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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN DETERMINANTS OF FAMILY LIFE, MARITAL QUALITY AND MARITAL HAPPINESS

Zeynep ÇOPUR

Prof. Dr., Hacettepe University, Turkey, copur@hacettepe.edu.tr
ORCID: 0000-0002-1456-0522

Betül GÜREL

Dr., Hacettepe University, Turkey, byil@hacettepe.edu.tr
ORCID: 0000-0003-0590-9240

ABSTRACT

Marital satisfaction and happiness refer to subjective evaluations of positive effect in the marital relationship by one or both spouses. For most married people in modern societies, the quality of their marriages strongly affects their happiness. Nevertheless, societal norms suggest that the quality of marriage significantly impacts women's happiness than that of men. Spouses' different characteristics, traditional family behaviors, decision making, division of household labor, equality in family relations, and so on are parameters related to women's and men's views of marital quality and marital happiness. This study investigates the general attitudes of married individuals by gender toward family life includes non-marital sex, traditional family behaviors, and importance of autonomy and equality and marital quality includes marital disagreement, marital unfairness, decision making, chance of dissolution to measure the effect of these parameters on marital happiness. Participants comprised married employees in Ankara, Turkey. Sample size was determined by random sampling method ($n = 305$). 59.7% of the sample were men; 40.3% were women. The average age of the men was 40.3 ($SD = 8.05$) and that of women was 37.2 ($SD = 7.39$). Questionnaires assessed participants' attitudes toward family life, marital quality, and marital happiness using scales drawn from previous studies related to family life, marital quality and marital happiness. According to the results, women reported more marital disagreement, a more unilateral view of decision-making, and higher risk of dissolution than men. The highest levels of marital happiness were experienced with briefer length of marriage, beginning and contracting life stages, more progressive attitudes about non-marital sex, less disagreement and more fairness, and low chance of dissolution.

Keywords: Gender roles, family life, marital quality, marital happiness.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of marriage in constituting family—the basic social unit—is gradually increasing globally, and Turkey is no exception. Almost everywhere, marriage is considered to be the basic social institution and possesses great importance in establishing new lives and families (Çağ & Yıldırım, 2013; Hayward & Zhang, 2006). For many people, marriage begins as a source of satisfaction and fulfillment but ends as a source of frustration and despair (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Marriage affects several aspects of human life and brings happiness, hardships, joys, complexities, and benefits to individuals. Marriage is one of the main life objectives expected of most individuals—a social institution that improves individuals' general health conditions and supports them in achieving life satisfaction (Çağ & Yıldırım, 2013; Hayward & Zhang, 2006).

In most societies, family is the main institution in which new generations are raised and socialized. In many societies, in fact, marriage is the only culturally and legally accepted way to establish a family (Rostami et al., 2014). Berscheid and Regan (2005) define marriage as an institution that requires economic, social, and reproductive cooperation. Furthermore, Becker (1973) considers similarities between establishment of marriages and market economies; he states that individuals have conflicts and struggles to select the best spouse in the marriage market. In contrast, Ponzetti and Mutch's (2006) definition of marriage is more limited because they approach marriage as a social institution and define it as an environment where members have close relationships. The United Nations (2001) explains marriage as the legal union of a man and a woman.

Only recently has the term “marital quality” been used to refer to concepts and measures that have been previously called marital adjustment, satisfaction, or happiness (Spanier & Lewis, 1980). Marital satisfaction and happiness refer to subjective evaluations of positive effect in the marital relationship by one or both spouses (Spanier, 1976; Johnson, 1995). For most married people in modern societies, the quality of their marriages strongly affects their happiness. Nevertheless, societal norms suggest that the quality of marriage significantly impacts women's happiness than that of men. However, it is not self-evident that marital quality is the major determinant of women's happiness. In fact, other aspects of women's lives may be even stronger determinants (Glenn & Weaver, 1981; McRae & Brody, 1989).

In sum, gender represents a further predictor of particular importance for marital satisfaction, happiness, and quality. This study, therefore, investigates the general attitudes of married individuals by gender toward family life, marital quality, and marital happiness and evaluates the effect of family life and marital quality on marital happiness. We expect that men and women will differently respond to attitudes about family life, marital quality, and marital happiness. Furthermore, we expect to find a relationship among, family life, marital quality, and marital happiness when controlling for socioeconomic variables.

LITERATURE REVIEW**Gender Perspectives**

Societies treat women and men differently and impose on them different behaviors, roles, and responsibilities. Several studies have been conducted on reasons for and consequences of these differences. Indeed, the issue remains an active area of research. Ann Oakley, who included the term *gender* in sociological literature, states that the term *sex* relates to differences between a man and a woman, whereas *gender* addresses social inequality between manhood and womanhood (Marshall, 1998). Stoller (1984) suggests that gender has psychological and cultural rather than biological connotations. Gender identity begins with knowledge and awareness, whether conscious or unconscious, that one belongs to one sex and not the other. Similarly, Rice (1996) observes a relationship between gender and gender identity and explains it as the personal and inner meaning of womanhood or manhood; in other words, the subjective sensation of being a woman or a man as demonstrated in personality and behavior. Sullivan (2003) states that gender determines how individuals see themselves and how they behave against a backdrop of other individuals and that gender is generally the basis of social differentiation. In contrast, Lips (2001) emphasizes that the concepts of sex and gender are nested because what culture is expected from women and men is based on the observations of their physical bodies. In other words, cultural structuring of gender covers biological sex. Similarly, Acker (1992) argues that gender and biological sex are interdependent but different concepts. Cherry (2005) also defines gender as the social and cultural role expectations from women and men.

