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**DETERMINATION OF ELDERLY WOMEN'S VIEWS ON
DIVORCE: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**
YAŞLI KADINLARIN BOŞANMAYA İLİŞKİN DÜŞÜNCELERİNİN
BELİRLENMESİ: NİTEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA



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DETERMINATION OF ELDERLY WOMEN'S VIEWS ON DIVORCE: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH YAŞLI KADINLARIN BOŞANMAYA İLİŞKİN DÜŞÜNCELERİNİN BELİRLENMESİ: NİTEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

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ABSTRACT

This research was carried out to determine the thoughts of individuals, who are aged 65 and over, on divorce. It's a descriptive type of research. The data were collected from the study group with a questionnaire consisting of semi-structured questions in addition to the demographic questions prepared by the researchers. Interviews were performed with 8 women aged 65 and over living in the center of Giresun province. Descriptive and content analysis methods were used for qualitative data analysis. Among the elderly women, who participated in the survey, were those who indicated the financial difficulties (4 elderly) as the leading reason for divorce, those who affirmed the divorce of the couples who cannot get along well (5 elderly), those who indicated that the biggest problem in the divorce process was the situation of children (6 elderly) and those who indicated that the reason for the increase in divorce in our country is the financial issues (4 elderly).

Keywords: Marriage, divorce, woman, elderly.

ÖZ

Bu araştırma, 65 yaş ve üstü bireylerin boşanmaya ilişkin düşüncelerinin belirlenmesi amacıyla yapılmıştır. Tanımlayıcı tipte bir araştırmadır. Çalışma grubundan veriler, araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan demografik sorulara ek olarak yarı yapılandırılmış sorulardan oluşan soru cetveli ile ayrı ayrı yüz yüze derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılarak toplanmıştır. Görüşmeler Giresun ili merkezinde yaşayan sekiz 65 yaş ve üzeri kadın ile yapılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde nitel veri analizlerinden betimsel ve içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmaya alınan yaşlılar arasında çiftlerin boşanma nedeni olarak maddi sıkıntıları belirtenler (4 yaşlı), anlaşamayan çiftlerin boşanmasını onaylayanlar (5 yaşlı), boşanma sürecinde en büyük sorunun çocukların durumu olduğunu belirtenler (6 yaşlı) ve ülkemizde boşanmaların artma nedeninin maddi sorunlar olduğunu belirtenler (4 yaşlı) önde gelmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Evlenme, boşanma, kadın, yaşlı.

INTRODUCTION

In the developmental classification of individuals, the stages of infancy, childhood, adulthood and old age are taken into consideration. The main point in classifying or separating developmental stages is the age ranges. However, the main criterion for the inclusion of women over age 65 in the research is their experience in life, marriage and divorce, rather than their ages. In order to understand the current situation of women over age of 65 in the study group better, it will be useful to give general information about the old age and its characteristics based on literature. Age can be expressed as a period having social, psychological and physical aspects; in addition, the loss of certain functions

is experienced. The aging process also describes a situation that is expressed more chronologically and described as getting older. In general, knowing these concepts will contribute to understanding the elderly people, which is the main element of the study.

Before explaining the concept of divorce, a brief introduction to the definition of the concept of marriage can be made. Marriage can be defined as combining the lives of a woman and a man in the light of general social values through laws and official means. The Turkish Civil Code is referenced in the definition of marriage, which is used in sharing the statistics of the Turkish Statistical Institute on marriage

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and divorce (Turkish Civil Code, Article 185). According to this, the bilateral agreement between men and women who are competent to marry is described as marriage. Marriage, which is an institutionalized type of relationship, is a type of legal relationship in which there is a system of relationships, a state which provides a certain status to the children to be born by linking individuals as a wife and a husband (Özguven, 2000). The reasons for the individuals to take the decision of marriage and to enter into a new relationship period are elements such as love, sexuality, desire to have children. According to Özügurlu (1990), marriage is defined as the relationship system in which two individuals with different interests, expectations and needs form together a union with goals such as living together, sharing their lives, having children and raising children, at the same time, it is described as a fusion in which the sexual needs excluded from all prohibitions by being placed on a legal ground are mutually resolved.

