

The Relationship between Personality Traits and Marital Quality in Married Couples in Turkey

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ABSTRACT The personality traits of each partner have an effect on marital quality. Research studies of this nature carried out in Turkey are quite limited in number. Therefore, this study focused on the relationship between the personality traits and marital quality in married couples. Four hundred eighty-eight couples that lived in different cities in Turkey took part in the research. The level of marital quality of men was higher than that of women, while agreeableness and neuroticism were higher in women than in men. Marriage duration and neuroticism of women negatively, and educational level positively predicted marital quality. Openness to expressions of men positively predicted marital quality, while neuroticism of them negatively predicted it. Personality traits of men were not predictors of the marital quality of women while personality traits of women were not predictors of marital quality of men.

INTRODUCTION

The empirical literature that directly addressed the relationship between personality traits and the outcomes of marriage is largely dominated by the studies carried out in Western countries rather than developing ones including Turkey, wherein almost no study has been done until recent times. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to try to identify the main characteristics of the relationship between personality traits and marital quality in a Turkish sample and thus to produce information for the future researches that may be comparable with those in the West.

Personality Traits

Personality traits were defined as “consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, or actions that distinguished people from one another” (Johnson 1997: 74). There has been a consensus in literature that a great part of variance in normal personality traits was covered by five main

factors. The Five-Factor Model (FFM), referred to as Big Five, used five dimensions to organize personality traits and to define personality differences. These factors or dimensions are neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (McCrae 1991).

Neuroticism is a trait that has the power to guide the life of individuals, and in particular, to dramatically influence their relationships with others. Individuals with high scores in the neuroticism dimension were described as experiencing emotional distress, excessive variance in their emotions, anxiety, a lack of confidence in relationships, anger, resentfulness, introversion, nervousness (Costa and McCrae 1995; Somer et al. 2002; Burger 2010), fear, guilt and frustration (McCrae 1991). Those with low scores were described as easygoing, emotionally stable, able to stay calm in stressed situations, likely to experience positive emotions, and highly confident (Costa and McCrae 1995; Morris 1996; Somer et al. 2002; Burger 2010). Individuals with high scores in the extraversion dimension were described as positive, social, energetic, cheerful, dominant, challenging, caring, prone to cooperation, and sympathetic (Costa and McCrae 1992; Bono et al. 2002). Those with low scores were introverted, likely to stay silent, shy, timid and calm, wary of socialization, remaining at a distance from people, and preferred loneliness

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(Benet-Martinez and John 1998; Bono et al. 2002; Somer et al. 2002). Individuals with high scores in the openness to experience dimension were described as imaginative, insightful, liberal, intellectually investigative, sophisticated, adventurous, original, creative, and curious. Those with low scores were described as traditional, conservative and closed-minded, and having limited areas of interest (Costa and McCrae 1995; Morris 1996; Bono et al. 2002; Burger 2010). Individuals with high scores in the agreeableness dimension are defined as warm-hearted, kind, collaborative, unselfish, flexible, honest, unforgetting, helpful, sympathetic, generous, tactful, reliable, self-giving, and humble (Morris 1996; Bono et al. 2002; Burger 2010). Those with low scores were associated with hostility, unreliableness, stubbornness, rudeness and skepticism, enjoys competition and ventures to fight for their interests and beliefs (Graziano Jensen-Campbell and Hair 1996; Burger 2010). Individuals with high scores on the conscientiousness dimension were ambitious, determined, responsible, hardworking, organized, decisive, and competent and aim for achievement and acting in line with a plan. Those with low scores fail to follow a schedule, were undisciplined, unreliable, likely to postpone things, and are easily distracted (McCrae 1991; Costa and McCrae 1995; Morris 1996; Burger 2010).