Particularly in societies that consider women and men at opposite poles and shape individuals according to their sex, gender roles become even more important (Brooks & Bozendahl, 2004). Gender role is overt behavior that one displays in society, the role one plays, particularly with other people, to establish a position insofar as one's own and others' evaluation of gender is concerned (Stoller, 1984). Gender difference is a social category, and people's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are affected by sociocultural factors related to categorical classifications of women and men (Deaux & Bieri, 1967). Hence, gender-based role differences mean what is taught to males and females during their socialization period and the differences between emotions, attitudes, behaviors, and roles considered "appropriate" for their sexes by the culture (Dökmen, 2004). In contrast, in the literature, gender perspectives rely on gender socialization, gender ideology, and sex role attitudes to explain why husbands and wives perform different amounts and types of household tasks and, in turn, perceive this division differently in terms of equity (Bird, 1999; Young, Wallace & Polachek, 2013). According to Bhasin (2003), within the framework of the gender concept, if the woman is exposed to violence by the man, she should hide the situation, take care of the child, and manage household chores. In contrast, within married life, the woman is burdened with such roles as not having sexual intercourse before marriage and upgrading her status by giving birth to a male child. Overall, males in dual-earner households report higher perceived marital happiness than females in dual-earner households (Stanley, Hunt, & Hunt, 1986). Also, for men, marital quality is strengthened when their wives assure them that they (the wives) feel happy in their

marriages (Rutgers et al., 2014). Studies support gender differences in the genetic and environmental influences on different aspects of marital quality (see, Beam et al., 2018). Finally, according to McRae and Brody (1989), being in a happy marriage is more important to women than to men.

Family Life

Dramatic changes in past gender roles and family structure provide an important reason for questioning the assumption of gender differences in the effects of marital status and marital quality on marital happiness (Williams, 2003). Becker (1991) suggests that traditional roles support marriage. He believes that spouses who trade services by implementing traditional gender roles benefit most from marriage. In contrast, spouses less oriented toward traditional gender roles benefit less from marriage. Therefore, traditional marriage roles bring significantly greater marriage quality and happiness.

The more egalitarian in marital sex-role orientation the husband is relative to his wife, the higher both spouses' marital happiness; the less egalitarian he is relative to his wife, the lower the marital happiness. The opposite is found for women: wives with egalitarian values report lower happiness than traditional wives (Amato & Booth, 1995; Lye & Biblarz, 1993; Peplau, 1983).

Numerous studies indicate that an equitable division of housework is positively associated with marital happiness and satisfaction (Kubricht et al., 2017; Kulik, 2002; Pina & Bengston, 1993; Sutor, 1991) and negatively associated with marital conflict (Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1997; Stohs, 2000). For example, studies found that perceived equity in the household division of labor is more important for marital satisfaction and conflict than the proportion of housework completed by each spouse (Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994; Wilkie, Ferree, & Ratcliff, 1998). Earlier studies indicated a significant relationship between participation of men in household labor and their marital happiness. Thus, marital happiness of women was higher when their husband performed more household tasks (McGovern & Meyers, 2002; Nourani et al., 2019). Moreover, Frisco and Williams (2003) found that housework equity is associated with marital happiness for both men and women; however, the meaning and definition of housework equity may substantially differ by gender. They further indicate that perceived inequity in the division of household labor is negatively associated with both husbands' and wives' reported marital happiness but is positively associated with the odds of divorce among wives only. Scott (2006) indicates that changes in the behavior of men are slower than that in women, while gender equality is observed at a significant level in role distribution between women and men. Based on the data generated through the Gender Equality Scale in their book, Inglehart and Norris (2003) explain the rise of gender equality in the modern world and the transfer from traditional roles to roles based on equality. They suggest that this transformation changes lifestyles of individuals and their perceptions of cultural values.

Marital Quality

Marital quality is a very important aspect in a marriage as it affects the couple in different dimensions (Yee, Yun, & Zhi, 2018). Marital quality is strongly associated with the risk of divorce (e.g., Amato & Booth, 2001;

Carr, et al., 2014; Previti & Amato, 2004; White & Booth, 1991), and some speculate that dissatisfaction with household labor arrangements may diminish marital happiness and increase a couple's odds of divorce (Frisco & Williams, 2003). Possibly, the wife's happiness depends on marriage quality, and thus she will be highly motivated to divorce if the marriage becomes unsatisfactory, but the husband is not sufficiently dependent on the quality of marriage to be highly motivated to try to keep it satisfactory (Glenn & Weaver, 1981).

Division of labor affects marital happiness mainly through perceptions of fairness, which differ for women and men (Perr-Jenkins & Folk, 1994; Thompson & Walker, 1989). For example, although most women do more household tasks than their husbands, only a minority of women views the division of labor as unfair. When wives perceive inequality, however, their perceptions of unfairness significantly affects marital quality than husbands' reports of unfairness (Thompson & Walker, 1989). Husbands' lack of participation in housework and wives' dissatisfaction with the division of housework greatly contribute to tension and conflict in marriage (Kluwer et al., 1996; Stohs, 2000), and a direct relationship appears between an equitable division of household labor and increased marital quality (Kluwer et al., 1996, 1997; Pina & Bengston, 1993; Stohs, 2000; Suitor, 1991; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999; Yogeve & Brett, 1985). Despite differences in the amount of housework that husbands and wives perform, their perceptions of the arrangement's fairness are more strongly linked to marital quality than the actual hours of housework completed (Frisco & Williams, 2003).

