

What is the Secret Behind 25 Years of Marriage?

Gulen Uygurer¹, Huseyin Uzunboyulu² and Sertan Kagan³

¹Near East University, Faculty of Education, Department of Psychological Counselling and Guidance
Nicosia, North Cyprus, Mersin 10 Turkey
E-mail: gulenuygurer@gmail.com

²Near East University, Faculty of Education, Nicosia, North Cyprus, Mersin 10 Turkey
E-mail: huseyin.uzunboyulu@gmail.com

³Eastern Mediterrenan University, Famagusta, North Cyprus, Mersin 10 Turkey
E-mail: sertankagan@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT This paper is a report on marriages solemnized during the last part of the 20th century, specifically on how couples propose to each other before they get married. Changes in life's circumstances can have profound implications on a marriage and research results have shown that divorce rates are increasing. This research had a qualitative research paradigm. Five couples, living in either Famagusta or Iskele in Cyprus were chosen by purposeful sampling techniques. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and the questions were analyzed by way of thematic analysis. The findings indicate that coming from a traditional family influences both the decision to get married and the choice of a marriage partner. The participants' expectations of marriage include being happy, being peaceful and to continue their lives in this manner. A healthy marriage is based on comprehension, understanding, respect, love and empathy. Satisfaction in a marriage is obtained in this way.

INTRODUCTION

"Industrialization and development in terms of the economy will alter attitudes of people towards family patterns" (Imtiaz et al. 2015:695). Also, industrialization brings some problems and those problems cause difficulties in life. Families are important institutions across cultures and families change over time. Consequently, societies, which grow from families, become more complex and the quality of life among families becomes differentiated on economic issues (Letourneau 2012). These difficulties and problems can contribute to an unhealthy marriage, as marriage can be an integral part of life (Shoakazemi and Jafari 2009). Changes in life circumstances can cause marital break ups (Celik 2012). Such changes in life conditions can adversely affect marriage. Consequently, marriage today is becoming an increasingly complex social construct (Azizoglu-Binici 2000). "Statistics show decreased marriage stability resulting in an in-

creased number of divorces" (Igebaeva 2015: 2). The family is regarded as an important part of a community (Hamarta et al. 2015: 57). Societies consist of groups of people who live together and those groups are named differently in different cultures. For this paper, "the family" is used as heterosexual couples who get married and build families with their babies. However, it does not mean that families are limited to man and woman marriages. Saglam (2011) asserts that "heterosexual families" are notions of living together as wife and husband with children. These groups of people are helping fertilize and arrange the social system. Moreover, the family unit provides the primary vehicle for the perpetuation of social and cultural norms through the process of socialization (Farokhzad 2014).

Families have a social function—the socialization of the individual. Individuals become accustomed to living together and developing as a family unit (Celik 2012). Consequently, being part of a family is an essential dimension of an individual's wellbeing. The kind of adult a child grows up to become, his or her ability to conform to social norms and expectations, and psychological and emotional well-being are ultimately a product of family experiences. Therefore, the family is a social institution that comprises of an indispensable element of society. Healthy and resilient societies consist of healthy and resilient fami-

Address for correspondence:

Gülen Uygurer
Faculty of Education,
Department of Psychological Counselling and Guidance
Near East University,
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
via Mersin 10 Turkey
E-mail: gulenuygurer@gmail.com

lies (Yazicioglu and Kayhan 2007). A healthy society is a product of healthy families with healthy children growing up in a healthy marriage. Therefore, the numbers of studies on marriage and family issues are increasing (Celenoglu 2011). The divorce rate in many first world countries (for example, Canada and U.S.) is extremely high. Between 2001 and 2005, 353,106 marriages ended in divorce in Canada (Statistics Canada 2008). In the U.S, 2,131,000 couples got married in 2012 and 851,000 marriages ended in divorce in the same year. Additionally, the rate of divorce in many underdeveloped third world countries (for example, Turkey and North Cyprus) is increasing. In Turkey, 600,138 couples got married in 2013 and 125,305 marriages ended in divorce in the same year. In North Cyprus, the divorce rate in North Cyprus has increased significantly since 1995. Between 2002 and 2011, 5,504 marriages ended in divorce (Sayilar and Tunala 2013). In 2012, 1,238 couples got married and 803 couples divorced in the same year (Haberkibris 2014). Marriage is one of the most important institutions that affects people's lives and wellbeing (Stutzer and Frey 2006). Not coincidentally, marriage is also one of the most critical decisions that one will make in life (Hajeeh and Lairi 2009). Marital institutions regulate sexual relations and encourage commitment between spouses (Stutzer and Frey 2006). Thus it is hoped that a marriage decision will lead to happiness.