Marital Quality

Marital relations were analyzed in terms of two fundamental concepts, that is, marital stability and marital quality. Marital stability (including those marriages derailed by death, divorce, separation, desertion, and annulment) denoted the duration of a marriage. Marital quality was usually defined as a subjective evaluation conducted by married couples about their own marriages and addressed as an encompassing concept including marital satisfaction, marital quality, marital integrity (Spainer 1979) and marital happiness that were all often used interchangeably (Bahr et al. 1983) in the literature.

Personality Traits and Marital Quality

Since the 1930s, researchers have performed studies to identify personality factors and profiles associated with marriage outcomes (Terman et al. 1938) and to understand how personality

traits influenced the quality of romantic relationships among adults (Caspi et al. 2005). Many have found that there was a significant relationship between personality traits and the quality and satisfaction of a relationship (Watson et al. 2000; Robins et al. 2000, 2002; Gattis et al. 2004; Brittany and Joshua 2014; Shiota and Levenson 2007; Schaffhuser et al. 2014; Manesh and Arefi 2015; Vater and Schröder-Abe 2015; Ashrafi et al. 2015; Braithwaite et al. 2016; South et al. 2016; Timothy and Paula 2016). Personality traits were significantly correlated to the marital quality, satisfaction, functioning and outcomes (McCrae and Costa 1994; Karney and Bradbury 1997; Robins et al. 2000, 2002; Watson et al. 2000). Consistent correlations were identified between relationship performance and neuroticism, agreeableness, openness, and positive mood (Gray 2003).

Many researchers insisted that a high level of neuroticism among one or both partners was negatively associated with marital outcomes and positively correlated with higher rates of divorce (Kelly and Conley 1987; Karney and Bradbury 1995; Botwin et al. 1997; Caughlin et al. 2000; Watson et al. 2000; Hayes and Joseph 2003; Davila et al. 2003; Gattis et al. 2004; Heller et al. 2004; Donnellan et al. 2004; Barelds 2005; Shiota and Levenson 2007; Javanmard and Garegozlo 2013; Vater and Schröder-Abe 2015). Neuroticism or emotional instability creates a “continual vulnerability”, which affects how couples adapt to stressful life events (Karney and Bradbury 1995). Because individuals with high scores on the neuroticism have a tendency to display more impulsive behaviors, marital quality can be expected to be lower.

While some suggested that neuroticism of women had the most negative influence on marital quality (Pond et al. 1963), some others found that a man's personality had a greater impact on marital outcomes than a woman's personality (Barry 1970).

Studies on extraversion and marital quality produced inconsistent results. In various studies, extraversion was positively correlated with marital quality (Bentler and Newcomb 1978; Russell and Wells 1994; Karney and Bradbury 1995; Robins et al. 2000; Watson et al. 2000; Hayes and Joseph 2003; Gattis et al. 2004; White et al. 2004; Malouff et al. 2010). Especially when both partners were extraverted this correlation became positive (Zaleski 1981). Marital dissatisfaction

increased when one of the partners had a higher score on the extraversion dimension than the other (Lester et al. 1989). In some other studies, a negative or no correlation between extraversion and marital quality was found (Lester et al. 1989; Kelly and Conley 1987; Botwin et al. 1997; Gattis et al. 2004). Similarities (Nemechek and Olson 1999) or differences (Eysenck and Wakefield 1981) between partners in relation to extraversion had no influence on the marital quality of wife or husband.

Openness to experience was positively correlated with marital quality for both partners (Kosek 1996; Botwin et al. 1997; Donnellan et al. 2004). A study with couples using NEO identified a positive correlation ($r=.21$) between planned problem-solving and openness in couples (Bouchard 2003). A positive correlation was also found between openness and sexual satisfaction in marriage (Botwin et al. 1997). Another study detected significant differences in openness between distressful and non-distressful couples (Gattis et al. 2004).