Divorce, in the most general sense, can be defined as the termination of marriage association and separation of men and women living together. It is described as a divorce when marriage, which is described as a lifelong union between man and woman, does not have the atmosphere of reconciliation where marriage has lost all its meaning for each one of the couple (Uçan, 2007). Divorce, in terms of spouses, in the most inclusive form, can be expressed in these forms. In the case of the divorce being realized, there are cases where the divorce can be legally carried out in our country, and these cases are explained by the Articles 161-165 of the Turkish Civil Code. These cases are as follows: adultery, the attempt on life, very bad and degrading treatment, committing a crime and having an inglorious lifestyle, abandonment and mental illness (Turkish Civil Code, Articles 161-165).

Although divorce can be considered as a risk for married couples, according to Kalmijn and Monden (2006), it is a new process coming along with hope for couples who define their marriage as bad, and it is considered a crisis for the couples who define their marriage as a decent one. Based on this view, it would not be wrong to say that the divorce is regarded as crisis and opportunity according to the individuals. However, the question of why divorces have increased worldwide and in our country comes to the minds of people. In the context of the recent increases in divorce, some situations have emerged as the important causes of divorce. As the main reason for divorce, the collapse of the general taboos, changes in the status of women and the general social change can be listed. In studies on marriage and divorce in the literature, the reasons for divorce are primarily stated as

follows: domestic violence, economic inadequacy, cheating of spouses, change in the status of women, couples' not fulfilling their responsibilities. (Doğan, 2016; Aydın and Baran, 2010).

According to the results of the Turkish divorce causes survey conducted by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (Former, 2014), "The most common causes of divorce are emotional relationship (40%) and the intervention of the close environment to marriage (38%). These causes are followed by cheating (35%), economic problems (34%) and violence (34%). The ratio of the individuals stating that their marriage ended because of their former spouses' or their own habits, (31%), lifestyle (25%) or values (20%) is also at an alarming level. One of the spouses' not fulfilling their duties and responsibilities (29%) or not being sufficiently concerned with child care (18%) are also other issues that lead to divorce. Other reasons for divorce are sexual life (20%), working life/unemployment (15%), and not having enough familiarity with the spouse during the pre-marital period (14%)".

In the 'Research on Families' Life Style and Value Judgments', conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) in 2016, the results indicated that irresponsible and indifferent acts of the spouses (50.9%) as the most important reason for divorce throughout the country. It was concluded that 30.2% of the households were not able to make a living and that 24.3% of them were complaining about the fact that their spouses treated their families disrespectfully. As the most important reasons for the divorce according to gender, 61.5% of women expressed irresponsible and indifferent behavior, while 2.5% of men expressed the beating and ill-treatment issues.

Finally, it is stated in the publication of the Turkish Statistical Institute, entitled "Marriage and Divorce Statistics (2017)" that:

"the number of married couples decreased by 4.2% from 594 thousand 493 in 2016 to 569 thousand 549 in 2017, whereas the rough marriage rate was 7.09 per thousand. The number of divorced couples rose 1.8% in 2017 to 128 thousand 411, while it was 126 thousand 164 in 2016. Rough divorce rate took place as 1.6 per thousand".

This study was based on the idea that the opinions of the elderly women, who has high life experiences, on divorce are taken in addition to all these general information and statistical data. In the study, elderly women's ideas on divorce were intended to be taken.

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MATERIALS AND METHOD

Phenomenology approach, which is one of the qualitative research patterns, was employed in the study. This approach aims to reveal the perceptions, descriptions, feelings and views of individuals about a concept (Patton, 2014). As a result of the interviews, it was tried to share the views of elderly women on divorce through direct excerpt. The most striking findings are presented.