In the 1960s, a number of studies emerged in the field of marriage and family counseling in a bid to identify the hallmarks of a healthy marriage (Guest et al. 2012). Myress's work (1999), for example, noted that married couples were happier than singles. Similarly, many studies attempted to investigate the reasoning behind unhealthy marriages. But one area that seems to be poorly researched is "the before marriage" period, thus, partner or mate selection should be considered a research priority. One example of a pre-marriage mate selection study is that of Dincyurek and Uygurer (2012) who investigated the role of communication skills among university students and partner selection. In the 1970s, the marriage age was 23, but by the 2000s the marriage age has risen to 29. The marriage age has also risen in other European countries (Martinez Pastor 2008). One study conducted in England shows that healthy marriages contribute to the raising of children (Crawford et al. 2010). Healthy marriages are the bridge for healthy generations. A number of different studies have been conducted on marriage.

In the light of high divorce rates in North Cyprus, a number of studies have been conducted in order to raise awareness about the importance of marriage and family counseling (Uzunboylu and Salman 2011). These efforts might be described in terms of health promotion as harmonious marriages play an important role in human lives and promote psychological wellbeing (Tutarel-Kislak and Goztepe 2012). Therefore, the rising rate of divorce is giving rise to an increasingly unhealthy generation.

As stated above, there are a number of studies presented on marriage and family counseling. This means that the studies generally were on marriage and well-being, marriage decision and happiness and married couples and happiness. It has also represented mate selection and communication skill, marriage age, healthy marriage and raising healthy children and awareness of marriage and family counseling. Various studies have mentioned what should be done to be happy and what should be done for the right marriage decisions. This paper focuses on existing relations between woman and man who have been married for over 25 years. It also aims to show what the couples did and what they are doing to be happy in their marriages.

Purpose of this Paper

This paper was conducted in North Cyprus. Divorce rates are rising and this results from a broken society, broken social system and broken economic system in North Cyprus (Boyra 2015; Rahvancioglu 2015). The duration of marriages is very short and typically they end in divorce. As eluded to previously, the rate of divorce has risen since the late 1990s and is continuing to rise. The rate of increase is not a surprise because there is no institution for psychological support for couples to protect and empower their marriages (Mevsimler 2015). This paper focuses on couples who have been married for an average of 25 years in order to learn more about their marriage, to assert ways of coping in their marriage and focusing on healthy marriages in an attempt to create a more resilient and healthy society.

Research Questions

1. How did couples who have been married for 25 years in North Cyprus first decide to get married?

2. What does marriage mean for couples who have been married for 25 years in North Cyprus?
3. What is the secret behind making a marriage survive for 25 years in North Cyprus?
4. How do these married couples attain satisfaction in their marriage in North Cyprus?

METHODOLOGY

Paradigm

A qualitative approach was taken for this paper because the “whys” and “hows” of human behavior, opinion and experience information are difficult to obtain through more quantitatively oriented methods of data collection (Guest et al. 2012).

Sample

This paper was conducted in 2014 with five couples who had been married for 25 years. The total number of individual participants was 10. A free workshop on marriage and family counseling was organized before the samples were chosen. This workshop was organized by using liftmen to make the announcement between Iskele and Famagusta districts. Then, eight voluntary couples attended the free workshop and they were thus involved in the sampling process. These couples were informed before being made a part of this paper. Five voluntarily couples among them were selected for this paper via purposeful sampling. This sampling technique was adopted because purposeful sampling can lead to richer and more comprehensive research data (Buyukozturk 2012). Participants were residents of either the Famagusta or Iskele districts of North Cyprus. Two of the couples were from the

Iskele district and three couples were from the Gazimagusa (that is, Famagusta) district. The demographic breakdown of the participants is summarized in Table 1.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection was performed via the semi-structured interviews approach and observations. An interview guide helped ensure that the interviews and questions were effective in obtaining data on a range of subjects, including the marriage decision, the meaning of marriage, and the secrets of a long marriage and the level of satisfaction within the marriage. The interview questions were consistent with the stated objectives of this paper. The interviews were conducted at the participants' houses. Interviews were scheduled one week before by phone. The interviews lasted an average of 25-30 minutes.