Earlier researchers proposed that unfair perceptions of the division of household labor not only decrease women's marital quality but also lead to role strain that makes them more likely to end unhappy marriages. This unequal division of housework decreases marital quality (e.g., Pina & Bengston, 1993; Stohs, 2000; Suitor, 1991; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999; Yogeve & Brett, 1985) and may eventually lead to marital dissolution (Greenstein, 1990; Spitze & South, 1985).

Recent research shows that problematic marriages take an emotional toll, whereas high-quality marriages provide benefits, particularly for women (Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007). Gottman, Coan, Carrere, and Swanson (1998) indicate that the amount of positive affect in the conflict predicts marital happiness among stable couples. They found that newlywed men who accept influence on their views wind up in happy and stable marriages.

Previous studies also indicate that equal sharing in decision-making appears to be most beneficial for relationships overall (see Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). However, decision making in contemporary marriages has been divided along traditional gender lines, with wives making decisions concerning day-to-day details of family life and husbands making major decisions, such as those concerning career choices and resource allocation (Steil & Weltman, 1991). Bartley, Blanton, and Gilliard (2005) indicate that decision making, low-control household labor, and high-control household labor significantly differ between husbands and wives. Perceptions of marital equity are influenced by decision-making and by the time spent in low-control tasks for both husbands and wives. Similarly, Fox and Murry (2000) conclude that although couples view their marriages

as equal and their family roles as egalitarian, husbands are more likely to maintain an upper hand in decision-making processes, congruent with gender inequality.

However, in societies such as Turkey that embrace the contemporary way of life on one hand and the traditional on the other, non-traditional implementation and transference of gender roles are observed to be sources of conflict between spouses. In fact, marriage is a considerably gendered and traditional institution, with gender differences verified in the division of labor, parental responsibilities, and spouse's sexual intimacy. These gendered elements of marriage emphasize that the relative importance of each spouse's characteristics may be different (Heaton & Blake, 1999). Family quality and happiness/unhappiness are experiences that potentially contribute to changes in the composition of gender differences (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988). Earlier studies concluded that men have higher marital happiness than women (Çabuk, Özgür Güler, & Örk Özel, 2017).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Marriage is an important part of achieving happiness in life. It is an important source of satisfaction and fulfillment for individuals. The amount of satisfaction that married couples derive from marriage varies according to the amount of time they spend together, and how much they participate in each other's lives. Published studies have shown that couples who spend quality time together in significant amounts derive more satisfaction from their marriages (Sprecher et al., 1995). One of the main questions that many scientific research works have discussed is "Why do some marriages successfully last for a long time, while others end after a short time?" (Machaty, 2013). The indicators of marital happiness, such as lack of conflict, good communication and sharing of activities, may relate in different ways to feelings of couples in different marriages, or even in the same marriage. The feelings of the female and the male may be different. The preceding discussion has pointed out that marital happiness is related to family life and marital quality. This study will explore this relationship further, allowing for the relationship of family life and marital quality on marital happiness to vary with socioeconomic characteristics. More specifically, we are interested in three categories of family life; non-marital sex, traditional family behaviors, and importance of autonomy and equality and four categories of marital quality; marital disagreement, marital unfairness, decision-making, chance of dissolution. Thus, we approached this exploratory study with several guiding research objectives: (a) to examine levels of family life, marital quality and marital happiness among married individuals by gender; (b) to determine whether marital happiness are associated with family life and marital quality when controlling for socioeconomic characteristics.

Hypotheses

Based on the previous research, the following hypotheses are suggested:

1. Married individuals' family life includes non-marital sex, traditional family behaviors, and importance of autonomy and equality scores differ by gender.

2. Married individuals' marital quality includes marital disagreement, marital unfairness, decision-making and chance of dissolution scores differ by their gender.
3. Married individuals' marital happiness scores differ by their gender.
4. There is a statistically significant relationship between family life includes non-marital sex, traditional family behaviors, and importance of autonomy and equality and marital happiness when controlling for socio-economic characteristics.
5. There is a statistically significant relationship between marital quality includes marital disagreement, marital unfairness, decision-making, chance of dissolution and marital happiness when controlling for socio-economic characteristics.

METHOD

In recent years, divorces and separations have become more usual in the world. Again, Turkey is no exception. One reason for increasing numbers of divorces can be stated as deterioration in marital quality and happiness. Spouses' different characteristics, traditional family behaviors, decision making, division of household labor, equality in family relations, and so on are parameters related to women's and men's views of marital quality and marital happiness (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988). Therefore, this study investigates the general attitudes of married individuals by gender toward family life includes non-marital sex, traditional family behaviors, and importance of autonomy and equality and marital quality includes marital disagreement, marital unfairness, decision making, chance of dissolution and evaluates the effect of these parameters on marital happiness.

Participants

As part of the project work for the region, participants in this study comprised married employees living in Alacaatlı neighborhood (Ankara, Turkey). Data were collected in 2012, and according to the Turkish 2012 official population census, the total population of Alacaatlı neighborhood is 12,584 (6505 women and 6079 men) of whom 5336 are married. In our study, the total number of participants was determined using random sampling method by utilizing household evaluation form of Alacaatlı Mukhtars, and 305 participants completed the survey, with a response rate of 17.5%. Random number tables were used to select the participants. Sample reflects different levels of socioeconomic groups and represents the different level of employee and can provide a glimpse of ongoing social and economic changes in Turkey.

