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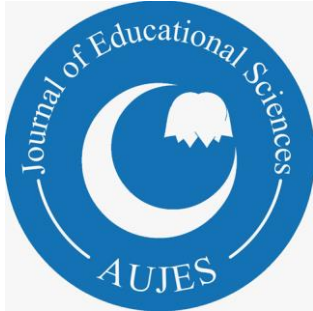
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## Marital Attitudes According To The Marital Messages of University Students From Various Sources

Ekrem Sedat ŞAHİN<sup>1</sup> , Filiz BİLGE<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education  
Aksaray University. 

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education  
Hacettepe University 

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## Marital Attitudes According To The Marital Messages of University Students From Various Sources\*

Ekrem Sedat ŞAHİN<sup>1\*\*</sup>, Filiz BİLGE<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education Aksaray University.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education Hacettepe University

### Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine whether single university students' marital attitudes change according to the marital messages they receive from marital message sources such as friends, media, family, and other institutions. To this end, Marital Messages Scale (MMS) and Inonu Marital Attitudes Scale (IMAS) were applied to a total of 1013 university students (654 female and 359 male) enrolled at a state university in Ankara during the 2018-2019 academic year. Convenience sampling was used to reach students. Data obtained from the measuring tools were evaluated by using SPSS 23.0. T test was used in the comparison of binary groups in data analysis. When there was a significant difference between groups, impact magnitude statistics was examined by calculating the Cohen d. At the end of the study, it was found out that students who receive high level positive marital messages from their families, friends, media, and other institutions have a more positive marital attitude compared to those university students who receive a low level of positive message from these sources. Findings of the study was discussed in relation to the literature; suggestions were made for researchers, applicators, and policy makers.

**Key words:** Marital message sources, Received marital messages, Marital attitudes

### Introduction

One of the most important developments in a person's life is marriage. Marriage, especially within Turkish culture, is presented beginning with childhood as a target to be achieved. Indeed, certain toys bought to children and dressing children in costumes such as wedding gowns or wedding suits can be regarded as cultural behaviours that incentivise them for marriage. Such behaviours of people around children, the way they talk about marriage, and the marriage of their parents are the sources that introduce marriage to children. A child can form quite a large fountain of knowledge with the effect of these information sources around him or her. This knowledge may affect his or her opinion, feelings, and behaviours about marriage.

Marriage is a system in which partners are in a trusting and open relationship; they have an effective and quality communication; moreover, it is a system in which individuals can meet their psychological and material needs; and they experience such emotions as closeness, anger, and sexuality (Hansen, & L'Abate, 1982). Marriage is also defined as forming a new unit, which contributes to one's happiness and development, by uniting one's self with another's (Fowers, 1993). In another definition, marriage is defined as a path which makes partners happy and contributes to their personal development (Glenn, 1991).

Marriage is an important factor in interpersonal relationships (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2002). The will to meet social, psychological, and biological needs is an important factor for a person to get married. The desire to meet their social, psychological and biological needs is seen as the factors that lead the individual to marriage. (Woody, & Woody, 1973). Waite and Gallagher (2000) indicated that having a happy marriage is one of the aims in life for 93% of people living in the United States. Marriage being an aim for most people can be because marriage provides a constant friendship for partners, partners contribute to each other's behaviours being more healthy, married people live longer, they get less sick, and get better more quickly when they get sick (Van Den Berghe, 2000). It was determined that married people have a higher physiological and

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\*\* Corresponding Author: Ekrem Sedat ŞAHİN, [ekremsedat33@gmail.com](mailto:ekremsedat33@gmail.com)

psychological wellness level compared to single, separated, or divorced individuals (Lillard, & Waite, 1995; Waite, 1995; Waite, & Gallagher, 2000). In studies conducted within Turkish culture, a positive relationship was found out between marital satisfaction and psychological wellbeing (Gülyüksel-Akdağ, & Cihangir-Çankaya, 2015; Uçar, 2018).

Just as marriage affects an individual's health, so can an individual affect marriage. In a healthy marriage, the socio-economic level of the family, life-cycle process, education level of partners, religion, ethnicity, gender roles (L'Abate, 1994) play a role. These factors affect marriages as well as individual's feelings, views, and behaviours about marriage; in other words, they affect their attitudes towards marriage.

### **Marital Attitude**

Marital attitude denotes a person's subjective views on marriage institution (Braaten and Rosen, 1998). In another definition, marital attitude refers to each of the feelings, views, beliefs, and perceptions about marriage (Larson, 1988). Demographic variables significantly impact and shape what marriage means for young adults and young adults' beliefs concerning marriage, their attitudes towards the marriage institution (Özabacı, Körük, & Kara, 2018; Peters, 2018). Marital attitudes are determinant of marital expectations, decision to marry, preparing for marriage, and when to marry (Larson, 1988; Larson, & Thayne, 1999).