Although there were only a few direct studies on agreeableness and various aspects of marital functioning, agreeableness was considered to have the highest association with social and marital relationships and increased marital quality. Studies that investigated the Big Five Factors found that agreeableness was negatively correlated with negative interactions and positively correlated with a positive assessment of marital relationships as a whole (Donnellan et al. 2004). For example, a study involving married individuals found a correlation between a reduced level of agreeableness among men and marital quality and divorce (Kelly and Conley 1987).

Many studies found a significant positive correlation between conscientiousness and marital quality (Kelly and Conley 1987; Karney and Bradbury 1995; Kosek 1996; Botwin et al. 1997; Kwan et al. 1997; Rogers 1999; Robins et al. 2000; Watson et al. 2000; Gray 2003; Hayes and Joseph 2003; Heller et al. 2004; Malouff et al. 2010).

According to one of the most known studies that investigated the effects of the Big Five on marital quality, used NEO FFI and was performed with married German couples under thirty, married individuals had higher levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion and tendency to socialization and lower levels of neuroticism compared with unmarried ones (Neyer and Asendorpf 2001).

Objective

In Turkey there are only limited number of studies on the relationship between personality traits and outcomes of marriage. Studies conducted so far have addressed the relationships between marital quality and such concepts as socio-demographic variables, level of emotional expression, depression (Tutarel-Kislak and Goztepe 2012; Duzgun 2009), age of couples, duration of marriage, family visits (Demiray 2006), emotional intelligence (Uncu 2007), somatization level of couples (Fidanoglu 2007), and empathy (Tutarel-Kislak and Cabukca 2002). However, none of these studies have directly addressed the relationship between personality traits and marital quality. The main aim of the present study, therefore, is to investigate this relationship of married couples. In addition, the contribution of variables such as educational level, duration of marriage and number of children, and personality traits of each partners to predicting marital quality will also be clarified.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sample

The sample group was composed of 488 married couples. In October and February of 2014 some senior psychology students at Cumhuriyet University were chosen as volunteer interviewers to apply the questionnaires in 25 cities of Turkey in which their families lived. Using the snowball technique each student applied nearly 20 questionnaires. Since some participants were illiterate interviewers helped them fill in the questionnaire forms. Some cases were weeded out during the data cleaning process.

Procedure

Interviewers visited participants at their homes and before beginning the interview they informed participants clearly and openly about the content and objectives of the research, later asked them to sign the document of ethical confirmation. Participants filled in the questionnaire on their own in a separate place from where their spouses were. In this way they did not see the answers of their spouses. Each participant (woman or man) filled their own personality traits and marital qualities and gave questionnaire forms

back to the interviewers in a closed envelope. Data was analyzed in SPSS.

Data Collection Tools

The Big Five Inventory

The Big Five Inventory (BFI), developed by Benet-Martinez and John (1998), was used to measure the different personality traits of individuals. With a total of 44 items, the scale is subdivided among neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Each item is evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree). The inventory was adapted to Turkish by Sumer et al. (2005). The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient for five sub-dimensions ranged from .64 to .77. In the present study, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale's five sub-dimensions ranged from .50 to .63 for women and from .51 to .76 for men.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale-DAS

This scale, developed by Spainer (1976), was used to measure marital quality. The scale comprises four sub-dimensions including dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus and the affectionate expressions of married or cohabitant couples. The scale included 32 items and was individually evaluated on 5, 6 and 7-point Likert scales. Most of the items used a 6-point Likert. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient for the scale was .96 and ranged from .73 to .94 for sub-dimensions. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Fisiloglu and Demir (2000), and the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was .92 and ranged from .75 to .83 for sub-dimensions. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha for the scale ranged from .73 to .84.

