

# Reasons for Divorce in Turkey and the Characteristics of Divorced Families: A Retrospective Analysis

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## Abstract

Turkey is a country where, between Eastern and Western culture, recently divorce rates are increasing. This study was conducted to investigate the reasons for divorce and the characteristics of families who appealed for divorce. In this study, the divorce court cases filed in 2010 were examined as retrospective. Three hundred thirty-six case files could be accessed and content analysis was done. The findings showed that 60.1% of all appeals were made by women, and the marriage duration of 41.9% of couples was between 1 and 6 years. The reasons were determined that 48.4% of cases were fighting/conflict, 38.7% were psychological violence, 19.4% were financial problems, 18.5% were nonmarital relationships, and 12.9% were alcohol/drug abuse. The custody of 69.1% of children below age 18 was given to the mother. However, only half of these mothers received alimony. As a consequence, violence continues to be an important reason in divorce, and family counseling services should be more effective in Turkey. This study will contribute to understand the causes of increasing divorces and to development of family counseling services.

## Keywords

family relationships, divorce reasons, family law, family counseling

The family has always been considered as the building block of the society across cultures (Filiz, 2011). Marriage is a social institution, which unites a man and a woman through an official ceremony and supports their economic and overall health, well-being, and life satisfaction (Bilici, 2014; Çağı & Yıldırım, 2013). The healthy families consist with marriages that can shared emotions, that cooperation was essential, basic needs are met, and couples are having the problem-solving skills. It is important to be in harmony for couples to agree on issues related to family and solve their problems in a positive way. Many factors such as having/not having children in the family, number and ages of children, couples' incomes, occupational status, sharing domestic responsibilities, education level, religious faith, and cultural factors play significant roles in sustaining harmony and relationship in marriage (Unüvar & Tagay, 2015). Although couples marry with the desire to sustain a lifelong relationship, many marriages culminate in divorce in the present day for various reasons (Bilici, 2014). Divorce is described as a complicated crisis and a staged transition process, whereby couples end their marriages through a legal decision (Abalı, 2006; Bolhari et al., 2012). Divorce is considered as the dissolution of family and social life. It is also considered as a means to overcome the failure of the marriage. However, there are couples, who cannot transition from emotional divorce to legal divorce and, thus, continue with failed marriages (Afrasiabi & Jafarizadeh, 2015).

Although marriage retains its social significance, the increasing divorce rates in our century are remarkable. Previous studies claimed that approximately one third of all first marriages ends in divorce within the first 10 years (Frisby et al., 2012). Moreover, in the United States,

approximately one of every two marriages ends in divorce. For this reason, there is an increasing tendency for nonmarital cohabitation; many children live with single parents, thus influencing the social dynamics (Afifi et al., 2013; Gradisher et al., 2012). According to the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics (2015), there was a decline in marriage rates and the approximate divorce rate was determined as 3.1 in the year 2015 in the United States. In European countries such as Norway, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, the divorce rates vary between 30% and 50% (Bodenmann et al., 2007). Although Turkey is listed among countries with low divorce rates, these rates have escalated in Turkey in recent years

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(Uçan, 2007). The Turkish Statistical Institute reported that the number of marriages in 2016 was 594.493, whereas the divorce numbers for the same year were 126.164 (Turkish Statistical Institute, Marriage and Divorce Statistics, 2016a). It is seen that the rate of divorce has increased while the marriage rate has gradually decreased during the recent years. According to 2018 data, the number of marriages decreased to 553.202 and the number of divorces increased to 142.448 in the same year (Turkish Statistical Institute, Marriage and Divorce Statistics, 2018). Approximately, one of every five married couples get divorced, and the divorce rates are relatively higher in the western regions of Turkey (Kavas & Gündüz-Hoşgör, 2011). However, this rate is lower than in many countries. The previous studies indicate that divorce rates are lower in Muslim countries including Turkey (Bolhari et al., 2012; Yılmaz & Fişioğlu, 2006). In recent years, life-changing factors such as increasing educational and internet access opportunities have changed women's social roles and expectations could have effected to an increase in divorce rates (Bolhari et al., 2012). In addition, decreased institutional and social controls, increasing the individualization has resulted in a more equal gender regime and optional relationships (Simonsson & Sandström, 2011). Although there is an increasing conservatism trend in Turkey, modernization and individualization effects are felt intense in young generation especially. In Turkey, the increase in the rate of divorce and the reasons for this can be evaluated as similar to the Western and European countries' population characteristics. Differently from this, some studies have highlighted a decline in the divorce rates in South Asia and an increase in early and arranged marriages in Malaysia, which is a Muslim country (Dommaraju & Jones, 2011).