One's experience in their family, their social identity, the world they find themselves in, and social changes deeply affect their worldview and marital attitudes (Blagojevic, 1989; Riggio, & Fite, 2006; Gubernskaya, 2010). Positive marital attitudes generate positive beliefs about marriage institution; negative attitudes generate negative beliefs. People's marital attitudes are related to their parents' marital attitudes (Willoughby, Carroll, Vitas and Hill, 2012). A positive parent model concerning marriage contributes to a child's happy marital life (Nadolu, Runcan, & Bahnaru, 2020). Trotter (2010) indicates that marital attitudes and beliefs are formed through parents' relationships or media modelling. Health family relationships and positive marital attitudes in children are related (Gabardi and Rosen, 1993). A child's marital attitude is affected by both his mother's and his father's marital attitude. Those whose fathers' have a positive marital attitude have especially a more positive marital attitude and quality. The parent's marital attitude is transferred to the child (Willoughby et al., 2012). In short, there are individual and social variables affecting marital attitude. one of these variables is the marital messages one receives from various sources. Marital messages are important in acquiring marital attitudes. Several researchers argue that marital messages affect young adults' attitudes and emotions concerning their future marriages (Benson, Larson, Wilson, & Demo, 1993; Jennings, Salts, & Smith, 1992; Larson, Benson, Wilson, & Medora, 1998; Shurts, 2004; Shurts, & Myers, 2012).

### **Marital Messages**

Generally speaking, marital messages refer to feedback a person receive from their family, friends, media or other institutions about the positive, negative, and/or neutral aspects of marriage (Shurts, 2004). Messages about marriage affect young adults' readiness for a special and significant relationship like marriage as well as their feelings and attitudes about their prospect marriage (Benson et al., 1993). Answers a young adult has received from others to such questions as "what is a marriage," "how is a marriage," and "when should a marriage be" – in other words, messages – may be reflected in his or her plans and behaviour about marriage. In many of the studies on marital messages, for so long, only the family has been studied as the source of these messages; and other possible sources for messages have not been researched. The reason for this is the ease with which one can examine the generational transmission of marital messages received from the family (Shurts, 2004). Studies focusing on the sources of marital messages list friends, media, and other institutions (religion, government, etc.) as the other sources of marital messages besides family (Shurts, 2004; Shurts & Myers, 2012). Looking at the possible sources from which marital messages can be received, it can be said that Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems approach provides a basic framework for explaining this multidimensional and complex phenomenon (Espelage, & Swearer-Napolitano, 2003). According to Bronfenbrenner (1986), a child is born into and grows up in a social and cultural system. The child is related to the family, school, society, and other institutions. All of these elements have a great impact first on the family of the child and then the child itself. In other words, according to the ecological model, the elements of the system in which a person is raised may affect them both directly and indirectly.

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1986), one needs to understand not only the individual but the elements around the individual in order to understand that individual's development. These elements are his or her immediate circle such as the family, teachers, and peers, who directly affect or interfere with them; they are also the socio-cultural context such as the neighbourhood or society which indirectly affect them (Cook, & Kilmer, 2010). A person's immediate or distant circle may affect the formation and shaping of their emotions, thoughts, and behaviour. In short, one can receive several marital messages from different

elements of their ecological system. These messages may affect their views about marriage, their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours about marriage; in other words, they may affect their marital attitudes.

In studies where marital messages and marital attitudes are examined together, the relationship between marital attitudes and the marital messages received from the family, friends, and other institutions such as religion and the government were found to be significant. However, it has been revealed that there is no significant relationship between marital messages received from mass media and marital attitudes (Shurts, 2004; Shurts, & Myers, 2012).

It may be useful for a psychological counselor, who works in the field of marriage and family counseling, to not disregard marital messages a person receives from different sources when this counselor needs to examine the said person's marital attitudes. In literature, there is no study that examines the relationship between marital messages and marital attitudes in Turkey. Accordingly, in this study, it was aimed to examine the marriage attitudes of young adult university students according to the marriage messages they received from different sources.

## Method

The study used the survey pattern. According to Creswell (2014), survey pattern enables a quantitative or numerical description of an inclination, attitude, or view in a universe through a study of a selected sample from this environment. In this study, correlational survey model was used since the study examines the relationship between marital messages and marital attitudes. Correlational survey model denotes a research model that aims to determine the existence and/or degree of covariance between two or more variables (Büyüköztürk, Akgün, Karadeniz, Demirel, & Çakmak, 2014).

### Study Group

In the study, Marital Messages Scale (MMS) and Inonu Marital Attitude Scale (IMAS) were applied to a total of 1013 university students (654 female and 359 male) enrolled at a state university in Ankara during the 2018-2019 academic year. Convenient sampling was used to reach students. According to Senol (2012), selecting the sample from easily accessible and easily applicable units when there are limitations in terms of time, money, or labour is called convenient sampling.

### Data Collection Process

The study was carried out with the permission dated 30.03.2017 and numbered 433-1200 received from Hacettepe University Ethics Committee. In the study, Marital Messages Scale (MMS) and Inonu Marital Attitude Scale (IMAS) were applied to university students by the researcher. Students were briefed about the content and importance of the study in order to make sure they answer the questions genuinely. Moreover, the students were also given directions; and they were encouraged to ask for clarification if needs be. They were not required to put down their names so that they can answer the questions openly and honestly.

### Data Collection Tools

Marital Messages Scale (MMS) and Inonu Marital Attitude Scale (IMAS) were used as data collection tools in this study.

#### *Marital Messages Scale (MMS)*

The scale was designed by the researcher and was prepared in the manner of Semantic Differences Scale (Salcuni, Di Riso, Mazzeschi and Lis, 2007). During the development process of the scale, individual interviews with a total of eight students (one male, one female from each class) from freshman to senior. Moreover, two separate focus group interviews were held with eight and thirteen university students, respectively. These interviews were recorded by a voice recorder and were later transcribed. Afterwards, themes were determined, and item pool of the scale was formed based on these themes. Items in the item pool were examined by three experts – one professor and two associate professors – in the field of Psychological Counseling and Guidance. They were also examined by three Turkish teachers separately – one is a PhD candidate and the other two have master's degrees. Considering the views of these experts, a pilot application form of the scale was developed. This pilot application form was applied to 32 university students. Expressions, which students deemed vague in the application, were re-designed accordingly (Şahin, 2019; Şahin & Bilge, 2020).