Data Analysis

The participants' personal information and data from the semi-structured interviews were transferred to a secure computer. The computer, which stored the data from interviews, was password protected and enciphered. Data was classified according to the opinions expressed by the participant and coded for thematic analysis. This coding process led to the identification of four interview questions to determine the themes. In terms of reliability, a more senior researcher was asked to review the interview transcripts in parallel with the voice recording. The participants were informed by voice recording.

Ethical Issues

Participation was voluntary in this paper. Participants gave both their verbal informed con-

Table 1: Demographic information of participant

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Duration of marriage</i>
Participant 1	Female	52	Elementary	28
Participant 2	Male	57	Elementary	28
Participant 3	Female	56	Elementary	37
Participant 4	Male	58	Elementary	37
Participant 5	Female	56	High School	36
Participant 6	Male	60	Elementary	36
Participant 7	Female	51	University	26
Participant 8	Male	54	University	26
Participant 9	Female	50	University	26

sent and signed a written informed consent form. The participants were informed at the end of the free workshop about the paper. The informed consent involved the rights to interview the participants. These rights included, withdrawing from this paper, voice recording during the interview. This form also involved protocol section and both sides have signed and accepted responsibilities in respect to any sort of harm.

RESULTS

This paper aimed at determining why couples who have been married for 25 years actually chose to get married in the first place, what marriage means to them, the secret of a long marriage and how satisfied they were with their marriages.

Interview Question 1: Reasons for Getting Married

Most of the interviews began with the question, "Why did you decide to get married?" The responses to this seemingly innocuous question should be understood in the context of the participants' demographic information. All of the participants live in North Cyprus and they were native Turkish Cypriots. Furthermore, all indicated marrying in accordance with the traditions and customs prevalent during the time in which they got married. It was observed that many of the participants were married either as a result of an arranged marriage or as a result of emotional friendships. Those couples who were married as a result of an emotional friendship indicated that they have spent a long time together. On the other hand, those who had arranged marriage indicated that their marriages were favorable and were encouraged by family elders to make the relationship work. According to stories told by the participants, family intervention has been a concern in view of individual decisions. It is seen that the couples who married with arranged marriages have not incurred serious problems because their families gave permission. The following quotes from the participants illustrate the myriad of reasons underlying their decisions to get married. According to participants' answers, answers mainly are coded within three codes.

First one is, getting married with the help of a matchmaker (the matchmaker can be a relative or an elder in the family).

Participant 1: "I have mostly lived in a arranged marriage. My matchmaker had come, and my father had said 'ok'. I was married eight months later."

Participant 2: "My stepmother wanted to find somebody for me to marry. My aunt arranged for us to see a matchmaker so I could find my husband. We were welcomed and sat down. Nobody had to talk. Actually I had intolerance and I have said to my wife, 'I have come to see you, I like you, do you like me?' Then my wife has said that, 'I don't know, my father knows.'"

The second one is involved dating someone and wanting to get married with his or her partner.

Participant 3: "My husband was walking along our street and my mother invited him in to drink coffee and we fell in love with each other over time. For six months it went on like this, coming over to drink coffee. My husband's family didn't want me and gossiped about me. I finally said that if he really loved me, he would not listen to the gossip and just marry me. Then I had forsworn to marriage and I had been giving up. Later, my husband got seriously ill and my husband's family gave their permission for him to marry me."

Participant 4: "We had lots of problems. First, my family did not want me to get married to her. I got sick and had to stay in hospital for eight months. During that time, my mother found my wife's photo under my pillow at the hospital. Eventually, we were engaged and married."