RESULTS

Descriptive Findings

The mean age of women was 34.61 years ($SD = 10.38$, range = 19-78), and the mean age of men was 38.20 years ($SD = 10.50$, range = 22-84). The mean age of marriage in women was 21.89 years ($SD = 3.58$), and the mean age of marriage in men was 25.53 years ($SD = 3.63$). 98.2 percent of couples had their first marriage, and 1.8 percent had

their second marriage. The mean duration of marriage (in years) was 12.67 years ($SD = 10.80$). Of women in the study, 3.3 percent were illiterate, 28.2 percent were primary school graduates, 13.3 percent were secondary school graduates, 28.2 percent were high school graduates, 25.7 percent were university graduates and 1.2 percent were postgraduates. Of men in the study, 0.4 percent were illiterate, 13.6 percent were primary school graduates, 9.9 percent were secondary school graduates, 32.6 percent were high school graduates, 39.3 percent were university graduates and 4.1 percent were postgraduates. In regard to the number of children, 72 couples (29.6 %) had one child, 106 (43.6%) had two children, 39 (16%) had three children, 12 had (4.9%) four children, 6 (2.5%) had five children, and 9 (3.6 %) had six or more children.

Analysis Results for Gender Differences

MANOVA was performed to identify whether variables were differentiated by gender. Gender had a significant effect on marital quality, agreeableness, and neuroticism [Wilks' $\gamma = .92$; $F(6, 475) = 6.79$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$]. Further analysis showed that women's scores on agreeableness [$F(1, 480) = 7.85$, $p < .01$] and neuroticism [$F(1, 480) = 17.65$, $p < .001$] were higher than those of men, whereas the marital quality of men was higher than that of women [$F(1, 480) = 3.81$, $p < .05$]. Table 1 shows Pearson correlation coefficients and mean and standard deviation values.

A stepwise regression analysis was performed to identify variables that predicted the marital quality of couples. Personality traits of men and women and demographic variables were included together in regression equation. In the ANOVA table for stepwise regression analysis, the regression model was statistically significant. The analysis for women was completed in three steps, and the regression model was statistically significant. In the first step, the duration of marriage accounted for six percent of variance, in the second, the neuroticism of women (5% of variance) and in the third the education of women (2.3% of variance), were included in the equation. In beta values of variables, the duration of marriage ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .001$) and neuroticism of women ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .001$) negatively predicted marital quality of women and education of women positively predicted marital quality of women ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$). Analysis showed that the per-

Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficient, mean and standard deviation values for all variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Women M (SD)	Men M (SD)
1. Marital Quality	-	.02	.06	-.16*	.04	.19***	.11	-.14*	-.07	2.86 (.38)	2.93(.32)
2. Extraversion	.01	-	.24***	-.26***	.30***	.38***	.04	-.10	-.09	3.49 (.68)	3.55 (.69)
3. Agreeableness	.07	.10	-	-.46***	.36***	.22***	.07	-.07	-.12	3.90 (.54)	3.77 (.55)
4. Neuroticism	-.23***	-.07	-.25***	-	-.30***	-.12*	-.03	.09	.09	2.86 (.71)	2.60 (.66)
5. Conscientiousness	.02	.21***	.31***	-.27***	-	.39***	.05	-.14*	-.07	3.99 (.62)	4.00 (.62)
6. Openness	.10	.37***	.15*	-.101	.25***	-	.20***	-.20***	-.09	3.46 (.62)	3.51 (.70)
7. Education	.22***	.24***	.06	.06	.05	.35***	-	-.26***	-.30***		
8. Duration	-.22***	-.12	-.04	.03	.06	-.14*	-.47***	-	.57***		
9. No. of children	-.11	-.06	-.10	.03	-.06	-.16**	-.38***	.57***	-		

Note. Correlations above the diagonal are for males and those below the diagonal are for females

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

sonality traits of men did not predict the marital quality of women.

The analysis for men was completed in two steps, and the regression model was statistically significant. In the equation, firstly, the openness personality trait of men that accounted for five percent of variance, and secondly, the neuroticism of men that accounted for three percent of variance, were included. For the beta values of the variables, the openness of men ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$) positively predicted the marital quality of men, while the neuroticism of men ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .001$) negatively predicted marital quality of men. The results indicated that the personality traits of women did not predict marital quality of men (see Table 2).