Data Collection Tools

Interviewing data were collected by asking questions included in the socio-demographic characteristics form and semi-structured interview form. Questions other than the ones regarding the demographic characteristics are as follows: Why do you think couples get divorced? Do you approve the divorce of couples who cannot get along well? What kind of problems do you think couples have in the divorce process? Why do you think the divorces have increased in our country?

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data were collected between July 9 and July 16, 2018 and the research was conducted at the houses of women aged 65 and over. "Individual in-depth interviewing" method was employed in the study. Prior to the interview with elderly women, they were informed regarding the purpose of the study, and that the interviews were to be recorded, and the oral and written consent from the elderly who agreed to participate in the study were taken. Interviews were conducted in a room where elderly women and the researcher collecting data were alone. In order to prevent the interview to be interrupted, a quiet and calm atmosphere was provided. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 60 minutes, and each individual was interviewed once.

Descriptive and content analysis methods, which are qualitative data analysis methods, were administrated in the analysis of data. In the descriptive analysis, the answers given to the questions in the interview form were read and reported separately by the researchers and classified by grouping common expressions. Classified statements reviewed according to expert opinions from the social work area. The opinions obtained were encoded separately and common phrases are combined. The statements of the participants were presented in their pure form without adding comments. Respecting the privacy of individuals, elderly women's expressions are only expressed as Y1, Y2, ...

Tablo 1. Themes and Codes of the Research

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
Causes of Divorce of Couples	Conflict
	End of love
	Financial problems
Problems in the Process of Divorce	Cheating
	The status of the children
Reasons for Increasing Divorces in Turkey	Division of property
	Economic problems
	Media
	Intolerance

FINDINGS

Demographic Findings

The study was conducted with the participation of 8 elderly women in the central of Giresun Province. The average age of elderly women was 68.9 ± 3.9 years. Half of the elderly women surveyed (50.0%) are secondary school graduates and have a middle income level. Among the women, the primary social security type was the one provided by Social Security Institution (SSI) (62.5%), the majority had 2-3 children (62.5%), the majority of the women were living with children (50.08%), and lived with an extended family (62.5%). Half of the elderly women were married while other half were widowed (due to death). (Table 2).

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Tablo 2. Demographic Characteristics of Elderly Women

Variables	Group	N	%
Mean Age	(Mean ± SD) 68.9 ± 3.9		
Income Level	Low	2	25.0
	Medium	4	50.0
	High	2	25.0
Education Level	Primary School	1	12.5
	Secondary School	4	50.0
	High School	3	37.5
Social Security	SSI (Social Insurance Institution)	5	62.5
	Government Retirement Fund	3	37.5
Marital Status	Married	4	50.0
	Widowed (death of spouse)	4	50.0
	With spouse	3	37.5
Household	With spouse and children	1	12.5
	With children	1	12.5
Family Type of Marriage Life	Nuclear family	3	37.5
	Extended Family	5	62.5
Total		8	100.0

The Findings on the Views Regarding the Divorce

The reasons for divorce according to the elderly women at and over the age of 65 are presented in Table 3.

Tablo 3. Causes of Divorce of Couples According to Elderly Women

Codes	N	%
Conflict	2	25.0
End of love	1	12.5
Financial problems	4	50.0
Cheating	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

According to Table 3, four (50%) of the elderly women stated that the reason for the divorce of a couple was financial problems, while 2 (25.0%) of them stated that the problem was conflict, and one of them stated that it was the end of the love (12.5%) and cheating (12.5%).