Participants were contacted in person, and surveys were administered individually. For survey interviews, participants were visited at home. Upon arrival at their homes and following the researcher's self-introduction, the researcher explained the study objectives and that participation was entirely voluntary also that the results will be used for scholarly research only, not for any commercial purpose. After obtaining their consent, the survey packets, which participants read and completed on their own, were distributed, and then researchers collected all surveys once they were completed. All the contacted individuals participated.

59.7% of the sample was men; 40.3% were women. The average age of the men was 40.3 (SD = 8.05) and that of women was 37.2 (SD = 7.39). 74.8% of the women had college or higher degrees, and 59.9% had high school or lower degrees. With respect to interviewees' spouses, 71.4% of the men held high school or lower degrees, and 69.1% of the women held college or higher degrees. Participants' monthly income was obtained via an open-ended item, and the mean monthly income was determined at 3079.6 TL for men and 3926.6 TL for women.

Table 1. Characteristics of Turkish Women and Men Participants in Family Life, Marital Quality and Marital Happiness in 2012

Independent Variables	Mean(SD)/Proportion		Significance test
	Men (n=182)	Women (n=123)	
Age (M/SD)	40.3 (8.05)	37.2 (7.39)	$t=3.466***$
Education level (%)			$\chi^2=35.563***$
High school or less	59.9	25.2	
College or more	40.1	74.8	
Spouse' Education level (%)			$\chi^2=48.741***$
High school or less	71.4	30.9	
College or more	28.6	69.1	
Income TL (M/SD)	3079.6 (1857.16)	3926.6 (1777.01)	$t=-4.009***$
Marital Duration (M/SD)	14.7(8.76)	12.5 (8.28)	$t=2.217*$
Number of Children (M/SD)	1.6 (1.05)	1.2 (.86)	$t=3.640***$
Family-Life Stage (%)			
Beginning	18.1	24.4	$\chi^2=16.111***$
Expanding	66.5	74.0	
Contracting	15.4	1.6	
<i>Family Life Variables</i>			
Non-marital Sex	3.98(1.16)	3.80(1.13)	$t=1.369$
A woman having a child without getting married	5.95(1.84)	5.52(1.86)	$t=1.969*$
Unmarried couple to live together	3.96(1.36)	3.51(1.34)	$t=2.846**$
Unmarried 18-year-olds to have sexual relations	4.09(1.33)	4.20(1.17)	$t=-.797$
Unmarried couple to live together as long as they have plans to marry	3.90(1.28)	3.68(1.33)	$t=1.439$
Traditional Family Behaviors	2.48(1.08)	2.90(1.00)	$t=-3.480***$
Better to marry	2.56(1.44)	2.77(1.29)	$t=-1.344$
Better if husband earns living and wife cares for family	2.68(1.40)	3.62(1.27)	$t=-5.975***$
Better to have a child	2.19(1.42)	2.30(1.34)	$t=-.676$
Importance of Autonomy and Equality	2.71(.88)	2.01(.80)	$t=7.184***$
Should share tasks equally	2.19(1.14)	1.52(.74)	$t=5.757***$
Partners must have freedom	3.24(1.29)	2.57(1.24)	$t=4.540***$
Parents encourage independence in daughters and sons	2.71(1.35)	1.95(1.11)	$t=5.189***$
<i>Marital Quality Variables</i>			
Marital Disagreement	3.22(.57)	3.10(.57)	$t=1.696$
Household tasks	3.08(.76)	2.89(.76)	$t=2.123*$
Money	3.19(.92)	2.93(.93)	$t=2.461*$
Spending time together	3.09(.76)	3.02(.87)	$t=.656$
Sex	3.47(.71)	3.30(.78)	$t=1.895$
Having a(nother) child	3.39(.89)	3.41(.96)	$t=-.151$
In-laws	3.09(.85)	3.08(.81)	$t=.069$
Marital Unfairness	1.81(.83)	2.11(1.09)	$t=-2.702**$
Household chores	1.87(1.10)	2.32(1.43)	$t=-3.061**$

Spending money	1.54(.94)	1.77(1.24)	$t=-1.829$
Working for pay	1.95(1.34)	2.19(1.47)	$t=-1.450$
Child care	1.87(1.17)	2.15(1.55)	$t=-1.839$
The Relative Decision-Making Scale (RDMS)	2.51(.96)	3.02(.79)	$t=-4.874***$
Chances of Dissolution	1.44(.93)	1.63(1.07)	$t=-1.706$
<i>Dependent Variable</i>			
Marital Happiness	5.14(1.66)	4.84(1.68)	$t=1.540$

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

Procedure

This study used a written questionnaire to assess married employees' attitudes about family life, marital quality, and marital happiness. The questionnaire concluded with sociodemographic questions, including age, gender, income, duration of marriage, level of education, number of children, as well as family-life stage. Questionnaires assessed participants' attitudes toward family life, marital quality, and marital happiness using scales drawn from previous studies related to family life, marital quality and marital happiness. The scales were originally developed in English and translated into Turkish (with back translation to check for consistency and accuracy). The researchers instructed three people who are proficient in English and Turkish to translate the scale from English to Turkish; another three people translated the scale from Turkish to English. After the translations were made equivalent, reliability and validity tests of the scales have also been carried out for Turkish sample in this study using Cronbach's alpha coefficients and exploratory factor analysis.