Divorce is considered not only as an individual but also as a social and complicated phenomenon, that's why it may be the basis of various crises as well (Bolhari et al., 2012). The reasons for divorce are variable. They are also related to a country's socioeconomic status and cultural structure. The educational and developmental level of a country, changes in family roles, women's place in work life, the society's perception of divorced individuals, and religious faiths affect divorce practices (Abalı, 2006; Dommaraju & Jones, 2011; Yıldırım, 2004). Individualization and industrialization of the society along with women's participation in education and public life are among the factors that escalate the divorce rates. Nevertheless, divorce is still not common in societies, where religion is the core of culture (Afifi et al., 2013). For individuals with high education levels, the changes in individual needs, diminishing satisfaction of the spouses, lovelessness, and experiencing an unjust situation in the relationship are the leading reasons for divorce (Hawkins et al., 2012). Moreover, variables regarding mental conditions such as bonding types of couples, their emotional makeup, and coping mechanisms influence the process of divorce (Cohen & Finzi-Dottan, 2012). It is further contemplated that individuals, who witnessed negative parent relationships or divorcing parents during their childhood, have a higher probability of getting divorced. Currently, people tend to invest less devotion in their relationships, and therefore, divorce is

more easily accepted by the society (Kavas & Gündüz-Hoşgör, 2011). The U.S. National Statistics reports reasons for divorce as follows: 73% weakening commitment, 56% domestic quarrels, 55% adultery, 46% early marriage, 45% unrealistic expectations, 44% inability to sustain equality in marriage, 41% insufficient preparation before marriage, and 29% domestic violence. Regardless of the severe increase in the divorce rates in Western countries, divorce is still not easily accepted by the society in Turkey, unless there is a significant reason, such as violence or serious conflict among partners. In Turkey, women, in particular, face social problems after divorce (Abalı, 2006; Kavas & Gündüz-Hoşgör, 2011).

Divorce, an extremely stressful and a traumatic process, causes significant changes in the lives of all family members. Often, these changes have a negative connotation and are multidimensional with social, psychological, emotional, and economic aspects (Frisby et al., 2012; Rijavec Klobučar & Simonič, 2016; Yılmaz & Fişioğlu, 2006). The most frequently encountered postdivorce mental problems are identified as follows: depression, suicidal tendency, anxiety disorders, drug abuse, problems in concentration, problems in emotional regulation and social functions, somatic disorders, and commitment problems. The end of marriage has many negative effects on child/children. Depression, emotional and behavioral problems, and development and adjustment problems are among the most common problems experienced by children (Bolhari et al., 2012; Çelikel, 2006; Frisby et al., 2012; Voursoura et al., 2012; Yılmaz & Fişioğlu, 2006). Sometimes, especially in problematic marriages, divorce may have positive effects such as relaxation and feelings of happiness and freedom for individuals. Furthermore, having protective factors like adequate social support and coping skills can increase the persons' resilience (Frisby et al., 2012).