For the construct validity of MMS, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis were done. For the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the scale was applied to a total of 608 university students (276 male and 332 female). As a result, it was seen that the scale is a four-factor structure with 38 items. It was then applied to a different group of 324 university students for Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). CFA showed  $\chi^2$  (df = 161,

$N = 324$ ) = 364.38;  $p < .00$ , RMSEA= .06;  $\chi^2/df = 2.26$ ; CFI= .96; NFI= .93; GFI= .90 and AGFI= .87. These values show that MMS is a 3-factor model with 20 items which has an acceptable fit level.

MMS is a 3-factor (sub scale) tool with 20 items in total. The first factor called “Messages Have received About the Evaluation of Marriage” (MRAEM) consists of 12 items, and it constitutes approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  (55.42) of the common variance (75.46). The second factor called “Messages About the Effect of Marriage” (MAEM) consists of five items. It explains more than half (13.64) of the remaining part of the common variance not explained by the first factor. The third factor called “Messages about the Emotions Marriage May Generate” (MEMMG) consists of three items. This factor constitutes a little less (6.40) of the common variance compared to the second factor. It can be said that MMS fits the Semantic Differences Scales in terms of its factor structure.

Reliability of the MMS was examined by internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha) and test-re-test methods. Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was .95, its Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was .92; Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the sub scale “Messages Have received about the Evaluation of Marriage” was .97, its Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was .90; Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the subscale “Messages About the Effect of Marriage” was .87, its Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was .75; Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the subscale “Messages About the Emotions Marriage May Generate” was .90, and its Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was .87. Results obtained from both methods revealed that the reliability coefficients of MMS and its subscales are high. It was also determined that the sources of the marital messages were “Family, Friends, Media, and Other Institutions”.

In the scoring of MMS, each item has an answer whose score varies between 1-7. The positivity of the answer increases from 1 to 7. Two items in MMS are scored reversely (item 12 and 15). For each message source, one can score 20 – the lowest – and 140 – the highest. Adding up the scores obtained from four sources, namely, “Friends, Media, Family, and Other Institutions” one can calculate the general marital messages score. The lowest score to be obtained can be 80 and the highest can be 560. Receiving a high score in the scale means that the individual has have received positive marital messages both in terms of the sources of these messages and in the general evaluation (Şahin, 2019; Şahin & Bilge, 2020).

#### *Inonu Marital Attitude Scale (IMAS.)*

The scale developed in 2014 to determine the marital attitudes of young adults; It consists of one dimension and 21 items. Item pool prepared during the development process of the measuring tool were presented to the expert opinion and the 30-item trial form was designed. The trial form was initially applied to 27 university students; necessary adjustments were made according to feedback from this application. Then, the scale was applied to 723 single university students. Construct validity of the scale was examined with Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). CFA shows that IMAS explains 36.77% of the total variance. It was determined that the scale has 21 items and a single dimension. CFA gives the values of  $\chi^2/sd=2.905$ , GFI=.91, CFI=.93, NFI=.90 ve RMR=.04. In this respect, IMAS was determined to be at an acceptable fitness level. In a study on the reliability of the scale, internal consistency coefficient was calculated by Cronbach Alpha and was found to be .90 (Bayoğlu and Atli, 2014). In this study, the internal consistency coefficient calculated by Cronbach Alpha was .92.

The grading of the Inonu Marital Attitude Scale is 1= I completely disagree and 5= I completely agree. Accordingly, a minimum of 21 and a maximum of 105 points are obtained from IMAS. A high score at IMAS indicates a positive marital attitude (Bayoğlu and Atli, 2014). The scale was developed to reveal young adults’ marital attitudes. Based on the findings about reliability and validity, IMAS was decided to be used in this study.

#### **Data Analysis**

Data obtained from Marital Messages Scale and Inonu Marital Attitude Scale were digitally analysed by using SPSS (Statistics Package for the Social Sciences) 23.0. To determine whether the marital attitudes of university students vary according to the source from which they receive their marital messages, positivity of “The Received Marital Messages” were determined as “High level” and “Low Level.” The lower limit of the midlevel was determined by subtracting half the standard deviation value from the average, and the upper limit of the midlevel was determined by adding half the standard deviation value from the average. Scores below lower limit of the midlevel were accepted as the indicator of low level while the scores above the upper limit of the midlevel were accepted as the indicator of high level. Therefore, everyone’s marital message score was classified as low or high level. While calculating these, values after the comma were rounded up. In the analysis, operations were done through the low and the high level; midlevel was left out of analysis. In data analysis, t test was used in comparing binary groups. When there is a significant difference between groups, influence quantity statistics were examined. Cohen d value was calculated to determine the influence quantity. According

to Cohen (1988), .20 indicates small influence quantity; .50 indicates medium and .80 indicates large influence quantity (Büyüköztürk, 2010). Margin of error was taken as .05 in the study.

## Results

Findings concerning whether marital attitudes of university students vary according to the positivity level (low and high level) of the marital messages they receive from various sources was examined according to the source of these marital messages. To this end, findings related to the marital attitudes according to marital messages received from the family were presented first.