Participant 5: "We had been studying in Turkey. We were in love and we got married so we could stay together."

Participant 6: "It was a sudden decision. We got married for having been together."

The last one is that the elders of the family used force to get the two together to be married. However, elders of a family do not allow their daughter or son to get married with lovers or do not allow whatever they wanted to do.

Participant 7: "I wanted to finish school in Turkey, so I did not want to get married. Honestly, I have been married by my cousin's mediate. I said that I don't want to get married for one (1) and a half years. Although my mother was opposed to the reason of study being my decision against marriage, I do not know how I suddenly found myself married."

Participant 8: "I thought that it was the time for marriage, so I had better get married. I told my family to find someone for me."

Participant 9: "My mother's brother insisted that I get married. We got married 45 days later."

Participant 10: "I have been working and wanted somebody to get married to and asked my family to find a woman for me."

There was no uniformity among the participants in terms of their reasons for getting married. Each participant had different life experiences and so this paper attempted to connect the different life experiences of the people into a small island. Actually, when one looks at social meanings as a society, the roles of social values have continued, still individual differences were available among the five couples' marriage decision. After coding, two themes were revealed with respect to the decision of getting married. In this sense, the first theme is, reaching a decision to marry with the help of the elderly people around. The second theme is, dating and reaching the decision to marry alone. The reasons of getting married were different from one to another. Nevertheless, it is related to cultural issues as well as religious. Turkish Cypriots are Muslim and Muslims mostly get married with the decisions of the elders in the family. Findings show that elders had a role and rights to determine and find the right partner for marriage for younger members of the family. On the other hand, dating and being lovers was also seen in those years. That is related to Cyprus, which had been occupied by the British, and this occupation had had influence on cultural issues such as marriage (that is, intimate relationship between opposite sex). Cultural differences should be taken an account for marriages (Schroder and Schmiedeberg 2015:81).

Interview Question 2: The Meaning of Marriage

This paper asked participants, "What is the meaning attributed to marriage?" The meaning attributed to marriage helps condition the emergence of expectations associated with marriage. In particular, the reason why a participant got married differs in the sense of responding to needs. In general, the participants that have been married by interventions to establish a family and meaning of marriage is having a family, and generally those that chose to live together out of their own volition is receding. The following quotes from the participants illustrate the range of responses to the question of what marriage means to them. The meaning of marriage was

coded within four codes according to participants' answers.

The first one is the bridge to have a family.

Participant 1: "I am 52 years old. Marriage means being able to continue my family. It is the key to a new family."

Participant 2: "During my childhood, I wanted to have a happy and warm house but I did not have it because my mother and dad divorced when I was 7 years old. Therefore, marriage means having a happy house and now I have one. Also, it means to live with my wife and children, and to be happy together. It shows that marriage is a beginning point to have a family."

Participant 5: "I haven't thought about this; but now that I think about it, it means my family."

Participant 9: "Marriage was something that was unexpected and I had delayed attempts because I had not planned to get married. But now, it means 'my family,' my children and my husband."

Participant 10 "Marriage means getting married to a beautiful woman. I succeed and nowadays, it means having my family."

Second code is being together. Marriage means the permission to live together within traditional Muslim families.

Participant 3: "Marriage really needs too much efforts to arrange the man, thus, marriage is meaning attempt to arrange the man." Some of Cypriot expressions include these phrases. It means controlling the man.

Participant 8: "Marriage did not carry too much meaning for me at first. It meant living altogether and having family."

Otherwise, singles generally stay with parents. Participants are around over 50 years old. That's why the Muslims' rules were followed during those years.

The third code involves being happy and living in harmony. It is a kind of expectation from marriage that it is to bring happiness to couples and they would live in harmony.

Participant 4: "Marriage is a source of happiness and feeling love for being happy."

Participant 7: "Marriage is the harmony among partners. It is like a music harmony, which has got same harmony so that partners understand each other with the help of harmony."

The last one is that marriage is serenity, which means to have a good marriage and to live in peace.

