



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## The Role of Life Satisfaction and Sexual Self-Consciousness in Marital Disaffection\*

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## ABSTRACT

In this research, it was aimed to investigate life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness as the predictors of marital disaffection and to reveal whether marital disaffection differs significantly according to determined demographical variables. The form including the scale items was transferred to the digital environment (Google Forms) and sent online to the participants, and the research data were collected between May 2021 and July 2021. This study was conducted with the data collected from 435 married individuals (239 women and 196 men) living in various cities of Türkiye, in a correlational survey model, using multiple regression analysis. The findings obtained in the research suggested that life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness significantly predicted marital disaffection and the present two predictive variables of the research together explain 28% of the total variance in the scores of marital disaffection. It was also concluded that life satisfaction was negatively and moderately related to marital disaffection, and that there was a low related positive relationship between sexual self-consciousness and marital disaffection and it was found that marital disaffection it differed significantly according to gender, type of marriage, duration of marriage and the number of children.

According to Kayser (1993), marital disaffection occurs when the feeling of love between couples decreases after the increase in dissatisfaction in the marital relationship. In other words, marital disaffection can be defined as the weakening of the bonds between couples when the positive features perceived by the individual regarding the marital relationship are in the background and negative features are in the foreground (Kumcağız & Ertuğ, 2016). This emotional bond between couples is defined as the basis of the marriage relationship (Johnson, & Whiffen, 2003). Marital disaffection is another term for emotional bond disruption (Kayser & Rao, 2006). Research on the breakdown of marriages has revealed that there are numerous varieties in terms of the length and nature of this process (Hagestad & Smyer, 1982; Baxter, 1984; Lee, 1984; Vaughan, 1986).

In marriages where the level of disaffection gradually increases, couples not only feel feelings of resentment, anger, regret, and self-pity and move away from each other, but these feelings may also lead to mental health problems such as depression and suicide attempts (Dokur & Profeta, 2009).

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Examining the concept of marital disaffection, two types of disaffection can be mentioned. The first one is direct marital disaffection and the second one is indirect marital disaffection. Direct marital disaffection is defined as the woman's marital disaffection as a result of the effect of the disaffection experienced by the man on the woman. The second type of disaffection, indirect marital disaffection, is defined as the man's marital disaffection as a result of the woman's behaviours that weaken communication in the marriage (Westmann, et al., 2004). In other words, being exposed to the feeling of disaffection of one of the spouses can be directly transmitted to the other spouse and cause the emergence of mutual, emotional dissatisfaction.

Kayser and Rao (2006) state that marital disaffection consists of three stages. Disillusionment is the initial stage of marital discontent and is brought on by a progressive decline in the emotional bond between partners. This is phase of acute hurt and wrath that occurs in the second stage. At this point, the couples no longer value the good old days and are more focused on their problematic behaviors. The third and last stage of marital disaffection is the stage of indifference and indifference, in which negative and indifferent states peak and emotional distance replaces intense emotions. While couples experience emotional tiredness rather than rage, individuals report feelings of mourning as their discontent grows.

The assessment of the disaffection levels and stages of couples seeking psychological counselling support is a central point in family and marital therapy. Information on the level of disaffection of couples provides an understanding of the extent to which the couple's emotional bonds exist, while on the other hand, it provides clues to the psychological counsellor on the way to solve the problem (Kersten, 1990). In other words, analysing marital disaffection as a process shows that the psychological counselling service to be provided to couples experiencing disaffection should be structured on different qualities (in terms of intervention strategies).

When the studies investigating marital disaffection in Turkey are examined; socio-demographic variables, solution orientation, fear of compassion, conflict resolution styles and attachment styles, jealousy and emotion regulation, marriage types and sexual self-efficacy perceptions were investigated (Kumcağız & Ertuğ, 2016; Üçgöl, 2019; Karasu et al., 2021; Şahin, 2023; Aytan, 2023). When the related foreign literature was examined, it was seen that marital disaffection was investigated with the concepts of workaholism, attachment styles, marital conflict, social media addiction and marital satisfaction (Robinson et al., 2006; Hojatifar & Noori, 2017; Sarathchandra & De Silva, 2018; Abbasi et al., 2019).