DISCUSSION

One of the major findings of this research was that gender had a significant effect on marital quality, agreeableness and neuroticism. Findings at this point are elaborated and discussed below:

The marital quality of men was higher than that of women. This result was consistent with the findings of some previous researches (Bentler and Newcomb 1978; Markman and Hahlweg 1993; Kamp et al. 2008; Stevenson and Wolfers 2009; Jackson et al. 2014; George et al. 2015; Perry 2016; Shafer et al. 2016). One research asserted that this would be explained by the high level neuroticism in women, which made them unable to accommodate themselves well to their partner (Bentler and Newcomb 1978). In other words, high level of neuroticism increased complicated negative emotions that diminished the marital satisfaction and quality over time. In addition, it was found that the idealization of partners was known to increase marital quality (Murray et al. 1996). Neurotic women who significantly experienced negative moods would be less likely to idealize their partner, and therefore, marital quality could be lower. Some of recent studies emphasized gendered expectations (Ng et al. 2009, Xu and Lai 2004; Umberson and Williams 2005; Wilcox and Nock 2006), gender inequality in relationship benefits and power differentials

Table 2: The results from stepwise regression analysis on predicting the marital quality of women and men

		Step	Predictor variables	R	R ²	ΔR^2	ΔF	β	t
Marital Quality	Women	1	Duration of marriage	.24	.06	.06	14.33***	-.24	-3.78***
		2	Duration of marriage	.34	.11	.05	14.05***	-.24	-3.83***
			Neuroticism (Women)					-.23	-3.75***
	Men	3	Duration of marriage	37	12	.02	6.01**	-.16	-2.23**
			Neuroticism (Women)					-.24	-3.96***
			Education level					.17	2.45***
	Men	1	Openness (Men)	.22	.05	.05	12.44***	.23	3.52***
		2	Openness (Men)	28	.08	.03	8.11**	.20	3.19***
			Neuroticism (Men)					-.18	-2.85**

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

between partners (Monin et al. 2008; Monin and Clark 2011). According to these studies, in a marriage, “wives are often expected to support their husbands and do more to maintain the marriage, while husbands do not owe the same responsibility to their wives. In turn, wives’ burden of both the emotional and practical work of the marriage reduces their own marital quality, while promoting that of their husbands” (Allebdorf and Ghimire 2013: 55).

Although all these explanations are fairly accurate in general, the Turkish case seemed to need a wider historical perspective. Within this context the situation of women in the face of marital quality may be explained by the fact that social changes, which might create further equal opportunity for women and allow them greater ability to express their sense of identity, have not yet occurred in the family structure in Turkish society. Turkish women are considered as a member of family who devote themselves to their husbands, children and relatives rather than as a free individual capable of having and leading a separate life. As dependent members of family, contrary to men, it is not possible to expect for women to get satisfaction with their marriages. In short, emotional investments into relationships yield different returns on relationship quality by gender (Monin et al. 2008; Monin and Clark 2011). Therefore, the female personality is considered to have significant influence on overall marital quality.

Differently from these results, however, some studies concluded that the level of marital quality of women was higher than that of men (Sternberg and Hojjat 1997; Karney and Bradbury 1995), while in some others, there were no gender differences at all between men and women (Feeney et al. 1997).

The present research found that *the level of agreeableness of women was higher than that of men*. This finding was explained by the previous researches on the base of efforts, which women made for intimacy, unity and solidarity with others and also by the fact that women were good-tempered, straightforward, self-giving, humble, tactful and supportive (Bono et al. 2002) compared to men. These explanations seem to be true for the Turkish/Muslim case. In addition to their natural characteristics inherited by birth, in the upbringing process, which is mostly conservative and religious, Turkish women are taught to be supportive or in some cases sub-

missive rather than being assertive and dominant in their relationship with men. It may be asserted that Turkish women behave in a consistent way with their given social gender roles.