Mediation during the process of divorce is important in protecting spouses and children from negative psychosocial impacts of divorce because it eases the legal process by enabling spouses to agree on legal terms (Mienkowska-Norkienė, 2012; Ministry of Family and Social Policy General Directorate of Family and Community Services, 2015). Although couples are guided to consensual divorce in Turkey, there are no state-sponsored mediation services, and the couples' lawyers undertake this role. Moreover, predivorce intervention mechanisms such as family counseling services and couples' therapy for solving the problems of couples and alleviating the negative effects of divorce on the family members are considerably limited. Although the recent and relative rise in family counseling training can be considered as a positive development, however, this service area needs further improvement. Mental health professionals and social service experts have significant responsibilities in this area.

This retrospective and descriptive study was carried out in the district of Fethiye in Muğla, which is known to have high divorce rates. It aims to investigate family characteristics, reasons for divorce, and court decisions concerning child custody in divorce court case files.

## Material and Methods

In Turkey, between west coast cities and east cities are socio-cultural and demographic differences. Muğla province where study was carried out is located on the west coast in Turkey and in an area where the tourism and entertainment sector is predominant. This study was carried out in the Fethiye Courthouse in Muğla during the year 2012 by obtaining the necessary institutional permits. In this cross-sectional and descriptive study, the divorce court case files registered in 2010 were retrospectively analyzed in the archives. The sample of this research consisted of 611 divorce files registered in 2010. Some of the files in the archives could not be reached because they were under revision or were transferred to and united with other files related to custody or alimony. Moreover, the cases withdrawn before the hearings were not included, and the study was carried out through the analysis of the accessible 336 court files. Each of these files located in the court archives was individually examined by researchers in a period varying between 15 and 30 min. The information (reason of divorce, marriage year, having children, alimony and maintenance order, etc.) available in these files was registered in a log sheet by the researchers. Personal information of individuals was not recorded in study and any visual data or material was not recorded. The evidences for divorce were limited in the consensual divorce case files ( $n = 212$ ). Sociodemographic information (education, occupation/job, and income status), which could be important for this research, did not exist in most of the court case files. Therefore, they were not included in this study. Data were transferred to computers and analyzed in numbers and percentile calculations.

## Results

Divorce cases are classified into two categories as contestable and consensual in Turkey. Among the examined court cases, documents concerning the reasons, allegations, and evidence for divorce were notably limited in the *consensual* divorce case files ( $n = 212$ ), which constituted 63.1% of the research sample. It was determined that this information be more available in court cases that were classified as *contested* divorce cases ( $n = 124$ ), which constituted 39.1% of the sample. Moreover, 91.7% ( $n = 308$ ) of the examined files ended in divorce. Contested divorces, which continued during the time of analysis, constituted 6% of the research sample ( $n = 20$ ). Regardless of being contested divorce cases, 2.3% ( $n = 8$ ) did not end in divorce after the hearings.

The analyzed court case files indicated that the average age of women was  $X = 36.51$  ( $SD = 11.56$ ), while that of men was  $X = 40.87$  ( $SD = 12.33$ ). In 8.6% of the divorcing couples ( $n = 29$ ), one of the spouses was of foreign nationality. Our findings showed that 60.1% of the cases were filed by women. Considering the duration of the marriage, it was observed that 6.0% lasted less than a year, whereas 20.5% were between 1 and 3 years, 21.7% were between 4 and 6 years, 17.9% were between 7 and 9 years, 19% were between 10 and 20 years, and 14.9%

**Table 1.** Family Characteristics in Case Files.

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Litigant		
Women	202	60.1
Men	134	39.9
Types of case		
Consensual case	212	63.1
Contested case	124	36.9
Child/children		
No children	105	31.3
There is a common child/children	214	63.6
Stepchild	17	5.1
Marriage year		
Less than 1 year	20	6.0
1–3 years	69	20.5
4–6 years	73	21.7
7–9 years	60	17.9
10–20 years	64	19.0
Over 20 years	50	14.9

Note.  $n = 336$ .

lasted more than 20 years. Concerning the status of having children, 63.7% of the couples had joint child custody (Table 1). Moreover, at the time of divorce, 31.2% of the couples did not have any children, while 1.2% were pregnant, and 3.9% had children from a previous marriage. It was observed that in half of the research sample, the children were underage and 17.6% were above the age of 18. The age of the youngest child of a divorcing family was determined as  $X = 5.93$  ( $SD = 4.10$ ).

