rates also had steadily increased until 2016 (2017, TÜİK).

A satisfying marriage plays an important role in people's life. It may contribute to individuals' psychological and physical wellbeing (e.g., Berkman & Syme, 1979; Glenn & Weaver, 1988; Hawkins & Booth, 2005). A recent study demonstrated that the relationships between marital quality and various health benefits were found to be closer to the reported effects of diet and exercise on health (Robles, Slatcher, Trombello, McGinn, 2014). According to this study, on average, married individuals have better mental and physical health in comparison to unmarried individuals.

Premarital stage is important for a successful marriage. According to some researchers, at the premarital stage, it is possible to tell whether a marriage will work or not (Markman, Rhoades, Stanley, Ragan, & Whitton, 2010). Premarital relationship quality might affect the future of a given marriage.

The studies that used longitudinal data showed that some problems are persistent over the years and it is possible to detect certain problems that cause divorce as early as 9-12 years prior to divorce (Amato & Rogers, 1997). In Turkey, Arikan (1992) found that disagreement started soon after marriage and continued to divorce. In the light of this, we assume that certain problem areas could be detected

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in limited social settings such as at school, in cafes, or at family visiting). In order to know the spouse better, one can say that an expansive and deeper interaction process should be practised so that one can observe the variety of behaviours in a prospective spouses.

The results of the qualitative study might also be evaluated in relation to cultural settings. In other words, individuals' expectations of marriage, strategies followed and patterning of courtship relationships could well be culturally mediated. While independent youth culture in the west places a premium on the personal choice of romantic matters (Hill & Peplau, 1998) the base culture provides young individuals with the required means to exercise free will. On the other hand, in traditional Turkish culture in which relatedness is emphasised (Kagıtcıbası, 1990), the choice of a marital partner and getting married are more of a societal issue. It is regulated by well-defined rules. And in the rapidly changing societal context, these rules sometimes conflict with the young generations' needs. According to the accounts of respondents in this study, the cultural context restricts the level of interaction between prospective spouses. This is perhaps due to differences between young members of society and their families in their perception of accepted forms of male-female relationships. In a study conducted by Kandiyoti (1978) among the upper socio-economic status university students, it was found that female students scored higher than their mothers in independence and self-decisiveness. Also, among the younger individuals, modern indices of marital relationships were found more prevalent in comparison to older individuals (Atalay et al., 1992).

To summarise, the results of this study demonstrated that circumstantial pressure on making decisions perceived to make a deleterious impact on marital stability. Considering that the sample of this study could be regarded in the more modern range of social strata in Turkey, societal or familial constraints on the premarital relationships seemed still to be heavily felt by the divorced individuals.

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