### Findings on marital attitudes of university students according to the marital messages they received from their families

Whether university students' marital attitudes vary according to the positivity level (low and high level) of the marital messages they receive from their families was examined by t test and the results were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and t-test results on marital attitudes of university students according to marital messages received from their families

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T     | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|-------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 384 | 76.55     | 15.21 | 678 | 10.64 | .00 | .78     |
|                  | Low   | 296 | 63.81     | 18.80 |     |       |     |         |

As can be seen in Table 1, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 76.55) of the university students who receive high levels of positive marital messages (n=384) from their families are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 63.81) of those who receive low levels of positive marital messages (n=296). At the end of unrelated samples t test, it was determined that there is a statistically significant difference between university students' marital attitude scores according to the level of positivity of the marital message received from their families (t=10.64; p< .05). Cohen d value was calculated as .78. In this respect, it can be argued that the positivity levels (high or low) of the marital messages that university students receive from their families have a great impact on their marital attitudes. According to these findings, one can say that university students who receive a high level of positive marital message from their families have a more positive marital attitude compared to those who receive a low level of positive marital message from their families.

The study also examined whether the marital attitudes of university students vary for the subscales of MMI. Whether university students' marital attitudes vary according to the positivity level (low and high level) of the marital message they receive from their families was examined by t test and the results were presented in Table 2. Whether university student' marital attitudes vary according to the positivity level (high and low level) of the marital messages they receive from their families about assessment of marriage was examined by t test. Test results can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and t-test results on marital attitudes of university students according to the marital messages received from their families for the assesment of marriage

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 428 | 74.86     | 15.83 | 719 | 8.90 | .00 | .67     |
|                  | Low   | 293 | 64.20     | 15.75 |     |      |     |         |

Table 2 shows that marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 74.86) of university students (n= 428) who receive a high level of positive marital messages from their families about the assessment of marriage are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 64.20) of those (n= 293) who receive a low level of positive marital messages from their families on the same issue. Unrelated samples t test results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the marital attitude scores of university students according to whether they receive a high or low level of positive marital messages about the assessment of marriage (t= 8.90; p < .05). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .67. According to this, it can be stated that the positivity level of the marital messages which university students receive from their parents about the assessment of marriage has a huge impact on their marital attitudes. Based on these findings, it can be argued that marital attitudes of those university students who receive a high level of positive marital messages from their families about the

assessment of marriage are higher than that of those who receive a low level of positive marital messages on the same issue.

Whether the marital attitudes of university students vary according to the positivity level (high and low) of the marital messages about the effect of marriage which they receive from their families was examined by t test. Test results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and t-test results on marital attitudes of university students according to the marital messages received from their families on the effect of marriage

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 282 | 76.14     | 16.02 | 616 | 9.24 | .00 | .74     |
|                  | Low   | 336 | 64.21     | 15.91 |     |      |     |         |

As can be seen in Table 3, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 76.14) of the university students who receive high levels of positive marital messages (n=282) from their families about the effect of marriage are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 64.21) of those who receive low levels of positive marital messages (n=336). At the end of unrelated samples t test, it was seen that there is a statistically significant difference (t=9.24; p< .05) between the marital attitude scores of university students according to receiving high or low level of positive messages in the dimension the marital messages received from the family about the effect of marriage. Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .74. In this respect, the positivity level of marital messages university students receive from the family about the effect of marriage has a huge impact on their marital attitudes. Likewise, it can be argued that the marital attitudes of the university students who receive a high level of positive messages from their families about the effect of marriage are more positive than the marital attitudes of those who receive a low level of positive messages.

Whether the marital attitudes of university students vary according to the positivity level (high and low) of the marital messages which they receive from their families about the emotions that marriage can make you experience was examined by t test. Test results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and t-test results on marital attitudes of university students according to the marital messages received from their families regarding the emotions that marriage can experience

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T     | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|-------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 355 | 76.47     | 15.65 | 662 | 10.42 | .00 | .81     |
|                  | Low   | 309 | 63.79     | 15.58 |     |       |     |         |

As can be seen in Table 4, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 76.47) of university students (n= 255) who receive high levels of positive messages from their families about the emotions that may be generated by marriage are higher than those (n= 309) who receive low levels of such positive messages ( $\bar{X}$ = 63.79). At the end of unrelated samples t test, it was seen that there is a statistically significant difference between the marital attitude scores of university students according to whether they have received a high or low level of positive message they receive from their families about the emotions that may be generated by marriage (t= 10.42; p< .05). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .81. As such, it can be argued that the positivity level of messages that university students receive from their families about the emotions that may be generated by marriage has a huge impact on university students' marital attitudes. According to these findings, marital attitudes of those who receive a high level of positive messages from their families about the emotions that may be generated by marriage are more positive compared to that of those who receive a low level of positive messages.