Most consensual divorce cases ( $n = 212$ ), which constituted 63.1% of the research sample, yielded limited information. Only 39 files of these cases entailed expressions about marital conflict (disagreement, fighting, and arguing) related to reasons for divorce. Many of these divorce files comprised general expressions such as “irreconcilable differences” and “shaking the foundation of the family.” Furthermore, couples agreed on issues related to custody, compensation, and division of property, and these cases were resolved sooner compared with others. In contested divorce cases, where there was no agreement between spouses, all court files ( $n = 124$ ) had indictments with evidence, including reasons for divorce. Among these contested cases, 66.9% were filed by women. In the contested divorce court case files, the reasons for divorce could be listed as follows: marital conflict (fighting/arguing/disagreement) in 48.4% of cases, psychological violence (insulting/threatening/humiliation) in 38.7%, non-cohabitation/the process of physical separation in 36.3%, physical violence against women in 29.8%, financial problems in 19.4%, adultery/nonmarital relationships in 18.5%, alcohol/gambling habits in 12.9%, and other reasons (psychiatric disorder, age difference, and criminal history) in 8.9% (Table 2).

When the child custody decisions are examined, it was determined that 47.9% of the couples had no children or their children were more than 18 years old. The custody of the underage children was granted to the mother in 69.1% of the cases and to the father in 20.6% of the cases. In 2.3% of

**Table 2.** Reasons for Divorce in Contested Divorce Case.

Reasons	<i>n</i>	%
Litigant		
Women	83	66.9
Men	41	33.1
Reasons for divorce <sup>a</sup>		
Marital conflict	60	48.4
Psychological violence	48	38.7
Physical separation	45	36.3
Physical violence	37	29.8
Financial problems	24	19.4
Adultery/nonmarital relationships	23	18.5
Alcohol/gambling habits	16	12.9
Other	11	8.9

Note. *n* = 124.

<sup>a</sup>Multiple data.

the cases, the custody was divided between the parents, while the decision for custody was not finalized/determined in 8% of the cases at the time of this study. Alimony/compensation requests and/or approvals featured in only 29.2% of the examined cases and in 49.6% of all divorce cases, where the child's custody was given to the mother (*n* = 121). The alimony compensation claim/approval is lower in contracted cases (Table 3). Notably, the alimonies were rather low (approximately US\$100 a month).

## Discussion

In 2010, the Turkish national statistics reported that there were 582,715 marriages and 118,568 divorces. The crude divorce rate was 1.62 in a thousand. This rate was 2.33 in a thousand for the Aegean region, which has the highest number of divorces in Turkey (Turkish Statistical Institute, Marriage and Divorce Statistics, 2010). In 2018, the number of marriages was reported as 553,202, while the number of divorces was 142,448 (Turkish Statistical Institute, Marriage and Divorce Statistics, 2018). The highest rough divorce rate was 2.63 in a thousand in the province of İzmir (Turkish Statistical Institute, Marriage and Divorce Statistics, 2016a), and the highest rough divorce rate was in the province of İzmir in the last decade. During the period of data collection for this research in 2010, the district of Fethiye in Muğla was the third city with the highest divorce rate in Turkey (Turkish Statistical Institute, Marriage and Divorce Statistics, 2010). In 2018, Muğla was the second province where divorces were most common (Turkish Statistical Institute, Marriage and Divorce Statistics, 2018). According to the information received from local government authorities, there were 1,512 marriages and 408 divorces in Fethiye, in 2011. In 2016, there were 1,200 marriages and 506 divorces. Although the marriage rate is decreasing, divorce rates are increasing, and these data are consistent with the overall statistics in Turkey.