Participant 6: *"Actually, marriage means living together in order to have serenity with my family."*

Participants were asked to contrast their views on marriage before with those after getting married. This paper revealed the participants' expectations from marriage and asserts what sorts of needs are maintained by being married. Expectations and maintained needs, which asserted the participants' answers, are properly traced out through cultural signs of the participants. Being attached to a partner can be assumed as a fulfilled need. The meaning of marriage is associated with what is expected from marriage and what is being done to be happy in marriage. Thus, each definition showed the differences within the meaning of marriage. Four codes were revealed for the themes as mentioned above.

Interview Question 3: The Secrets of Sustaining a Marriage

When participants were asked to describe what they considered to be the secret of a successful marriage, participant responses revealed the importance of common sense, understanding and respectful thinking instead of thinking only of one's self. According to the participants' answers, sustaining a marriage was coded with in fourth codes. These are, first, sacrificing to be content from the marriage.

Participant 1: *"I keep my marriage by sacrificing myself. This is my secret. I was lucky, because I don't have to sacrifice too much, but no marriage survives without some sacrificing."*

Participant 2: *"Two people should be prepared to make sacrifices and be respectful to each other."*

Participant 4: *"The secret to 37 years of marriage is respect and love."*

The second code is respecting each other (in a relationship).

Participant 2: *"The two should be prepared to make sacrifices and be respectful to each other."*

Participant 6: *"Respect, love, tolerance and willingness. It is all about understanding."*

Participant 7: *"Talking to each other in a good way, being polite and respectful, and endeavoring to understand each other's needs. It is good to establish effective communication. Entering into conflict is better than escaping."*

Participant 8: *"Tolerance is the secret to making a marriage work and being respectful*

to each other because respect opens every door. The secret is endeavoring to understand each other."

The third code is being patient and tolerant.

Participant 3: *"I have kept my marriage with the help of my positive energy for 37 years. At the same time, I say nice things to my partner (that is, you are my life), however, I have experienced disagreement sometimes."*

Participant 5: *"There is no description without patience and tolerance. To endure, patience and tolerance are necessary...financial hardships and other problems pass by with patience and tolerance."*

Participant 6: *"Respect, love, tolerance and willingness. It is all about understanding."*

Participant 9: *"My partner tolerates me and accords me my due respect with patience and tolerance."*

Participant 10: *"Patience and willingness... The big secret is having the patience and willingness to keep the marriage going."*

The last code is the willingness to understand.

Participant 6: *"Respect, love, tolerance and willingness. It is all about understanding."*

Participant 7: *"Talking to each other in a good way, being polite and respectful, and endeavoring to understand each other's needs. It is good to establish effective communication. Entering into conflict is better than escaping."*

Participant 8: *"Tolerance is the secret to making a marriage work and being respectful to each other because respect opens every door. The secret is endeavoring to understand each other."*

According to the participants' views, the secrets of their lasting marriages were revealed. Each participant mentioned and shared his/her secrets with respect to their experiences under four codes and those codes are revealed in four themes with the same name. The reasons of the codes show that each of them has a part in effective communication skills. This also means that communication skills are required to have a good connection between both partners and understand each other in a relationship. Thus, the secret of 25 years in marriage was related to their personal coping skills and expectation from the marriage. These personal coping skills are also related to their communication skills. Communication is a "fundamental" element due to the set up of human interaction in intimate couple rela-

tionships because communication is an important appliance for knowing and/or “emotionally connecting” to one another (Wiley 2006).

Interview Question 4:
Marital Satisfaction, 25 Years on.....

How is satisfaction reached in the marriage? Respondents described the importance of understanding each other, being tolerant and loving, respectful, focusing, listening to each other, not speaking at the same time, or retreating into the self. Participants also highlighted the importance of discussing their needs, and trying to understand and care for their partner. The first code is reconciliation.

Participant 1: “To be satisfied, you need to be endowed with a sense of sacrifice, good understanding and doing what is necessary for reconciliation.”

Participant 4: “We are like guns and rifles, but it is good for us. You get back from your marriage whatever you put into your marriage. Pans cover should fit with pots.” With this expression, he means that they complete each other such as guns and rifles and pans and pots. Some of Cypriot expressions include these phrases.”

Participant 8: “I reach satisfaction by looking for solutions and by understanding each other instead of complaining. Also, I feel satisfaction by following a busy life and focusing on targets. Also by sharing, understating what my partner wants and expects, by listening and by being clear about what I want.”