The level of neuroticism of women was higher than that of men. In many studies carried out across cultures, it has been suggested that men and women are highly different in the neuroticism dimension (Costa et al. 2001; Goodwin and Gotlib 2004; McCrae et al. 2005; Langvik et al. 2016). One study “examined data for 37 countries on gender differences and concluded that there was the consistency of women’s higher means on neuroticism in such a wide range of countries, all at different stages of economic development” (Lynn and Martin 1997: 369). Gender differences were larger, rather than smaller, in industrialized countries where more progressive socio-culture gender role norms would presumably lead to smaller differences (Chapman et al. 2007). This consistency suggested that gender differences were not related to the developmental level of countries, rather they might have a genetic basis. It would not be wrong to say that relatively higher neuroticism of Turkish women stems mostly from their genetic structure and partly forms their learned sociocultural gender role norms.

From the regression analysis it revealed that *openness to experience positively and neuroticism negatively* predicted marital quality in men while *marital duration negatively, neuroticism negatively and education positively* predicted marital quality in women.

Neuroticism negatively predicted marital quality in both men and women. This finding was consistent with almost all of previous researches. In one research individuals with high levels of neuroticism were described as being “prone to having irrational ideas, being less able to control their impulses, and as coping more poorly than others with stress” (Costa and McCrae 1992). Numerous studies reported that expressing more criticism, contempt, and defensiveness (Malouff et al. 2010), they had greater relationship dissatisfaction (Nemechek and Olson 1999; Watson et al. 2000; Watson et al. 2004; Malouff et al. 2010) and might evoke negative behaviors from their partners (Robins et al. 2000), thereby damaging the partner relationship. Many problems in the family and community are due to the neurosis trait (Bakhshayesh and Mortazavi 2009). These individuals tended to divorce at

relatively high rates (Jockin et al. 1996). The neuroticism measured just after the wedding predicted a decline in both sexual and overall marital satisfaction one year later (Fisher and McNulty 2008). Furthermore, “neuroticism is linked to more dysfunctional emotion regulation and interpersonal behavior, which consequently leads to lower relationship satisfaction. Individuals who are high in neuroticism may experience negative emotions during relationship conflicts, and because of their lower self-control, might react with a dysfunctional emotion regulation strategy such as aggressive externalization” (Vater and Schroder 2015: 210).

In previous studies *openness to experience is positively correlated with marital quality* for either partner (Botwin et al. 1997; Donnellan et al. 2004; Kosek 1996). They found that openness to experience was also positively correlated with sexual satisfaction (Botwin et al. 1997) and planned problem-solving (Bouchard 2003). Individuals who were open to experience had a vivid imagination, a liberal attitude and were intellectually curious (McCrae 1991), tended to be more flexible, open to change, and willing to engage in constructive conflict resolution (Robins et al. 2000). Openness was considered to be more willing to thinking from different perspectives or to experience new approaches, and “was associated with lower levels of expressive suppression and higher levels of perspective taking” (Vater and Schröder-Abe 2015: 220). Openness levels thus influenced an individual’s willingness to listen to his or her partner and to understand the issue from the perspective of his or her partner. Openness is not only characterized by intellectual efficiency but also by curiosity. These characteristics may motivate and enable individuals who are high in openness to take their partner’s perspective. As openness also includes expressive tendencies (Connelly et al. 2013), “individuals with high openness may choose to express, rather than suppress their emotions” (Vater and Schröder-Abe 2015: 220).

In short, it was thought that influencing one’s capacity for empathy, effective communication, problem solving and sexual quality, openness to experience would contribute to increase or predict marital quality. This seems to be particularly true for the Turkish case. In their upbringing and socialization process Turkish men are taught to be more independent and free in engaging in social activities. In daily life Turkish men are more

effective and more powerful than women. Because of this they feel more satisfied and pleased than women and this opens ways for them to constitute a firm self-confidence, self-sufficiency and self-image. Having these characteristics, Turkish men gain the opportunity to lead relatively more peaceful and happier life than women. This kind of life makes them more open and more socialized than women.