The number of hearings taking place in the family courts in Turkey may vary significantly (Filiz, 2011). Consensual

**Table 3.** Parental Alimony/Compensation Claim and Custody Status of Children.

Alimony and Custody Status	Consensual Cases		Contested Cases		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Alimony/compensation request in sample ( <i>n</i> = 336)						
No	163	76.9	68	54.7	231	68.7
Yes	49	23.1	49	39.5	98	29.2
Demand not approved	0	0	7	5.6	7	2.1
Custody of children in sample ( <i>n</i> = 336)						
No child/adult child	94	44.3	67	54.1	161	47.9
Mother	89	42.0	32	22.7	121	36.0
Father	25	11.8	11	8.9	36	10.7
Shared with parents	4	1.9	0	0	4	1.2
Unresolved case	0	0	14	11.3	14	4.2
Alimony/compensation request of couples having underage child ( <i>n</i> = 175)						
No	73	61.9	28	49.1	101	57.7
Yes	45	38.1	27	47.4	72	41.2
Demand not approved	0	0	2	3.5	2	1.1
Custody of underage child ( <i>n</i> = 175)						
Mother	89	75.4	32	56.1	121	69.1
Father	25	21.2	11	19.3	36	20.6
Shared with parents	4	3.4	0	0	4	2.3
Unresolved case	0	0	14	24.6	14	8.0

divorces, which are shaped through the mediation of the spouses' lawyers, are resolved during the first hearing/in short periods of time. Consensual divorces are recommended for ending the marriage by agreement of the partners without corroding the family and for protecting the privacy of the family. The contested divorce cases end in an average of five or six hearings, which take a maximum of 2–3 years. This process has a negative psychological impact on the couples' children and their family members. The national statistics of Turkey for the year 2013 reported that 42% of all divorces were consensual, while 55% were contested (Ministry of Family and Social Policy General Directorate of Family and Community Services, 2015). Most court cases examined within the scope of this research consisted of cases, where couples agreed on custody, alimony, and distribution of property. These were cases finalized in short periods of time. The findings of this study identified that the rate of consensual divorce was higher than the average divorce rate in Turkey. This is related to the fact that the research sample was located in the western regions of the country, where divorce is more easily accepted. The contested divorce cases, which constitute 39.1% of all divorce cases, took a long time to be finalized. These cases contained more information on family characteristics and reasons for divorce. Moreover, the long judicial processes lead couples toward consensual divorce.

Within the examined court files, the average age of couples ranged between 35 and 40 years. The age of the youngest child in the family was determined as  $X = 5.93 \pm 4.10$ . The age of the child could be a significant factor in the spouses' divorce

decisions. For middle-aged individuals, the drive for self-realization may be a deciding factor. The duration of marriage lasted less than a year in 6.0% of the cases, 1–3 years in 20.5%, 4–6 years in 21.7%, 7–9 years in 17.9%, 10–20 years in 19%, and over 20 years in 14.9% of the studied cases. According to the 2010 data in Turkey, 39.9% of all divorces occurred within the first 5 years of marriage, while 24% took place for couples who had been married for 16 years and more (Turkish Statistical Institute, Marriage and Divorce Statistics, 2010). According to the 2018 data, 37.6% of all divorces took place within the first 5 years of marriage, while 20.4% of the couples got divorced within 6–10 years of marriage (Turkish Statistical Institute, Marriage and Divorce Statistics, 2018). Likewise, the divorce rates were observed to be high within the first 5 years of marriage (Kavas & Gündüz-Hoşgör, 2011). In this research sample, 48.2% of the couples appealed to the courts for divorce within the first 5 years of their marriage; this rate is relatively higher than the national statistics. The high divorce rate may be due to the rapid cultural change in line with the escalating tourism in the region. Other identified reasons for divorce included adultery, alcohol/drug abuse, financial problems, and psychological violence against women, which could also be ascribed to cultural change. Similarly, in another study, higher divorce rates in cities with Arabic population were associated with sociocultural changes (Gharaibeh & Bromfield, 2012). In our study, 8.6% of divorcing couples ( $n = 29$ ) comprised of a spouse (generally the woman) was of foreign nationality. Since the field site is a tourist region, love relationships and marriages between Turkish people and foreigners are common. There is a population that settles especially from England in Fethiye. Among these, a small section consists of consensual marriages arranged for obtaining a residency permit. It is commonly believed that cultural differences may cause divorce in marriages, and the past studies demonstrate that cultural effects are involved in divorce as well (Afifi et al., 2013; Eeckhaut et al., 2011; Furtado et al., 2013).