Statements of the elderly who express financial problems as the cause of divorce are as follows:

Y3- *Everything today is based on the economy. In the past, it was love in a cottage (we used to bear the poverty). Now there is no such thing. When people run out of money, the love and the respect and the marriage end.*

Y2- *When the money is over, the fighting starts at home. And a divorce follows it.*

Y6- *If the husband does not bring money home, the woman does not want to take him as husband anymore. And especially if she is standing on her own feet, if she works. In our time, there was the habit of doing with less. Now, they are always looking for more.*

Y7- *Life conditions are very difficult. Needs are met very difficultly now. Life is very expensive. If the husband cannot meet the needs, the unrest begins at that house. Continuous fights emerge between spouses. Then, the marriages come to a breaking point.*

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Statements of the elderly who emphasize dispute as the cause of divorce are as follows:

Y1 - Marriage is the effort of two separate people to live in a house. No matter how good you deal with it, you don't know it until you live in the same house. You get married, you start living in the same house, you get to understand her/his temper. If you can get along, it is well. But if you can't get along, you're getting divorced. So no one has to tolerate anybody else.

Y4 - Two people who love each other marry to be happy. But when it comes to living together, you stop there. Two people can't keep up with each other. They don't get along. Then they're getting divorced.

The statement of the elderly who emphasized the end of love as the cause of divorce is as follows:

Y5- Love is very important in marriage. People who love each other can carry on for years. Without love, that marriage won't work. The current generation immediately consumes love. You're looking at someone today, someone else tomorrow. When love ends, marriage ends naturally. Because couples don't tolerate each other.

The statement of the elderly who emphasized cheating as the cause of divorce is as follows:

Y8- The cheating cases have increased a lot now. In the past, women couldn't get divorced even if they were cheated because they couldn't stand on their own feet. Now they have economic freedom. They get divorced at once now.

Within the scope of the research, the elderly women's, who are aged 65 and over, approval status for the divorce of the couples having dispute are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Elderly Women's Approving the Divorce of the Couples That Cannot Get Along

Codes	N	%
I approve	5	62.5
I don't approve	3	37.5
Total	8	100.0

According to Table 4, five (62.5%) of elderly women stated that they approved the divorce of couples having disputes, while 3 (37.5%) of them disapproved.

The statements of some of the elderly who stated that she "approves" the divorce of the couples who cannot get along well:

Y1- Yes, I approve. If they don't get along, forcing it doesn't make any sense.

Y4- I approve of course. The current generation is intellectual. When you see that it does not fit you, you are not happy, you can't get along well with your husband, you can get a divorce. The longer you stay married, the unhappier you will be.

Y8- I approve. Especially if they have children, it is better to get a divorce when the husband and the wife continuously argue. Children become unhappier when they grow up in unhappy families.

The statements of some of the elderly who stated that she "doesn't approve" the divorce of the couples who cannot get along well:

Y5- I do not approve much. If there are children, divorce is not the solution. They become torn between parents. We need mutual understanding for them.

Y2- Spouses need a little patience. If you want to be happy in marriage, you will be patient. Patience is the cure for everything. Over time, even disagreements dissolve. That's why we cannot tell that "we do not get along well with each other and we are getting a divorce".

According to elderly women aged 65 years and over, the problems experienced in the divorce process are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Problems in the Divorce Process According to Elderly Women

Codes	N	%
The status of the children	6	75.0
Division of property	2	25.0
Total	8	100.0

According to Table 5, six (75.0%) of the elderly women stated that the biggest problem in the divorce process is the situation of children and 2 (25.0%) of them expressed the share of property.

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The statements of the elderly women who emphasized the status of the children are as follows:

Y4- An important problem is that children will live with whom after the divorce? It's best if the child stays with the mother, of course. But sometimes husbands use their children to get revenge on their ex-wives. The man who loves his wife when he's married suddenly changes when it comes to divorce. He does everything possible to hurt his wife. That's why he uses his kids.

Y3- When it comes to divorce between husband and wife, both sides do not want to give their children to each other. In my opinion, mother doesn't want to give the child because she really wants to take care of him/her, while the father doesn't want to give the children just to hurt the mother.

Y8- If they have children, divorce is the best thing for a husband and wife who can't get along. They should do this most to raise their children in a more peaceful environment. But what happens in the end? Divorce turns into a custody fight. What's important is that on which side the children will be happier. I think this is more important.