When the positive psychology literature is analysed, it is seen that life satisfaction is an important concept that affects individuals' mental health as well as their relationships with family, couple, society and work (Neugarten et al., 1961). In terms of life satisfaction, the marital relationship can provide a healthier and higher quality life by providing benefits through social, economic and psychological support mechanisms. In other words, research shows us that the role of marriages in increasing the life satisfaction of couples is clear (Koydemir et al., 2005; Çağ & Yıldırım, 2013; Demirel, 2018). The permanence of families and marriages depends on couples' satisfaction with their marriages. It can be said that couples who experience disaffection in their marriages have a higher risk of ending their marital relationship than other married couples (Üçgöl, 2019).

Another dependent variable of our research is sexual self-consciousness. Sexuality is a fundamental part of human life (İncesu, 2005) and is also an important factor in marriage. The concept of sexual self-consciousness, which can affect the marital relationship, consists of two components known as sexual self-focus (focusing on oneself, one's body) and sexual shame (individuals being sensitive to the judgments and opinions of others when displaying sexual behavior) (Van Lankveld et al., 2007; Durlik et al., 2014; Brand & Waterink, 2018). In other words the higher the sexual focus on oneself and one's body, the higher the sexual shyness. This situation causes negative effects on the sexual experience of the person (Van Lankveld et al., 2008). Studies have concluded that sexual harmony and sexual self-consciousness affect the marital relationship (McCharty, 1997; Synder, 1997; Trudel, 2002; Litzinger & Gordon, 2005; Sanchez & Kiefer, 2007; Gülsün et al., 2009; Brand & Waterink, 2018; Çolak & Cin 2019; Bilal & Rasool, 2020).

In summary, marriage is one of the most beneficial (increasing life satisfaction) relationships in individuals' lives. But it might be one of the relationships which cause the most problems or disaffection as well (Dush et

al., 2008; Gordon et al., 2004). Thus, couples have more negative thoughts and feelings about their relationship than positive ones in marriages in which disaffection is being experienced. The disaffection phenomenon can be experienced due to many reasons. These can be summarized with cases such as socio-economic changes, communication problems, sexual problems, violence, burdening the marital responsibilities onto one of the couples, not sharing the parental responsibility fairly, impairment of physical or psychological health of one of the couples and manipulation of the families of couples on the marriage relationship (Westmann et al., 2004; Şendil & Korkut, 2008; Duba et al., 2012; Güren, 2017; Sidi et al., 2017; Brand & Waterink, 2018).

### **In This Study**

This research was conducted within the framework of Kayser's concept of marital discontent. When the related literature is reviewed, it is seen that fewer studies focused on positive support mechanisms of married couples such as life satisfaction, healthy communication and well-being (Gable & Haidt, 2005). For this reason, this research is considered important since it investigates the variable of life satisfaction, which is believed to be effective on marital disaffection. Thanks to healthy and satisfying relationships that are built in family system in which the grounds for personality traits of individuals are laid, individuals can be satisfied with their lives and build healthy relationships. In addition to the development of these personality traits, individuals are also expected to form and develop characteristics such as sexual self-assertion, sexual self-efficacy, sexual shyness (Sanchez & Kiefer, 2007; Van Lankveld & Bergh, 2008) or courage by means of the relationships in their families. Therefore, family structures should be arranged in atmospheres in which personality traits enabling individuals to have life satisfaction can develop and positive attitudes exist (Çelik, 2012).