Data analysis began by calculating sample frequencies by gender on all independent variables. Independent sample t -tests were then used to compare by gender mean values on non-marital sex, traditional family behaviors, importance of autonomy and equality, marital disagreement, marital unfairness, relative decision making, chance of dissolution, and marital happiness. Finally, ordinary least square regression analysis (OLS) was computed to determine the interrelationships between marital happiness and family life and marital quality when controlling for socioeconomic characteristics. Due to ordinary least squares (OLS) regression estimates the relationship between one or more independent variables and a dependent variable; the method estimates the relationship by minimizing the sum of the squares in the difference between the observed and predicted values of the dependent variable configured as a straight line. One result of minimizing the error between responses is that OLS provides the researcher with a more accurate view of the relationship between the independent variables (IVs) and dependent variable (DV) (Dismuke & Lindrooth, 2006). For the regressions, some dummy variables had to be created. Gender was already coded as a dummy variable with female = 1 and male = 0 with female as the reference category. Age, number of children, marital duration, and income were continuously measured in years, number, and Turkish lira, respectively. Educational level was recoded six items (illiterate, literate, primary school, high school, college, master's degree or higher) into two categories as high school graduates or less = 1 and college graduates or more = 0. Family-life stage was recoded as a dummy variable with beginning stage = 1 and other = 0, contracting stage = 1 and other = 0 with expanding stage as the reference category. Before conducting regression analysis, data were checked for assumptions of regression analysis (multicollinearity and autocorrelation) and found fit for the procedure. The Statistical Package for the Social Scientists, SPSS 15.0, was used to analyze the data.

Measurement of Variables

Considering previous studies, this study considered the following variables: marital happiness, non-marital sex, traditional family behaviors, importance of autonomy and equality, marital disagreement, marital unfairness, decision making, and chance of dissolution.

Dependent Variable

Marital Happiness: Marital happiness was measured by the *Taking all things together, how would you describe your marriage?* question, with a seven-point response ranging from “very unhappy” to “very happy” developed by Heaton and Blake (1999).

Independent Variables

We used three scales to assess family life. The first includes non-marital sex, the second includes traditional family behaviors, and the third includes importance of autonomy and equality.

Non-marital Sex: We used the Turkish version of the Non-Marital Sex Scale developed by Heaton and Blake (1999) to assess attitudes about non-marital cohabitation. The scale includes four items, and respondents were asked if they approve of “a woman having a child without getting married” (measured on a seven-point scale ranging from “strongly approve = 1” to “strongly disapprove = 7”). “Is it all right for an unmarried couple to live together even if they have no interest in considering marriage?,” “Is it all right for unmarried 18-year-olds to have sexual relations if they have strong affection for each other?,” “Is it all right for an unmarried couple to live together as long as they have plans to marry?” Each of the latter items was measured on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly agree = 1” to “strongly disagree = 5”). Higher scores on the Non-Marital Sex Scale represent less progressive attitudes. Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency reliability was .85 for this scale. The factor loading of each item ranged between 0.77 and 0.88. All 4 items had positive loading on the factor. Almost 71% of the total variance was explained by the one factor extracted. This result suggests that the inner consistency of the inventory is high.

Traditional Family Behaviors included three items that deal specifically with the social importance of having children or acceptance of childlessness and traditional gender roles developed by Heaton and Blake (1999). Items include the following statements: “It is better for a person to get married than to go through life being single,” “It is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living, and the woman takes care of the home and family,” and “It is better for a person to have a child than to go through life childless.” Response categories ranged from “strongly agree = 1” to “strongly disagree = 5.” Higher scores represent more progressive attitudes. Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency reliability was .64 for this scale. The factor loading of each item ranged between 0.72 and 0.79. All 3 items had positive loading on the factor. Almost 58% of the total variance was explained by the one factor extracted. This result suggests that the inner consistency of the inventory is high.

Importance of Autonomy and Equality was measured with three items developed by Heaton and Blake (1999). This scale includes attitudes about sharing tasks and equality in family life. Items were “If a husband and wife both work full time, they should share household tasks equally,” “In a successful marriage, partners must have freedom to do what they want individually,” and “Parents should encourage just as much independence in their daughters as in their sons,” each measured on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly agree = 1” to “strongly disagree = 5.” Lower scores reflect greater autonomy and equality. Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency reliability was .60 for this scale. The factor loading of each item ranged between 0.68 and 0.79. All 3 items had positive loading on the factor. Almost 56% of the total variance was explained by the one factor extracted. This result suggests that the inner consistency of the inventory is high.

Four variables measuring marital quality were included. First, we used marital disagreement; second, we used marital unfairness; third, we used decision making; and fourth, we used chance of dissolution.

Marital Disagreement: We used a six-item scale based on reported frequency of disagreement about household tasks, money, spending time together, sex, having a(nother) child, and in-laws developed by Heaton and Blake (1999). Categories for this scale ranged from “almost every day” (1) to “never” (4). Higher scores indicate less marital disagreement. Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency reliability was .77 for this scale. The factor loading of each item ranged between 0.61 and 0.78. All 6 items had positive loading on the factor. Almost 47% of the total variance was explained by the one factor extracted.

Marital Unfairness was measured using a four-item scale assessing the fairness of household chores, spending money, working for pay, and childcare developed by Heaton and Blake (1999). Responses included “fair to both (1),” “somewhat unfair to partner (2),” “somewhat unfair to me (3),” “very unfair to partner (4),” and “very unfair to me (5).” Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency reliability was .74 for this scale. The factor loading of each item ranged between 0.74 and 0.77. All 4 items had positive loading on the factor. Almost 57% of the total variance was explained by the one factor extracted. This result suggests that the inner consistency of the inventory is high.