The statements of the elderly women who emphasized the property sharing are as follows:

Y1- After the divorce case has been filed, as far as I know, the property acquired during the marriage is shared. But people transfer the estate properties or other valuables to others so they don't share them with their spouses. They declare their income to be lower than their actual income. I call these deceit as a pity.

Y7- The husband and wife want to keep everything in their own hands when they're getting divorced. The woman thinks that the man should take care of her anyway, and the man wants to come down hard on the woman. There's no couple who don't get into a fight for the goods/possessions when they were getting divorced, in this era.

According to the elderly women aged 65 years and older, the reasons for increasing divorce in our country are given in Table 6.

Table 5. Problems in the Divorce Process According to Elderly Women

Codes	N	%
Financial Problems	4	50.0
Media	2	25.0
Intolerance	2	25.0
Total	8	100.0

According to Table 6, four (50.0%) of the elderly women stated that the reason for the divorces in our country was due to financial problems, while 2 of them (25.0%) stated that it was the media, and 2 (25.0%) said that it was the lack of tolerance in the couples.

The statements of the elderly women who emphasized the financial problems are as follows:

Y3- Now everything is about economy. If you have money, you are happy, if you do not have money, you are unhappy. He/she marries you for the money, and when the money is finished, the spouse says goodbye. The current generation of young people are intolerant. They cannot endure problems. They do not want to support each other in difficult times.

Y7- Everything is bought with money. It is common for young people to indulge in luxury, and they don't want to wear anything twice (they are lavish). If these expectations are not met in marriage, divorces become common.

The statements of the elderly women who emphasized the media are as follows:

Y2- The divorces on the television series are so common. Young people, too, inevitably, become a wannabe on the divorce issue.

Y5- Divorce is often shown as a good thing on TV shows that are watched every day. Our young children are, unavoidably, also influenced by these series.

The statements of the elderly women who emphasized the intolerance are as follows:

Y6- Happy marriage is based on mutual understanding. If you understand your spouse, then he/she will tolerate you, too. Divorces will also increase when you treat the other person intolerantly.

Y1- The most important reason for the increase in divorce is that couples do not understand each other. When you are understanding, marriage is carried out and you are happy. Otherwise, if there is no understanding, the other side will be disturbed with any mistake that the other party makes. Thus, divorces occur.

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DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In order to determine the 'elderly women's thoughts on divorce' with the participation of eight elderly women over 65 years of age living in the Central district of Giresun province, face-to-face interviews were held between 9-16 July 2018. In the study carried out by qualitative research method, the data gathered using the data collection tools were broken down and analyzed.

Based on the findings of the study, it is shown that couples' having financial problems was the main reason for divorce according to elderly women. The dispute has also been expressed as another important reason for divorce. In the literature, also in the studies on the causes of divorce, financial problems appear to be frequently cited as the reason for divorce.

More than half of the elderly women have declared that they approve that if there is any dispute, the marriage should not be continued and that the divorce should take place, regarding the couples who cannot get along well. The social change experienced, the different family structures and the change in the social status of women is thought to be related to this result. The main problem in the divorce process is the situation of children (custody, care, etc.), and the second most important factor comes to the forefront as the division of the property. As a matter of fact, it is determined that the problems in marriages are caused by communication conflicts, economic problems, jealousy, disloyalty, selfishness or insecurity (Canel, 2012).

According to another result obtained from the research, it was determined that the biggest problem experienced in the divorce process is the status of children. The couples who do not have any relationship in the meaning of marriage after divorce must establish a relationship as parents (Sönmez, 2012).

According to the elderly women, the most important reason for the increase of divorces in our country is the financial problems. The literature on divorce is very limited in our country number of studies. There is not any study investigating the views of older women on divorce. Further research is needed in this area. In this way, it is possible to make a more detailed understanding of the situation in our country and to facilitate the services.

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