Providing individuals with this atmosphere becomes a positive indicative factor in their development process. Investigating the reasons of individuals' disaffection in marriages in which this positive atmosphere cannot be experienced, determining the factors affecting individuals' disaffection and carrying out studies for preventing these disaffections are of great importance in the formation of a healthy society and maintaining its continuity. The main purpose of this research is to investigate the roles of the variables of life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness on the disaffection in marriages. Besides, determining whether there is a significant difference between the marital disaffection of married couples and some particular demographic variables (gender, the type of marriage, the duration of the marriage, the number of children) is also among the subgoals of this research. Based on discussions above, general hypotheses of this study were that:

H1: While sexual self-consciousness of married individuals predicts their marital disaffection positively and significantly, their life satisfaction predicts their marital disaffection negatively and significantly.

H2: Marriage disaffection of married individuals differs depending on the determined demographic variables

- i) Marital disaffection of married individuals differs depending on gender.
- ii) Marital disaffection of married individuals varies depending on the type of marriage.
- iii) Marital disaffection of married individuals varies depending on the duration of marriage.
- iv) Marital disaffection of married individuals varies depending on the number of children they have.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

In this research, the relationship between marital disaffection, life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness and the extent to which life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness predicted marital disaffection were investigated. The predictive variables of the research were life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness and the predicted variable as marital disaffection. While the first two goals of this research refer to a correlational survey model, the demographic variables present that this research has a descriptive character.

## Participants

The sample of this research consists of 435 married couples (239 women and 196 men) living in various regions of Turkey and snowball sampling method has been used in this research. Snowball sampling method is used in cases where it is difficult to access the units that make up the universe (by subject or person) (Patton, 2005). In this technique, people and situations where rich data can be obtained are focussed and the universe is reached by following these people and situations (Creswell, 2013). The frequency and percentage values related to the demographic information of the married individuals who participated in the study are given in Table 1

**Table 1.** Frequency and Percentage Values of Demographic Variables Related to the Study Group Participating in the Research

	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Gender	Female	239	54.9
	Male	196	45.1
Age	20-30	96	22.1
	31-40	156	35.9
	41-50	130	29.9
	51+	53	12.2
Type of Marriage	Arranged Marriage	81	18.6
	Convenience Marriage	42	9.7
	Love Marriage	312	71.7
Duration of Marriage	0-5 year	133	30.6
	6-10 year	89	20.5
	11-20 year	108	24.8
	21 years and over	105	24.1
Number of Children	No child	100	23.0
	1 child	118	27.1
	2 children	159	36.6
	3 and more children	58	13.3
	Total	435	100

As it is seen in Table 1, 239 (54.9%) and 196 (45.1%) of the 435 participants were female and male, respectively. When the ages of the participants in the sample are analysed, it is seen that there are 96 participants aged 20-30 (54.9%), 156 participants aged 31-40 (35.9%), 130 participants aged 41-50 (29.9%), and 53 participants aged 51 and over (12.2%).

## Data Collection Tools

The form which contains personal and demographic information of individuals, the Marital Disaffection Scale, the Life Satisfaction Scale and the Sexual Self-Consciousness Scale were transferred into digital environment (Google Forms) due to the pandemic and sent to the participants online. The data was collected between May 2021 and July 2021.

**The Marital Disaffection Scale.** This scale was developed by Kayser in 1996 in order to assess the marital disaffection of married couples. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Çelik in 2013. The scale is the one which is based on the purpose of an individual's, who assesses the marital disaffection, giving information about himself and it contains 21 four-point likert type (not true=1, completely true=4) items. In the scale, items 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14, 16 and 21 are reversely coded. The scores obtained from the items of the scale are summed up and marital disaffection score is acquired. The possible score that can be acquired from the scale ranges between 21 and 84. A high score means that marital disaffection is proportionately high. It was found as a result of the study to determine the reliability of the original form of the scale that Cronbach-alpha coefficient was 0.97 (Kayser, 1996). On the other hand, it was 0.89 for the reliability of the Turkish form of the scale. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as 0.92 in this particular study.