Duration of marriage in women negatively predicted marital quality. Empirical findings showed that marital quality (or satisfaction) would take one of three paths over time. Some studies asserted that marital quality decreased (Rollins and Cannon 1974) or increased (Gilford 1986) over time. Yet other studies suggested that there was no correlation between marital quality and the duration of marriage (Jones et al. 1995) or that marital quality tended to decrease after the first years of marriage (Paris and Luckey 1966). A group of researchers argued that marital quality increased in the first years of marriage, decreased when raising children and during middle age, and then increased again in the later years, thus the relationship between marital quality and the duration of marriage was a curvilinear one (Anderson et al. 1983; Olson et al. 1983; Sternberg and Hojjat 1997). As a result, it was suggested that the higher level of marital quality reported by those who had no children could not be explained by a shorter duration of marriage. The lower level of marital quality reported by those who had children could partially be a function of marriage being longer and partially a function of the actual presence of children.

In the present research, the mean duration of marriage was 12.68 years and the mean age was 34-38 (women and men, respectively) for couples and all couples had at least one child. Over seventy percent had 2 or more children. This finding confirms the main argument expressed in the views, which asserts that *the presence of children has negative effects on marital quality*. It is also observed that the reason for the decline was the fact that “women became less compatible or bored with her husband over time” (Allebendorf and Ghimire 2013: 69).

Education of women plays a positive role in predicting marital quality. This point was stressed strongly and repeatedly in many previous researches and became a well-known finding, which did not need further elaboration. Presumably one specific point to the Turkish case should

be emphasized. According to traditional Turkish/Islamic culture, men have a priority in receiving education. In a traditional family a boy gets more support from his parents than a girl. This sexist attitude puts the women behind the men in evaluating their marriage in a rational and realistic way. Therefore, educated women would possibly make more quality marriages than those less educated ones. This result is also related to the framework of the Turkish educational system. The curriculum and textbooks are designed according to the ideas and values imported from Western countries through history and this makes it easy for couples to compromise on Western ideals about marriage, individualism and Western style of life. Education for a woman living in such a country like Turkey in which the modernizing process is still an essential social and developmental issue means more freedom, more independence, more sensibility and better conflict management within the family, better communication and less domestic violence.

Apart from all these results, the present study also came to a conclusion that the personality traits of a husband did not predict the marital quality of women, and the personality traits of a wife did not predict the marital quality of men. Although no consistent results were obtained from the studies that investigated the relationship between the personality traits of one's romantic partner and one's own marital quality and functioning (Botwin et al. 1997; Robins et al. 2000; Watson et al. 2000; Barelds 2005; Donnellan et al. 2007), the influence of one's own traits on marital quality was generally much higher than that of his or her partner's traits.

CONCLUSION

In this research it became clear that gender differences had a significant effect on marital quality, agreeableness and neuroticism. Openness to experience positively and neuroticism negatively predicted marital quality in men while marital duration negatively, neuroticism negatively and education positively predicted marital quality in women. All these relationships were explained on the base of sociocultural gender role norms, genetic basis and also some cultural differences specific to the Turkish/Muslim society, such as men's priority in getting education and the women's upbringing process, which is mostly conservative and religious.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since neuroticism is a form of response to any stimulus, one must consider the idea that neurotic individuals are more likely to report negative items in measurements. Thus, the analysis of observational measurements of marital functioning and negative reactions observed in self-reported measurements should be compared and then analyzed.

LIMITATIONS

This study supports the idea that there is a relationship between the five-factor personality traits and marital quality. However, its ability to answer questions regarding the causal relationship is limited.

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