The Relative Decision-Making Scale (RDMS): Decision making was determined using a seven-item Likert-type scale developed by Bartley, Blanton, and Gilliard (2005) to determine the extent to which individuals perceived their relative influence in the decision-making process within their families. The items include the following statements: “If I know my spouse and I are going to disagree about a decision, I just go ahead and make the decision and explain it later,” “My opinion carries more weight in the decisions we make because of my importance in providing for my family’s economic well-being,” “If my spouse and I cannot find a way to settle a dispute, I decide,” “My spouse would say that I have more authority over our household than he/she does,” “My spouse would say that I have more authority over how we spend our money than he/she does,” “My children would say that I am the final authority in our family.” Responses included “strongly agree” (1) to “strongly disagree” (4). The Turkish adaptation study of the RDMS was conducted by Copur (2015) and Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency reliability was found to be .92. Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency

reliability was .91 for this study. The factor loading of each item ranged between 0.77 and 0.86. All 6 items had positive loading on the factor. Almost 68% of the total variance was explained by the one factor extracted. This result suggests that the inner consistency of the inventory is high.

Chance of Dissolution was measured by “What do you think the chances are that you and your husband/wife will eventually separate or divorce?” with a five-point response ranging from “very low” to “very high,” used by Heaton and Blake (1999).

Socioeconomic variables: This study involved information about the participants’ personal characteristics such as age, gender, participants’ level of education, spouse’s level of education, marital duration, number of children, family-life stage, and household’s monthly income. These characteristics were selected according to research literature and their potential effects on the results. Descriptive statistics on dependent variables were clustered according to personal characteristics.

FINDINGS (RESULTS)

Comparison by Gender of Marital Quality and Happiness

Results of statistical analyses comparing attitudes about family life, marital quality, and happiness are summarized in Table 1. Averages for specific items are listed for men and women, along with averages for combined indices. As Table 1 shows, men’s score ($M = 3.98$) was slightly higher in opposition to *non-marital* sex than women’s score ($M = 3.80$). This result indicates that women were more accepting of non-marital cohabitation than men. An exception was the statement of “*unmarried 18-year-olds to have sexual relations if they have strong affection for each other.*” Women reported more progressive attitudes than men in all items and the overall index, although a *t*-test indicated no significant gender difference in the overall index. Significant differences between men and women were observed for two items: “*a woman having a child without getting married*” and “*unmarried couple to live together even if they have no interest in considering marriage.*”

With regard to *traditional family behaviors*, women ($M = 2.90$) reported more progressive (less traditional) attitudes than men ($M = 2.48$) in the overall index and in all component items; significant differences existed between women and men in the overall index. Significant gender differences were seen for the item: “*It is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living, and the woman takes care of the home and family.*” With regard to *importance of autonomy and equality*, women ($M = 2.01$) reported significantly much greater autonomy and equality than men ($M = 2.71$) in the overall index and all items. This result indicates that women more strongly supported freedom and equality in family life. Evidence was found to partially supported hypothesis 1.

With regard to *marital disagreement*, women reported greater frequency of disagreement about combined indices, household tasks, money, spending time together, and sex; men reported greater frequency of

disagreement about having a(nother) child. The fact that women and men reported almost the same frequency of disagreement about in-laws was an interesting result. There were significant differences between women and men in household tasks and money. In all, these results indicate that men perceive less marital disagreement than women.

With regard to *marital unfairness*, women ($M = 2.11$) reported more unfairness than men ($M = 1.81$) in household chores, spending money, working for pay, and childcare. There were significant differences between women and men in the overall index and household chores.

With regard to *relative decision making*, statistically significant differences were found between women ($M = 3.02$) and men ($M = 2.51$) in the combined indices. These results indicate a more unilateral view of women's influence in decision-making. With regard to *chance of dissolution*, women ($M = 1.63$) reported higher dissolution than men ($M = 1.44$), although a *t*-test indicated no significant gender differences. Men ($M = 5.14$) were happier than women ($M = 4.84$) in their married lives. These results indicate that men believe that they have higher quality in their marriages than women. Evidence was found to partially supported hypothesis 2.

However, marital happiness was not significantly different for men and women. This result did not support our third hypothesis.

Predictors of Marital Happiness

In this section, the results of the regression analysis conducted on the data concerning the variables taken as predictors of marital happiness are explained. In all the models established, *R* is observed as differing significantly from zero. However, analysis of Table 2 reveals that *F* values are also different and meaningful. *F* values being meaningful indicate that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is linear and thus meets the premises of regression analysis (Büyüköztürk, 2002).

Table 2 summarizes the results of OLS regressions' prediction of marital happiness. As in Table 2, spouse's educational level negatively related to marital happiness, but beginning life and contracting life stages positively related to marital happiness. This indicates that participants whose spouses have high school or lower educational levels were less happy than participants whose spouses have college or higher educational levels. Families at beginning and contracting life stages were happier than families at the expanding life stage (Step 1). This result might be related to the increase of responsibility in having children. As Table 2 shows, marital duration and non-marital sex contribute to marital happiness. Participants with greater marital duration reported significantly lower levels of marital happiness, and participants reporting less progressive attitudes about non-marital sex were more likely to be happy in their marriages than those reporting more progressive attitudes about non-marital sex. Marital disagreement was related to marital happiness. As expected, participants reporting lower frequency of marital disagreement were happier than those reporting greater frequency of marital disagreement (Step 5). Greater feelings of unfairness negatively related to marital happiness (Step 6). Chance of dissolution plays a role in marital happiness: the higher risk of divorce or separation, the less marital happiness. In this study, "marital duration," "beginning life stage," "contracting life stage," "non-marital sex," "marital disagreement," "marital unfairness," and "chance of dissolution" variables together explain almost 45% of the variance in marital happiness. In contrast, gender, age, participants'

education level, income, number of children, traditional family behaviors, importance of autonomy and equality, and relative decision making variables did not significantly predict marital happiness (Step 8). The highest levels of marital happiness were experienced with shorter lengths of marriage, beginning and contracting life stages, less progressive attitudes about non-marital sex, less disagreement and more fairness, and low chance of dissolution. Evidence was found to partially supported hypothesis 4 and 5.