**The Life Satisfaction Scale.** This scale was developed by Diener et al. (1985). It is a five-point likert type scale. It consists of 5 items and assesses the subjective well-being of an individual (Dağlı & Baysal, 2016).

The higher the scores obtained from the scale, the higher the life satisfaction. The adaptation, validity and reliability studies of the scale were carried out by Dađlı & Baysal in 2013-2014 academic year spring semester and the consistency between English and Turkish forms of the scale was calculated as .92. This result suggested that there was a high-level, positive and significant correlation between English and Turkish forms of the scale (Dađlı & Baysal, 2016). The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found as .88 and the test-retest reliability was found as .97. As a result of validity and reliability analysis, it was concluded that the scale was valid and reliable in determining the perceptions about life satisfaction (Dađlı & Baysal, 2016). In this particular study, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as 0.88.

***The Sexual Self-Consciousness Scale.*** This scale was developed by Van Lankveld et al., (2007) in order to determine the sexual self-consciousness levels of individuals. The validity and reliability studies of the scale were carried out by Çelik (2013). This scale was developed to determine the sexual self-consciousness levels of individuals and it is based on self-report of individuals. The scale consists of 12 items and it has two sub-dimensions of sexual shyness (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) and sexual self-focusing (items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). The internal consistency coefficient for the whole scale was found to be 0.84, for the sexual shyness subscale 0.83, and for the sexual self-focus subscale 0.79. The scale provides the score of 40 both as a total score and a score for two subscales. A high score indicates that the individual has high sexual self-consciousness. The possible score range that can be obtained from the scale ranges between 0 and 48. There are no items which are reversely coded (Van Lankveld et al. 2008; Çelik, 2013) The sub-scales of the scale were not included in this particular study so when the internal consistency coefficient for the whole scale was considered, Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.80.

***Personal Information Form.*** Information about some demographic variables of the research was collected by Personal Information Form. In this form, the participants were asked about their gender, age, type of marriage, duration of marriage and the number of children.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analysed by SPSS 26 program. In the analysis of quantitative data, "Correlation Analysis, Analysis of Normality, Independent Groups t-test, One-way Variance Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis" techniques were made use of. Before starting the data analysis, the responses to the scales were checked. Data that were found to be invalid or incorrectly completed by the participants were excluded from the data set.

First of all, normality analysis was performed to determine whether the data had a normal distribution. Findings show that skewness and kurtosis values were within the range of -1.5 and +1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), Scatterplot values were within the range of -3.3 and +3.3 (Pallant, 2007) it was found. These values showed that the data were considered normal (Pallant, 2007).

Before the regression analysis, whether there is a multicollinearity problem among the independent variables should be investigated as well. The multicollinearity problem exists when the correlation coefficient is  $r = .9$  and above among the independent variables (Pallant, 2007). Moreover, multicollinearity problem can be discussed when tolerance values are below .10 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are above 10 (Pallant, 2007). In addition to the Durbin Watson value is expected to be between 1-3 (Field, 2005). In this research, VIF and Tolerance Values of independent variables were investigated. The results showed that there were no values lower than .10 among tolerance values and higher than 10 among VIF values and Durbin Watson value was determined to be between 1-3. Besides, the correlation coefficient between the independent variables was lower than .90 so it can be concluded that there was not a correlation between independent variables. In other words, no multicollinearity problems were observed. As the data had a normal distribution, parametric statistical analysis were used in the data analysis. The significance level of .05 was used as a criterion in interpreting whether the findings were significant or not.

## Findings

In this part, the findings about whether the life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness of married individuals predicted their marital disaffection were presented. In addition, the findings obtained from the statistical analysis about investigating the relationship between the determined demographic variables and marital disaffection were also presented.

Table 2 shows the results of multiple regression analysis which was made to determine to what extent life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness of married individuals predicted their marital disaffection.