The second code is understanding.

Participant 2: “We could not understand each other at first. But now, we can and we know what makes us happy and content. Our love increased and we reached satisfaction. We began caring for each other and spending more time together. Every morning, she says ‘goodbye’ while I am going work, and when I come back she welcomes me. When I was working shifts, she used to wait until 5 am. She gives me peace in this way.”

Participant 7: “Partners should be aware of the need of their mates and should not give up in any situation in their marriage. Having good communication skills helps reach satisfaction in marriage because it helps us understand what the other wants and expects from marriage.”

The last code is respect, love, listening, tolerance and harmony.

Participant 3: “We do not talk at the same time. We should listen to each other. At the same time, love and respect are essential elements for satisfaction. Our love should be kept fresh and should be refreshed again and again for satisfaction.”

Participant 5: “We reach satisfaction with tolerance. We continue that way by accepting everything about the partner. For harmony, we need to agree, need to share and need to decide together. These are necessary and we try to do all. When I think about satisfaction, my home gives me a feeling of inner peace and I do everything to reach satisfaction; for instance, reading books and making handicrafts to satisfy my needs however I think, my husband does not do anything to reach satisfaction.”

Participant 6: “For reaching harmony and satisfaction, we should listen to each other and establish rules and regulations to aid in having satisfaction and harmony.”

Participant 9: “To get harmony and satisfaction, people should listen to each other effectively. To encourage interaction and harmony, people should empathize with each other.”

Participant 10: “Do what you love with whom you love. In this respect, satisfaction and harmony are related to individual’s expectations.”

Participants differed in terms of their demographic characteristics (for example, education, living standards, occupation, duration of marriage), but also in how they decided to marry. Nonetheless, there was some consensus with respect to what constitutes marital satisfaction like, effective listening, partners telling each other what they need, patience, understanding, being silent and compromising.

The findings of this paper reveal that individual differences affect every issue in life and that it is related to the individual expectations of each person with respect to marriage. In addition to individual differences and expectations, the participants’ comments highlight the importance of effective communication skills in marriage. Thus, “a better problem-solving ability in life, and this may have influenced improved marital satisfaction” (Holekianau et al. 2015: 43).

DISCUSSION

Marriages have changed over the past half century (Lamanna et al. 2014; Garrison 2012; Weil

and Hendrix 2010). Beyond the individual, the family is the basic structural unit of a society (Tirtashi 2012). Family includes all signs from individual culture and maintains particular needs (that is, living together, belonging to someone and somewhere, and so on). Therefore, family also includes differences within because different individuals live together and grow together in the same place. Differences are inescapable for families. Moreover, the family is formed via marriage. This paper had focused on the secrets of a long-term marriage and as already mentioned above, individual expectations are different from one to another from before marriage to after being married. Each couple has a unique formula to keep their marriage fresh. People ultimately grow up with different expectations from life and marriage based on their own experiences of having lived in a marriage from whence people were children growing up with their parents. With respect to expectations from marriage, the environment affects individuals differently, even in terms of the decision to marry. Thus, marriage problems are associated with marriage periods and individual characteristics (Sevim 1999). The practice of arranged marriages still persists to some degree in North Cyprus (Everyculture 2015; Akhmadeeva and Kusch 2009). While arranged marriages were once commonplace, today the practice exists only among the most conservative of families. Despite similar cultural signs of Cyprus, marriages in Turkey are different. Arranged marriages may be related to cultural values (Henslin et al. 2013). Empathy and understanding are necessary to have longevity in a marriage and a healthy family. Guven and Sevim (2007) observed that cognition in marriage is an important issue with respect to the partners' satisfaction. Cognition in marriage is helpful to solve problems. Satisfaction in marriage can be defined as maintaining personal needs in marital relationships. Participants highlighted the importance of trying to understand each other, and of listening to each other. Happiness occurs first, and then people can feel the satisfaction. Harmonious and cooperative families teach important values, which promote a healthy society. Therefore, cooperation is important in families (Arpaci and Tokyurek 2012).