Table 2. OLS Regression Result for Marital Happiness among Turkish Men and Women in 2012

Independent Variables	Marital Happiness							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gender	-.359(.216)	-.396(.210)	-.410(.212)	-	-	-	-.118(.195)	-.091(.962)
Age	.011(.022)	.009(.022)	.008(.022)	.007(.022)	.018(.019)	.004(.019)	.004(.019)	-.002(.018)
Education level	.099(.239)	.038(.233)	.044(.234)	.046(.234)	-.006(.205)	.033(.199)	-.047(.202)	-.078(.193)
Spouse's education level	-.489(.245)*	-	-.547(.240)*	-	-	-	-	-.223(.200)
		.555(.239)*		.568(.242)*	.457(.212)*	.345(.207)	-.348(.207)	
Income	-1.30(.000)	2.50(.000)	2.70(.000)	2.27(.000)	6.69(.000)	7.52(.000)	7.69(.000)	7.91(.000)
Marital duration	-.043(.022)	-	-.047(.022)*	-	-	-	-	-
		.047(.022)*		.047(.022)*	.057(.019)**	.042(.019)*	.043(.019)*	.038(.018)*
Number of children	.218(.148)	.181(.144)	.186(.145)	.194(.145)	.193(.127)	.145(.124)	.143(.124)	.162(.119)
Beginning life stage	1.026(.317)**	1.061(.309)***	1.060(.310)***	1.076(.311)***	.773(.274)**	.667(.267)*	.663(.267)*	.682(.256)**
Contracting life stage	.883(.358)*	1.025(.351)**	1.031(.351)**	1.086(.358)**	1.008(.314)***	.875(.306)**	.883(.307)**	.770(.295)
Non-marital sex		.340(.083)**	.343(.083)**	.330(.085)***	.181(.076)*	.202(.074)**	.204(.074)**	.184(.071)**
Traditional family behaviors			.044(.087)	.052(.088)	-.033(.077)	.022(.075)	-.014(.077)	-.008(.074)
Importance of autonomy and equality				.088(.112)	.001(.099)	.057(.097)	.053(.097)	-.008(.094)
Marital disagreement					1.379(.145)***	1.112(.153)***	1.117(.154)***	.798(.160)***
Marital unfairness						.403(.091)***	.399(.092)***	.327(.089)***
Relative decision-making							-.039(.093)	-.084(.089)
Chance of dissolution								.450(.088)***
Constant	4.948(.754)**	3.771(.789)***	3.661(.819)***	3.484(.850)***	-.302(.845)5)	1.396(.905)	1.469(.922)	3.427(.962)***
F	4.226***	5.693***	5.186***	4.799***	12.694***	13.932***	12.978***	14.893***
R ²	.115	.163	.163	.165	.363	.403	.403	.454

Note: Unstandardized coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight numerous factors related to gender differences in family life and marital quality. Contrary to our expectation, gender did not significantly predict marital happiness. This result is consistent with the previous studies (see, Carr, et al., 2014). Results from means comparison showed that greater acceptance of non-marital cohabitation was observed in women than in men. For example, in this study, women take a bright view of *“unmarried women having children”* and *“unmarried couple to live together even if they have no interest in considering marriage.”* Our results suggest that less traditional family behaviors were observed among women than among men. A disjuncture exists between men and women in gender roles for *“It is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family.”* Previous studies also indicate that women adopt more egalitarian gender roles than men (Arıcı, 2011; Koropeckyj-Cox & Çopur, 2015; Maness et al., 2000; Yılmaz et al., 2009). However, Vefikuluçay et al. (2007) states that both men and women adopt traditional family behavior. Another gender role beliefs study, conducted by Baykal (1988), concluded that among university students, women were significantly more traditional than men. In this study, women appear to be more supportive of autonomy and gender equality within the family. This finding is consistent with those in previous studies that demonstrate perceived inequity of the division of household tasks and family life (see Stohs, 2000; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999). According to Başarans’s (1984) study, both men and women stated that women must take more responsibility than men for household tasks. In this context, both men and women exhibit more traditional behavior. According to the research of Adana et al. (2011), a majority of participants (75%) stated that household tasks should be shared between men and women, and half the participants stated that men should decide how to spend money. Ministry of Family and Social Politics Family Structure Research (2011) found that besides the technical knowledge and skill required for tasks (maintenance, repair), household tasks was mostly (88%–95%) completed by women. Certainly, the results of studies and our results are similar: women do more household tasks than their husbands, and men have more responsibility in financial decisions than their wives. However, women perceive some trouble in marital relationships, particularly in household tasks and money. This result relating to feelings of unfairness about household chores indicates that women feel greater unfairness in household chores than men. Together, these results imply that women perceive inequality, disagreement, and unfairness in household tasks more than men. This is consistent with the finding of earlier studies (see Thompson & Walker, 1989; Stohs, 2000). Risk of divorce or separation was higher among women than men. Thus, similar to the finding of earlier studies (Greenstein, 1990; Spitze & South, 1985), perceptions of unfair and inequitable division of household tasks may contribute to risk of marital dissolution for women. Women reported exerting more unilateral influence than men in decision-making processes. This result indicates that women perceive themselves as exerting somewhat greater influence in day-to-day interactions than men. This finding is consistent with that in study by Bartley, Blanton, and Gilliard’s (2005). According to the Ministry of Family and Social Politics Family Structure Research (2011), spouses equally decide on house selection, holidays, and shopping. However, women make decisions concerning household order and children.