**Table 2.** The Results of Multiple Regression Analysis About Predicting The Marital Disaffection

	B	Standart Error B	$\beta$	t	p	Binary r	Partially r
Fixed	53.533	2.398		22.320	.000		
Life Satisfaction	-1.270	.110	-.472	-11.509	.000	-.491	-.484
Sexual Self- Conscious	.287	.061	.194	4.735	.000	.239	.222
R=0.528	R <sup>2</sup> =0.278						
F(2,432)=83.334	p=.000						

As it is seen in Table 2 and when partial correlations between marital disaffection, life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness are considered, it can be said that there is a negative and moderate level correlation between life satisfaction and marital disaffection ( $r=-.491$ ) and a negative and moderate level correlation between life satisfaction and marital disaffection in terms of sexual self-consciousness variable is observed ( $r=.484$ ). It is also notable that there is a positive and low level correlation between sexual self-consciousness and marital disaffection ( $r=.239$ ). Besides, the positive and low level of correlation between sexual self-consciousness and marital disaffection attracts attention when the variable of life satisfaction is considered ( $r=.222$ ). It is also seen that marital disaffection is in a significant and low level correlation with the variables of life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness together ( $R=0.528$ ,  $R^2=0.278$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The present two predictive variables of the research together explain 28% of the total variance in the scores of marital disaffection. According to standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), the relative order of importance of the predictive variables on marital disaffection is life satisfaction ( $\beta=-.472$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and sexual self- consciousness ( $\beta= .194$ ,  $p<.01$ ). When the results of t-test about the significance of regression coefficients are studied, it is seen that life satisfaction ( $t=-11.509$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and sexual self- consciousness ( $t=4.735$ ,  $p<.01$ ) are predictive on marital disaffection. Independent groups t-test analysis was made so as to determine whether marital disaffection of married couples differ according to to their gender and the results were shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The Results of Independent Groups T-Test About Marital Disaffection Of Married Couples According To Their Gender

Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	Sd	df	t	p
Female	239	39.15	13.68	433	3.464	.001
Male	196	35.08	10.83			

As it is seen in Table 3, the mean and standard deviation of the marital disaffection scores of married females are  $\bar{X}=39.15$  and  $Sd=13.68$ , the mean and standard deviation of the marital disaffection scores of married males are  $\bar{X}=35.08$  and  $Sd=10.83$ . It was concluded by the results of t- test done to find out whether there was a significant difference between the obtained values that there was a significant difference between marital disaffection of married couples according to their gender ( $t=3.363$ ,  $p=.001$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The descriptive statistics about the marital disaffection of married couples according to their types of marriage were presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Descriptive Statistics About Marital Disaffection of Married Couples According To Their Types Of Marriage

Type of Marriage	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd
Arranged Marriage	81	38.74	13.53
Convenience Marriage	42	45.95	14.02
Love Marriage	312	35.78	11.69



As it is seen in Table 4, among the married participants of this study, the ones who had convenience marriage has the highest life satisfaction score ( $\bar{X} =45.95$ ,  $Sd=14.02$ ) while the ones who had love marriage has the lowest life satisfaction score ( $\bar{X} =35.78$ ,  $Sd=11.69$ ) compared to the others who had other types or marriages. The mean life satisfaction score of the participants who had arranged marriages is  $\bar{X} =38.74$ ,  $Sd=13.53$ . One-way variance analysis was made in order to determine whether marital disaffection of married couples differs according to their marriage types and the results were shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** The Results of One-way Variance Analysis About Marital Disaffection Of Married Couples According To Their Types of Marriage

Resource of the Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean of Squares	F	p	Significant Difference (Scheffe)
Between-Groups	4025.085	2	2012.543	13.327	.000	Convenience- Arranged, Love
Within Groups	65235.499	432	151.008			
Total	69260.584	434				

As it is seen in Table 5, the results of analysis show that marital disaffection of married couples who had convenience marriage is significantly higher than of the married couples who had arranged or love marriages ( $F=13.327$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The descriptive statistics about the marital disaffection of married couples according to the duration of their marriages were presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Descriptive Statistics About Marital Disaffection of Married Couples According To The Duration Of Their Marriages