**Findings on marital attitudes of university students according to the marital messages they received from their friends**

Whether university students' marital attitudes differ according to the positivity level (high and low level) of the marital messages they receive from their friends was examined by t test. Test results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and t-test results of university students' marital attitudes according to marital messages from friends

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 323 | 75.67     | 15.01 | 615 | 9.43 | .00 | .76     |
|                  | Low   | 294 | 63.82     | 15.92 |     |      |     |         |

As can be seen in Table 5, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 75.67) of university students who receive high levels of positive messages from their friends about marriage (n=323) are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 63.82) of those receive low levels of positive messages from their friends about marriage (n= 294). At the end of unrelated samples t test, it was seen that there is a statistically significant difference between university students marital attitude scores according to the level of positivity of the marital messages they receive from their friends (t= 9.43; p< .05). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .76. Based on this value, it can be argued that the positivity level of the marital messages that university students receive from their friends has a huge impact on their marital attitudes. In the same vein, marital attitudes of the university students who receive a high level of positive marital messages from their friends are higher than the marital attitudes of those who receive a low level of marital messages from their friends. Whether the marital attitudes of university students vary according to the positivity level (high or low level) of the marital messages that university students receive from their friends about assessment of marriage was examined by t test. Results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics and t-test results of university students' marital attitudes according to marital messages from their friends regarding the assesment of marriage

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 384 | 74.48     | 15.35 | 687 | 8.64 | .00 | .66     |
|                  | Low   | 305 | 64.04     | 16.23 |     |      |     |         |

As can be seen in Table 6, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 74.48) of university students (n= 484) who receive a high level of positive marital messages from their friends about the assessment of marriage are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 64.04) of those (n=305) who receive a low level of positive marital messages from their friends about the same issue. Unrelated samples t test results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the marital attitude scores of university students according to whether they receive a high or low level of positive messages from their friends about the assessment of marriage (t= 8.64; p< .05). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .66. Based on this, it can be claimed that the positivity level (high and low level) of marital messages about the assessment of marriage that university students receive from their friends has a big effect on university students' marital attitudes. According to these findings, marital attitudes of university students who receive a high level of positive messages from their friends about the assessment of marriage are higher than the marital attitudes of those who receive a low level of positive marital messages from their friends on the same issue. Whether the marital attitudes of university students vary according to the positivity level (high and low level) of the marital messages they receive from their friends about the effect of marriage was examined by t test. Results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics and t-test results on marriage attitudes according to the messages of university students regarding the effect of marriage from their friends

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 254 | 73.67     | 16.48 | 614 | 5.13 | .00 | .42     |
|                  | Low   | 362 | 66.75     | 16.46 |     |      |     |         |

Table 7 shows that marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 73.67) of the university students (n= 254) who receive a high level of positive messages from their friends about the effect of marriage are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 66.75) of those (n= 362) who receive a low level of positive marital messages from their friends about the effect of marriage. Unrelated samples t test results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the marital attitude scores of university students depending on whether they have received high or low levels of positive marital messages from their friends about the effect of marriage (t= 5.13; p< .05). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .42. Based on this, it can be stated that the positivity level of messages university students receive from their friends about the effect of marriage has an intermediate effect on their marital attitudes. According to these findings, marital attitudes of the university students who receive a high level of marital messages from their friends about the effect of marriage are higher than the marital attitudes of those who receive a low level of marital messages from their friends about the effect of marriage.



Whether the marital attitudes of university students vary according to the positivity level (high and low level) of the marital messages they receive from their friends about the emotions that may be generated by marriage were examined by t test. Results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Descriptive statistics and t-test results on marital attitudes according to the marital messages of university students regarding the feelings of marriage from their friends

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 298 | 75.21     | 15.56 | 627 | 8.35 | .00 | .64     |
|                  | Low   | 331 | 64.71     | 16.96 |     |      |     |         |

Table 8 shows that marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 75.21) of the university students who receive a high level of positive messages from their friends about the emotions that may be generated by marriage (n= 298) are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 64.71) of those who receive a low level of positive messages from their friends about the emotions that may be generated by marriage (n= 331). Unrelated samples t test shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between the marital attitude score averages of university students according to whether they receive a high or low level of positive messages from their friends about the emotions that may be generated by marriage (t= 8.35; p< .05). Cohen d value was calculated as .64. Based on this, it can be stated that the positivity level of marital messages university students receive from their friends about the emotions that can be generated by marriage has a huge impact on their marital attitudes. According to these findings, marital attitudes of the university students who receive a high level of positive messages from their friends about the emotions that can be generated by marriage are higher than the marital attitudes of those who receive a low level of positive messages from their friends on this.

**Findings on marital attitudes of university students according to the marital messages they received from mass media**

Whether the marital attitudes of university students vary according to the positivity level of marital messages they receive from mass media (i.e. easily-accessible communication technologies such as radio, television, internet, newspapers, and journal) was examined by t test. Test findings are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Descriptive statistics and t-test results of university students' marital attitudes of university students based on marital messages received from mass media

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 330 | 72.17     | 16.66 | 650 | 3.91 | .00 | .30     |
|                  | Low   | 322 | 67.13     | 16.28 |     |      |     |         |

As can be seen in Table 9, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 72.17) of the university students (n= 330) who receive a high level of positive messages about marriage from mass media are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 67.13) of those (n= 322) who receive a low level of positive messages about marriage from mass media. Unrelated samples t test results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the students' marital attitude scores according to whether they receive a high or low level of positive marital message from mass media (t= 3.91; p< .05). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .30. In this respect, it can be argued that the positivity level of marital messages university students receive from mass media has a small effect on their marital attitudes. According to these findings, marital attitudes of the university students who receive a high level of positive marital messages from mass media are more positive than the marital attitudes of those who receive a low level of positive marital messages from mass media. Whether marital attitudes of university students vary according to the positivity level (high and low level) of the marital messages they receive from mass media about the assessment of marriage was examined by t test. Results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Descriptive statistics and t-test results of university students' marital attitudes according to the marital messages of university students regarding the evaluation of marriage from mass media

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 344 | 72.11     | 16.29 | 667 | 3.54 | .00 | .27     |
|                  | Low   | 325 | 67.61     | 16.56 |     |      |     |         |

Table 10 shows that marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 72.11) of the university students (n= 334) who receive a high level of positive marital messages from mass media about the assessment of marriage are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 72.11) of those (n= 325) who receive a low level of positive marital messages from mass media about the assessment of marriage. Unrelated samples t test reveal that there is a statistically significant difference between the marital attitude scores of university students according to whether they receive high or low levels of positive marital messages from mass media about the assessment of marriage ( $t$ = 3.54;  $p$ < .05). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .27. Based on this, it can be argued that marital messages university students receive from mass media about the assessment of marriage has a small effect on their marital attitudes. According to these findings, marital attitudes of university students who receive a high level of positive marital messages from mass media about the assessment of marriage are higher than the marital attitudes of those who receive a low level of positive marital messages from mass media about the assessment of marriage.