This study's results are consistent with the claim that women have a better sense of the marital relationship and that they are often considered to be responsible for the maintenance of their marriages. Women appear to be more capable of sensing if the marriage is in trouble, and their perceptions of conflict and fairness also better predict how long the marriage will last. This argument is also consistent with those in earlier studies (Heaton & Blake, 1999). Our results suggest more balanced responsibility for emotional maintenance, in addition to a more equal distribution of household tasks in egalitarian marriages. Overall, these results are partly consistent with our expectations.

In terms of marital happiness, OLS regression showed that "marital duration," "beginning life stage," "contracting life stage," "non-marital sex," "marital disagreement," "marital unfairness," and "chance of dissolution" variables together explain almost 45% of the variance of marital happiness (full model). In contrast, gender, age, education level, income, number of children, traditional family behaviors, importance of autonomy and equality, and relative decision making variables did not significantly predict marital happiness. Finally, the highest levels of happiness were experienced with shorter lengths of marriage, beginning and contracting life stages, less progressive attitudes about non-marital sex, less disagreement in family life, greater fairness, and lower risk of dissolution. Glen (1990), Xu, Qiu, & Li (2016) and Çabuk, Özgür Güler, & Örk Özel (2017) also found that marital happiness declines as the duration of a marriage increases. Our finding suggests that traditional non-marital sex roles support marital happiness. The result indicates that household chores have different effects on men's and women's experiences in marriage. Consistent with the findings of earlier studies (McGovern & Meyers, 2002; Nourani et al., 2019; Perr-Jenkins & Folk, 1994; Thompson & Walker, 1989), we found that men and women who perceive unfairness in their share of household chores have lower levels of marital happiness than those who perceive that household chores are fairly divided. Importantly, even though we find that agreement and fairness in household chores are associated with marital happiness for both men and women, the meaning and definition of housework equity may differ substantially by gender. Consistent with earlier studies (e.g., Previti & Amato, 2004), marital happiness strongly associated with the risk of marital dissolution and lower chance of dissolution increases a couples' marital happiness.

Marital happiness is important to social scientists who strive to understand marriage in modern societies and the changes occurring in that institution. For instance, if people in modern societies depend highly on their marriages for their happiness, then that very dependence may account to a great extent for the fragility and vulnerability of marital relationships. Earlier researchers suspected that the crucial importance of a good marriage for adults' happiness significantly contributes to the current high divorce rate (Amato et al., 2003; Glenn & Weaver, 1981).

Several limitations must be considered when interpreting these findings. First, participants were not a random sample of the country; thus, observations cannot be generalized to the population in general. Participants were married employees who were middle and upper-middle class in the Alacaatlı neighborhood of Ankara. Further research is warranted using broader and more representative samples, particularly including a wider range of socioeconomic backgrounds and aspirations. A second limitation is the absence of specific

information on particular types of marital relationships. The survey does not measure the performance quality of household tasks nor the measure of conflict for both genders. Further research on marital quality, family life, and marital happiness may need to include these measures. Another limitation was the lack of employment status information on participants' spouses, but this can likely be included in future studies. Also, there are some disadvantages of OLS regression analysis since it analyzes all the variables at the same time; it prevents to see the variables that suppress each other. Thus, sometimes insignificant variables can be encountered with significant or opposite situations. Due to this disadvantage of the analysis some variables that we were expecting significant might be insignificant such as importance of autonomy and equality.

Despite these limitations, this study has made several contributions to the marital happiness literature. For example, it takes an important step by examining the role of gender in marital quality, family life, and marital happiness. However, interpreting the results independently from social norms under which we live is not believed to be possible. Therefore, comparing this study with similar future studies conducted in other Turkish cities and districts will help researchers. The finding that marital disagreement, marital unfairness, and chance of dissolution are important in influencing marital happiness in Turkish families has implications for counselors, educators, and other helping professionals in the field of family issues. The results of this study have clear implications for the importance of cultural replication of findings. These findings could be used to develop action-oriented family counseling education programs that would not only provide families with the knowledge and skills to manage their marriages better and improve their marital quality but also to help increase their marital happiness. Thus, these research findings suggest that educators, counselors, and planners consider such knowledge while conducting studies on families. Furthermore, informing families with the support of visual and written media, research companies, universities, non-governmental organizations, and so on, and conducting similar research to lead families in a better and more accurate direction can be presented as suggestions. The importance of issues between spouses, for example, love, respect, equality, sharing household chores, and creating a more democratic family environment by accepting changes and developments in the structure of society should be also emphasized.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Signed informed consent was obtained from all participants. The ethics committee of Hacettepe University approved the study. In this article, journal writing rules, publishing principles, journal ethics rules are followed. The responsibility belongs to the authors.

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