Duration of Marriage	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd
0-5 years	133	33.12	9.52
6-10 years	89	37.01	12.83
11-20 years	108	40.23	13.02
21 years and above	105	39.89	14.09

As it is seen in Table 6, among the married participants of this research, the ones whose duration of marriage is between 11 and 20 have the highest marital disaffection score ( $\bar{X} =40.23$ ,  $Sd=13.02$ ) while the ones whose duration of marriage is between 0 and 5 years have the lowest marital disaffection score ( $\bar{X} =33.12$ ,  $Sd=9.52$ ). The mean life satisfaction score of the married couples whose duration of marriage is between 6 and 10 years is  $\bar{X} =37.01$ ,  $Sd=12.83$  and the mean marital disaffection score of the ones whose duration of marriage is 21 years and above  $\bar{X} =39.89$ ,  $Sd=14.09$ . One-way variance analysis was made in order to determine whether marital disaffection of married couples differs according to the duration of their marriages and the results were shown in Table 7.

**Table 7.** The Results of One-way Variance Analysis About Marital Disaffection Of Married Couples According To Duration of Their Marriage

Resource of the Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean of Squares	F	p	Significant Difference (Scheffe)
Between-groups	3957.707	3	1319.236	8.707	.000	21+, 11-21> 0-5,6-10
Within-groups	65302.876	431	151.515			
Total	69260.584	434				

As it is seen in Table 7, the results of analysis show that marital disaffection of married couples whose duration of marriage is between 11 and 20 years and 21 years and above differs significantly compared to the ones whose duration of marriage is between 0 and 5 years and 6 and 10 years ( $F=8.707$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The descriptive statistics about the marital disaffection of married couples according to the number of children were presented in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Descriptive Statistics About Marital Disaffection of Married Couples According To The Number Of Children

Number of Children	<i>N</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>Sd</i>
No children	100	33.97	10.73
1 child	118	37.64	12.85
2 children	159	38.51	13.35
3 or more children	58	39.15	12.39

As it is seen in Table 8, among the married participants of the research, the ones who have 3 or more children have the highest marital disaffection score ( $\bar{X} = 39.15$ ,  $Sd = 12.39$ ) while the ones who have no children have the lowest mean marital disaffection score ( $\bar{X} = 33.97$ ,  $Sd = 10.73$ ). The mean marital disaffection score of the married individuals who have 1 child is  $\bar{X} = 37.64$ ,  $Sd = 12.85$  and the mean marital disaffection score of the married individuals who have 2 children  $\bar{X} = 38.51$ ,  $Sd = 13.35$ . One-way variance analysis was made in order to determine whether marital disaffection of married couples differs according to the number of children they have and the results were shown in Table 9.

**Table 9.** The Results of One-way Variance Analysis About Marital Disaffection Of Married Couples According To The Number of Children They Have

Resource of the Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean of Squares	F	p	Significant Difference (Scheffe)
Between-groups	1557.309	3	519.103	3.305	0.020	3 or more children, 1 child, 2 children, no children
Within-groups	67703.275	431	157.084			
Total	69260.584	434				

As it is seen in Table 9, the results of the analysis show that marital disaffection of individuals who have 3 or more children differs significantly compared to the ones who have no children, who have 1 child and who have 2 children ( $F = 3.305$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## Discussion