Whether university students' marital attitudes differ according to the positivity level (high and low level) of the marital messages they receive from mass media about the effect of marriage was examined by t test. Results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Descriptive statistics and t-test results of university students' marital attitudes of university students according to messages received from mass media on the effect of marriage

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 280 | 71.15     | 16.80 | 604 | 2.80 | .01 | .22     |
|                  | Low   | 326 | 67.46     | 15.58 |     |      |     |         |

As can be seen in Table 11, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 71.15) of university students (n=280) who receive a high level of positive marital messages from mass media about the effect of marriage are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 67.46) of those (n=326) who receive a low level of positive marital messages from mass media about the effect of marriage. Unrelated samples t test results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the marital attitude scores of university students according to whether they receive a high or low level of positive messages from mass media about the effect of marriage ( $t$ = 2.80;  $p$ < .05). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .22. Based on this, it can be argued that the positivity level of the marital messages that university students receive from mass media about the effect of marriage has a small effect on their marital attitudes. According to these findings, marital attitudes of university students who receive a high level of positive marital messages from mass media about the effect of marriage are higher than the marital attitudes of university students who receive a low level of positive marital messages.

Whether university students' marital attitudes vary according to the positivity level (high and low level) of the marital messages they receive from mass media about the emotions that may be generated by marriage was examined by t test. Results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Descriptive statistics and t-test results on marital attitudes according to the marital messages received by university students on the emotions of marriage from mass media

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 314 | 73.01     | 16.90 | 658 | 5.04 | .00 | .39     |
|                  | Low   | 346 | 66.55     | 15.88 |     |      |     |         |

As can be seen in Table 12, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 73.0) of university students (n= 314) who receive a high level of positive messages from mass media about the emotions that may be generated by marriage are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 66.55) of those who (n= 346) receive a low level of positive messages from mass media about the emotions that may be generated by marriage. Unrelated samples t test results show that there is a statistically significant difference in the marital attitude scores of university students based on whether they receive a high or low level of positive marital messages from mass media about the emotions that may be generated by marriage ( $t$ = 5.04;  $p$ < .05). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .39. According to this, it can be argued that the positivity level (high or low) of the marital messages university students receive from mass media about the emotions that may be generated by marriage has an intermediate effect on university students' marital attitudes. In this respect, it can be claimed that marital attitudes of university students who receive a high level of positive marital messages from mass media about the emotions that may be generated by marriage are higher than the marital attitudes of those who receive a low level of positive marital messages from the same source.

**Findings on marital attitudes of university students according to the marital messages they received from other institutions**

Whether university students' marital attitudes vary according to the positivity level (high and low level) of marital messages they receive from other institutions (institutions that directly or indirectly influence a person such as religion, government, and professional world) was examined by t test. Results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13. Descriptive statistics and t-test results on marital attitudes of university students according to marital messages received from other institutions

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 348 | 75.07     | 16.61 | 666 | 8.05 | .00 | .62     |
|                  | Low   | 320 | 65.27     | 14.81 |     |      |     |         |

As shown in Table 13, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 75.07) of university students (n= 348) who receive a high level of positive marital messages from other institutions are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 65.27) of those (n= 320) who receive a low level of positive marital messages from other institutions. Unrelated samples t test results reveal that there is a statistically significant difference between the marital attitude scores of university students according to whether they receive a high or low level of positive marital messages from other institutions (t= 8.05; p< .05). In addition, Cohen d value was calculated as .62. In this respect, it can be argued that the positivity level of marital messages which university students receive from other institutions have a big effect on their marital attitudes. According to these findings, marital attitudes of university students who receive a high level of positive marital messages from other institutions are higher than the marital attitudes of those who receive a low level of positive marital messages from other institutions. Whether university students' marital attitudes vary according to the positivity level (high and low level) of the marital messages about the assessment of marriage they receive from other institutions were examined by t test. Findings can be found in Table 14.

Table 14. Descriptive statistics and t-test results on marital attitudes of university students according to marital messages received from other institutions regarding the assesment of marriage

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 359 | 74.51     | 16.24 | 680 | 7.71 | .00 | .59     |
|                  | Low   | 323 | 65.34     | 14.78 |     |      |     |         |

As can be seen in Table 14, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 74.51) of university students (n= 359) who receive a high level of positive marital messages about the assesment of marriage from other institutions are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 65.34) of those (n= 323) who receive a low level of positive marital messages from these institutions. At the end of unrelated samples t test, it was seen that there is a statistically significant difference in the marital attitude scores of university students according to whether these students receive a high or low level of positive messages about the assesment of marriage from other institutions (t= 7.71; p< .05). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .59. In this respect, it can be claimed that the positivity level (high or low) of the marital messages about the assesment of marriage university students receive from other institutions has an intermediate effect on their marital attitudes. Based on these findings, marital attitudes of university students who receive a high level of positive marital messages about the assesment of marriage from other institutions are higher than the marital attitudes of university students who receive a low level of positive marital messages.