Furthermore, marital satisfaction is a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person (Stone and Shackelford 2007). In order to have a healthy

family, satisfaction and harmony are essential. That is to say, marital harmony defines happiness from the satisfaction and the gratification of the couple's relationship (Akar 2005, cited in Celenoglu 2011:1). According to Binici-Azizoglu (2000), satisfaction in marriage is defined as a 'subjective happiness' and 'gratification'. Empathetic understanding, accepting individual differences, attention and love are essential elements for satisfaction in marriage. Conversely, a lack of empathetic understanding represents a potential problem for a marriage (Ozguven 2000). Pre-marriage factors also take into account enriching marital ties (Gungor et al. 2011:180). Pre-marriage can be assumed as a rehearsal for marriage to understand the partner as well. In closing, what is necessary for a healthy marriage? According to Bacanli et al. (2012), while a plethora of studies have been conducted to distinguish factors that help maintain marital relationships, the divorce rate continues to rise. These issues have been a recurrent part of marital studies since the 19th century. Initially, the focus of these studies was on the quality of marriage. Later, the focus shifted to individual differences in light of the characteristics and changes in family such as in the studies by Guven and Sevim (2007) and Mojallal et al. (2013). "The success or failure of a marriage is likely to depend in part on the personality (that is, the enduring traits and characteristics), of the individual spouses" (Karney 2001: 797). With globalization and rapid developments in technology, people are increasingly aware of what is going on around them therefore, their expectations from marriage are very high (Brucham 2012).

In light of this, further studies on marriage satisfaction and harmony should be prioritized. The importance of the family should be recognized as a unit for future healthy generations (Hedayati and Vakili 2013). Moreover, if the findings of this paper are anything to go by, further studies should look to examine the role of effective communication in healthy marital relationships (Elena-Adriana et al. 2012).

CONCLUSION

Changes in life conditions bring difficulties in every phase of the life. These changes in life cause difficulties as well in marriages. The number of short period marriages has increased and couples face unexpected situations such as di-

voce. The number of marriages and number of divorce are almost at par. The rate of divorce is increasing day by day as mentioned in the introduction. For these reasons, the paper aimed to focus on the secret behind long-term married partners who had a period of marriages beyond 25 years. In the first place, the decision of marriage had been questioned. Findings indicate that marriage decision was taken differently from one to another. Some of them asked someone else to help them get married, some of them found their partners themselves. The method of getting married is was different from one person to another. The participants' views were mentioned in the results section about how they got married. Asking help from someone else, elders' decision and emotional relationships are what helped the participants' marriage decision. It can be related to individual differences, for instance, the participants' lifestyle and what they learned from their environment. It is a sort of cultural transition. Also, opportunities of each participant had a play in important roles during this process. Living in the village or living in the city mostly plays a function in dating relationships because of opportunities. The couples defined the meaning of marriage. They mentioned the meaning of marriage and expressed their expectations from marriage. Marriage was mostly defined by what did they for their marriage, what they expect from it and what they found in it. For instance, marriage is seen as an essential action that ought to be done in life, marriage brings happiness, marriage aids to have family and actualizes expectations.

The secret of survival of a long-term marriage and satisfaction in marriage are generally effective communication skills. Respect, patient, tolerance, understanding, caring for each other and listening were given as part of these secrets. These variables help gain satisfaction and harmony in marriage. Also, participants mentioned love as a contributor to satisfaction in marriage. As mentioned previously, love is one of the most important needs to maintain a healthy marriage. Ten participants relayed their experience and their way of thinking about it all. With respect to the participants' answers, individual differences are the main component of marriages because every participant mentioned what his/her own expectations and experiences from marriage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The numbers of studies on marriage regarding the concept of satisfaction and harmony

should be increased. Thus, the role of family should be taken into consideration for a healthy generation and during this process, there should be a focus on effective communication in marriages. At the same time, international and intercultural marriages should be given consideration. Therefore, further studies could take an international perspective for comparing effects of relationship duration, cohabitation, and marriage across countries. Marriage and marital satisfaction are part of life and if those are fulfilled, then life would be affected in a positive way. Thus, marital satisfaction and happiness in life should be examined together to reveal the role of marital satisfaction in life.

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