In this research sample, it is seen that most of the divorce cases were filed by women. This rate is 66.9% in the contested court cases. Although divorced women have problems in being accepted by the society in Turkey (Abalı, 2006; Kavas & Gündüz-Hoşgör, 2011), the social pressure and discrimination against divorced women are less in the western regions of the country. Moreover, women's educational status and the increase in their participation in the workforce are considered as influential factors in women's position as plaintiffs in their divorce cases (Turkish Statistical Institute, Women in Statistics, 2016b). Likewise, the increasing divorce rates in recent years in Albania are related to the empowerment of women in the social and economic spheres (Shpuza, 2015). The economic and cultural interaction throughout history has caused changes in gender roles, thereby increasing the number of divorce cases (Simonsson & Sandström, 2011).

The analysis of contested divorce files indicated multiple excuses/reasons for divorce. In 48.4% of the court cases, there was marital conflict (fighting/arguing/disagreement), while in 38.7%, there was psychological violence (insulting/

threatening/humiliation). Non-cohabitation/the process of physical separation was identified in 36.3%, while in 29.8% of the cases, the reason for divorce was physical violence against women. In 19.4% of the court cases, financial problems constituted the reason for divorce, while adultery/nonmarital relationships were identified in 18.5%, alcohol/gambling habits in 12.9%, and other reasons (psychiatric disorder, age difference, and criminal history) in 8.9%. Legally acceptable reasons for divorce are defined in the Turkish Civil Code and are expressed in generalized legal terms such as "shaking the foundation of the family" and "irreconcilable differences"/"high-conflict." Therefore, similar expressions and reasons were found in the analysis of court cases. In a report analyzing the reasons for divorce in Turkey, the influence of the immediate vicinity, communication/relationship problems, adultery, financial difficulties, violence, harmful habits, not carrying out domestic responsibilities, differences in lifestyle/culture, sexual problems, and early marriage are listed as primary reasons for divorce (Ministry of Family and Social Policy General Directorate of Family and Community Services, 2015). Similarly, violence, financial problems, adultery, ideational differences, cultural differences, communication problems, alcohol/drug abuse, and mental illnesses are common reasons for conflict and divorce (Afrasiabi & Jafarizadeh, 2015; Cohen & Finzi-Dottan, 2012; Rijavec Klobučar & Simonič, 2016; Shpuza, 2015). In a study carried out in Turkey, the rate of high conflict in divorces was reported as 29.3%, while the rate of harmful habits was 19.3% in divorces. The same study noted that the rate of adultery in divorce was 18.7% and the problems arising from family elders were identified as 13.3% (Abalı, 2006). Similarly, Sucu (2007) determined adultery and violence as the most important and leading reasons for divorce. Although in the United States, adultery is considered as the most important reason ending a marriage among both divorced and separated individuals (Allen & Atkins, 2012), and adultery is more socially and culturally accepted in some cultures. Domestic violence is still the leading reason for divorce in many cultures. Women, who are exposed to violence, can decide to end their marriages; however, some women who are also exposed to violence may continue their marriages due to social, cultural, and economic reasons (Afifi et al., 2013; Das, 2012). In Muslim countries, particularly, marriage is highly influenced by cultural effects. In a study carried out in Malaysia, a predominantly Muslim country, it was seen that marriages at early ages and arranged marriages increase the divorce rates (Dommaraju & Jones, 2011). These reasons are also reported as factors that increase the divorce rates in Arab countries. Divorce rates increased in Muslim countries due to globalization and increased access to knowledge, higher education levels in women, and their increased participation in job opportunities (Gharaibeh & Bromfield, 2012). In a study carried out in Minnesota, the reasons for divorce were identified in various dimensions such as non-cohabitation, communication problems, adultery, differences in the areas of interest, and financial problems. A relative decline in the rates of "violence"