Whether university students' marital attitudes vary according to the positivity level (high and low level) of the marital messages that university students receive from other institutions about the effect of marriage was examined by t test. Results are presented in Table 15.

Table 15. Descriptive statistics and t-test results on marital attitudes of university students according to marital messages received from other institutions on the effect of marriage

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 261 | 74.40     | 16.85 | 572 | 6.81 | .00 | .57     |
|                  | Low   | 313 | 65.30     | 14.72 |     |      |     |         |

As can be seen in Table 15, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 74.40) of university students (n= 261) who receive a high level of positive marital messages about the effect of marriage from other institutions are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 65.30) of those (n= 313) who receive a low level of positive marital messages from these institutions. Unrelated samples t test results show that there is a statistically significant difference in the marital attitude scores of university students according to whether they receive a high or low level of positive marital messages from other institutions about the effect of marriage ( $t= 6.81$ ;  $p< .05$ ). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .57. Based on this, it can be claimed that the positivity level (high or low) of the marital messages that university students receive from other institutions about the effect of marriage has an intermediate effect on their marital attitudes. According to these findings, marital attitudes of university students who receive a high level of positive marital messages from other institutions about the effect of marriage are higher than the marital attitudes of university students who receive a low level of positive marital attitudes from other institutions about the effect of marriage.

Whether university students' marital attitudes vary according to the positivity level (high and low level) of the marital messages they receive from other institutions about the emotions that may be generated by marriage was examined by t test. Results are presented in Table 16.

Table 16. Descriptive statistics and t-test results on marital attitudes of university students according to marital messages received from other institutions regarding the emotions of marriage

| Variable         | Level | n   | $\bar{X}$ | S     | sd  | T    | p   | Cohen d |
|------------------|-------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|-----|---------|
| Marital Attitude | High  | 310 | 74.83     | 16.98 | 680 | 7.71 | .00 | .59     |
|                  | Low   | 372 | 65.31     | 14.82 |     |      |     |         |

As can be seen in Table 16, marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 74.83) of university students (n= 310) who receive a high level of positive marital messages from other institutions about the emotions that may be generated by marriage are higher than the marital attitude score averages ( $\bar{X}$ = 65.31) of university students (n= 372) who receive a low level of positive messages about the emotions that may be generated by marriage from other institutions. Unrelated samples t test results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the marital attitude scores of university students according to whether they receive a high or low level of positive marital messages from other institutions about the emotions that may be generated by marriage ( $t= 7.71$ ;  $p< .05$ ). Moreover, Cohen d value was calculated as .59. Based on this, the marital messages university students receive from other institutions about the emotions that may be generated by marriage can be argued to have an intermediate effect on university students' marital attitudes. According to these findings, it can be argued that marital attitudes of university students who receive high levels of positive marital messages from other institutions about the emotions generated by marriage are more positive compared to those who receive low levels of such messages.

### Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

In this study, it was determined that the marital attitudes of university students who receive high levels of positive marital messages from their families are more positive compared to those who receive low levels of positive marital messages from their families. The finding is consistent with the findings of Ganong, Coleman and Brown's study (1981) on marriage, family life and marital attitude, Jennings, Salts and Smith's study (1992) which examines the effect of perceived parental conflict, sex and family structure on young adults' marital attitudes, Shurts' study (2004) on university students, Segrin, Taylor and Altman's study (2005) conducted on women between the ages 18 and 85, Shurts and Myers' study (2012) which examines marital attitudes of university students and marital messages they receive, and Jackl's study (2016) which investigates the parent-child communication about marriage.

As discussed above, one of the variables shaping people's marital attitudes is family structure and conflict in family (Miles, & Servaty-Seib, 2010). Marital attitudes can be shaped according to parents' marital status (whether they are divorced or not) (Burgoyne, & Hames, 2002) and the existence of accord or conflict in parents' marriage (Valerian, 2001). It was determined that people with divorced parents have a more negative marital attitude (Riggio, & Weiser, 2008). On the other hand, it was determined that university students whose parents have a healthy marriage have more positive marital attitudes compared to those with divorced parents (De Coninck, Van Doren, & Matthijs, 2021). It can be argued that the first message source for marriage is the parents and their marriage. People who receive a positive marital message from their families would develop a positive marital attitude.

Pryor and Rodger (2001) indicate that positive or negative marital attitudes are transferred across generations. In other words, parents' marital attitudes are transferred to the next generation when they include marital messages. Finding obtained in this study is in accordance with previous studies and theoretical knowledge. In this respect, in Turkey, just like in other cultures, there is a positive relationship between marital messages received from the family and marital attitudes, which is one of the sources of marital messages; this is consistent with the literature.

In the study, it was found that university students who received a low level of positive messages from their friends about marriage had a more positive attitude towards marriage compared to university students who received a high level of positive messages. This finding is consistent with the findings of Shurt's study (2004) on university students and the findings of Shurts and Myers' study (2012) which focuses on university students' marital attitudes and the marital messages they receive. Both studies point at a positive relationship between marital attitudes and the marital messages university students receive from their friends. Accordingly, it can be said that the results of the research in the literature and the results of this research are similar.

As mentioned above, transmission of messages starts within the family. The media content one is exposed to, cultural myths, observing siblings and friends influence all attitudes, including marital attitudes (Miller, & Browning, 1999; Larson, & et al., 1998). Tissington (2008) argues that one's behaviour is affected by their friends while at the same time affecting their behaviour. Friends' feelings and views on marriage serve as marital messages for that person. In this respect, marital messages received from friends, who are an indispensable part of one's ecosystem and play an important role in one's development, may shape one's marital attitudes.

In the study, it was found out that marital attitudes of university students who receive a high level of positive marital messages from the media are more positive compared to those of university students who receive a low level of positive marital messages from the media. This finding is consistent with Segrin and Nabi's study on the relationship between watching television and having unrealistic expectations of marriage and Holman's study (2003) on the use of media – specifically of sexual content - among adolescents. On the other hand, the findings of this study differ from the findings of the study on university students conducted by Shurts (2004) and the findings of Shurts and Myers' study (2012) on the marital attitudes and marital messages university students receive.

Media is located at the third layer, which Bronfenbrenner (1977) defines as exosystem, of an individual's ecosystem. Exosystem refers to schemes that are composed of structures and rules organised within a society and do not directly include an individual. There could be people who are in contact with more than one group even though they are not actively involved with all of them (Tissington, 2008). A person can be informed of the rules, values, traditions, and norms of the society, to which they belong and even do not belong, through media. They can receive marital messages from these sources. These messages may be on marriage age or type, what marriage brings to the table, or negative consequences of marriage. In other words, these messages can shape one's marital attitudes.

In this study, media refers to the radio, television, newspapers, and magazines. It is not surprising today that people receive messages from one or several of these sources and that some of these messages are on marriage. According to Akay (2006), one of the sings of media, especially television, being highly influential in Turkey is the TV series. The audience is influenced by the TV series so much so that they are more interested in the fictional world of these shows than the actual world itself. Many of these shows include messages concerning marriage and family life. Similarly, marriage programmes dominating various TV channels can provide marital messages. In this respect, marital attitudes of an individual can be shaped by these messages.

Internet has become a highly popular, if not indispensable, media. According to Muslu and Bolışık (2009), children and adolescents have used the internet at an increasing rate. Due to internet, new friendships are formed through emails and chat rooms; existing friendships are maintained; social life is shared with others; people and maintain social relations. Children and adolescents may receive marital messages through internet as well, and these messages may be formative for their marital attitudes.

It was revealed that marital attitudes of university students who receive a high level of positive marital messages from other institutions (institutions affecting the individual such as government, religious bodies, and the professional world) are higher than the marital attitudes of university students who receive a low level of positive marital messages. This finding is consistent with Shurts' study conducted with university students (2004), findings of Shurts and Myers' (2012) study on university students' marital attitudes and the marital messages university students receive, and with the findings of Bener's (2011) study in which he focused on determining the basic interaction point between religiosity and partner selection and examined what elements and to what extent these elements have an effect on religiosity and partner selection. On the other hand, these

findings are different from the findings of Okutan and Büyükhahin-Sunal's (2010) study titled attachment in romantic relationships, the connection between gender stereotypes and the perception of religiosity.

“Religion” which is part of the “other institutions” in this study, can affect an individual in different degrees from birth till death. According to ecological system theory, religious institutions are situated within a microsystem (Santrock, 2014). In other words, the individual is born into a life surrounded by religious institutions, rules, and teachings. Several studies determined that religion/spirituality has an important place in university students' lives (Sandfort, & Haworth, 2007), that religion is an internal source of motivation that affect attitudes and behaviour (Maltby, 1990, and that people who are externally motivated in terms of religion stand more aloof from marriage (Mosko and Pistole, 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that religious rules and teachings provide various different marital messages and marital attitudes of young people can be said to develop with these marital messages they receive from religion.

Government and professional world which are part of the ecosystem in which the individual is situated are defined within “other institutions” in this study. According to ecological system theory, government and professional world is part of the egzosystem (Tissington, 2008). Laws created and policies implemented by the governing bodies can reach a person through the elements of the microsystem such as principals and teachers who can directly influence them. In other words, certain institutions such as the government and the professional world can send messages on various issues either directly or indirectly. It is possible that these messages can be on marriage. Notwithstanding that it is not the same for everyone, these messages can affect adult university students' marital attitudes. Likewise, financial state of the professional world and economic crises may be a source of message. For instance, the saying “Poverty makes you fight, wealth makes you love” can be taken as a marital message that affects and shapes one's marital attitude. In short social and economic conditions created by the professional world may present marital messages and these messages in return shape one's marital attitude.

In this study, the concept of marital messages was examined through marital attitudes and various socio-demographic variables. Future studies may examine the relationship between marital messages received from various sources and variables such as marriage expectations, marital satisfaction, marriage quality, marital harmony, and pressure to get married.

Psychological counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists working on marriage and family may carry out their work on pre-marital marital attitudes of individuals by taking into consideration the relationship between marital messages and marital attitudes. Mass media, which are indeed sources for marital messages, can be used to provide public service ads (PSA) on the notion of healthy marriage and family. Therefore, people may get correct and positive marital messages from the media. Taking into account current conditions, religious institutions can also provide illuminating information about the importance of marriage and family. Religious Affairs Administration can play an active role in people receiving correct and positive marital messages. Ministry of Family, Work, and Social Services can provide training for couples getting married. In these trainings, programs can be prepared that will enable individuals to receive correct and positive marriage messages in order to affect their marriage attitudes. People who would be offering these trainings can be put under training for trainers on marital attitudes and marital messages.

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