has been highlighted (Hawkins et al., 2012). Thus, gender and cultural factors are significant variables in reasons for divorce.

Having children, the age of the children, and their choices influence the process of divorce (Shpuza, 2015). While for some families the birth of a child is a stressor dragging the couple into divorce, for others, a small child within the family may be a factor postponing the divorce (Rijavec Klobučar & Simonič, 2016). The responsibility of a child and economic concerns are significant stressors for women going through the process of divorce (Sucu, 2007). Most divorcing couples had children, and 19.2% of these children were above 18 years of age. Although the custody of 69.1% underage children was given to the mother, in half of these cases and only one third of all divorce cases, there were alimony/compensation requests. It was also observed that alimonies were notably low. Sucu (2007) noted that the rate of custody given to the mother was over 90%. Although there are guiding law principles about custody and alimony, the significance of considering the benefit of the child in the judges' decisions has been emphasized. In Turkey, though, it is claimed that the best interests of the child are not considered in divorce court cases (Çelikel, 2006). During the analysis of court cases within the scope of this study, it was striking to find that court cases where the custody was given to the father were mostly filed by women and these were consensual divorce cases. Some women requested/accepted relinquishing the custody of the child due to their economic insufficiency. However, some of these women filed a custody/alimony court case for their children after the divorce. In some cases, women believe that not requesting the custody of the child, alimony, and any compensation perpetuate a lengthy divorce process. Moreover, some women are more compromising to obtain a divorce, and therefore, they do not question the will of their children. Couples may make agreements without considering the interests of their children, and the judges may approve this decision without exercising their complete discretionary authority for the benefit of the child. Nevertheless, court cases filed again after the divorce increase the tension between couples and may be potentially traumatic effect for both parties and the children.

## Conclusions

Divorce rates are higher, particularly, in the west and tourist regions of Turkey. Although various factors influence divorce, unfortunately, violence continues to be a significant reason. In this study, in many divorce files, the reasons for divorce were not openly expressed, and couples tended to favor reconciliation to ease the process of divorce. Although giving the custody of the child to the mother is a positive finding, alimonies were found to be notably low. One interesting finding was our observation that women gave up custody and alimony for facilitating the process of divorce. Thus, women were more compromising for the sake of divorce. This situation can be ascribed to the long judicial processes in Turkey. More attention should be given to protecting the family members and children from the process of the divorce court cases, and faster decisions during

the process should be mandated. Moreover, particular care should be taken to prevent the victimization of women. Additionally, women who have children should be supported for legal rights like parental power and alimony payment in divorce period.

As family is the cornerstone of society, studies on family structure provide important data. To investigate changes in social and demographic structures in societies, it is important to plan the needs and interventions for existing and potential problems. In Turkey, there is a need to increase and disseminate effective family counseling and mediation practices before, during, and after the process of divorce. The appointment of mental health workers experienced in family counseling services is highly recommended.

## Limitations

In consensual divorce case files, the couple's limited information sharing to protect family privacy restricted access to information that might be important. Contrastingly, in contested court case files, since there were many documents, researchers had difficulty in categorizing data. Some of the court case files could not be reached because they were cases that ended in divorce but were reopened and continued due to custody or alimony requests. In addition to this, problems in the archival system of the court limited access to the entire research population. To collect more data, *questionnaires* and *face-to-face* interviews with divorcing families were recommended for researchers working in this area. Additionally, we recommend the comparative divorce studies between Western and Eastern culture in Turkey.

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