### Discussion of Marital Disaffection, Life Satisfaction and Sexual Self- Consciousness

In this research, it was investigated whether life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness of married individuals predict their marital disaffection or not. The findings obtained showed that the hypotheses which sexual self-consciousness of married individuals predicts their marital disaffection positively and significantly while their life satisfaction predicts their marital disaffection negatively and significantly were confirmed. The results of the analysis showed that aforesaid two predictor variables of the research explained 28% of the total variance in the scores of marital disaffection. It was seen that there was a negative and moderate level correlation between life satisfaction and marital disaffection while there was a positive and low level correlation between sexual self-consciousness and marital disaffection. The individuals with high life satisfaction level and low sexual self-consciousness level have high level of well-being about life and it is expected that the satisfaction from their marriage will increase when shame is not considered as a factor in their sexual behavior with their spouses. On the contrary, individuals with low life satisfaction and high levels of sexual self-consciousness and sexual shame are expected to express disaffection with their marriage. While Yıldız & Baytemir (2013) found similar to our findings that marital dissatisfaction (not feeling disaffection in marriage) was a significant predictor of life satisfaction, Çetinkaya & Gençdoğan (2014) concluded that the quality of a marriage was a significant predictor of life satisfaction. According to the study of Westmann et al., (2004), it was reported that marital disaffection showed an increase as a result of spouses' stress experiences and males reported relatively more marital disaffection than females. Sanchez & Kiefer (2007) found a correlation between an individual's sexual self-consciousness and feeling shy of his/her body during physical intimacy, sexual pleasure level, sexual problems and sexual self. Trudel (2002) investigated the correlation between couple's sexual lives and course of their marriages and determined that there was a positive correlation between sexual behaviours and the course of marriage. Accordingly, it was concluded that the



quality of the relationship between couples and sexual life increased marital satisfaction. Another study presented that individuals who could express themselves without feeling sexually shy had high level of sexual satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2004). According to these findings, it can be said that low sexual shame and high life satisfaction may be a factor that reduces disaffection in marriages.

### **Discussion of Marital Disaffection to Socio-Demographic Variables**

In this research, it was also investigated whether there was a difference between marital disaffections of married couples according to gender. The findings confirmed the hypothesis that marital disaffection of married individuals differs according to gender. As a result of the analysis, it was found that females' marital disaffection was higher than male's. From this point of view, in the definition of marriage in Turkish society, women's responsibilities (feeding the family, housework, childcare, shopping) are more than men's responsibilities (paying bills, earning money) and this situation may cause them to experience marital dissatisfaction by reducing their marital satisfaction (Geçtan, 1982; Türkiye Family Structure Survey, 2011). In addition unfortunately, sexuality is still a taboo in Türkiye. Women's inability to express themselves sexually and not knowing their bodies may be the reason for different marital disaffection (Brand & Waterink, 2018; Else-Quest, et al., 2012). Some studies in the literature obtained findings similar to ours and concluded that males had higher level of marital satisfaction than females (Üncü, 2007; Çağ, 2011; Koçkan, 2015). Sarathchandra & De Silva (2018) found out in their study that gender and business sector were significantly correlated with marital disaffection. On the contrary to our findings, Anar (2011) determined that marital satisfaction of females were greater than that of males. Saraç (2021) was not able to find a significant correlation between life satisfaction of females and males in his study. The findings of Westmann et al., (2004) suggested that males reported marital disaffection more compared to females. In this particular research, whether there was a difference between marital disaffection of married individuals and the type of their marriages was investigated.

In the findings obtained, the hypothesis that marital disaffection of married individuals differed depending on the type of their marriages was confirmed. As a result of the analysis, it was found that the marital disaffection of individuals who had convenience marriages was significantly higher than that of individuals who had arranged and love marriages. Based on this finding, the fact that individuals in love marriages had the chance to flirt before marriage and individuals in arranged marriages stepped into the marriage relationship with the expectation of traditional marriage may have led to lower marital disaffection scores. Or, the fact that an arranged marriage woman thinks that she will not return to her father's house may have caused her marital disaffection scores to be lower. However, individuals who had convenience marriages may have had high marital disaffection scores as they stepped into the marriage relationship within the framework of some certain criteria and rationale. Similar to the findings of our research, it was found that marital satisfactions of those who got married by falling in love were higher than of the ones who had arranged or convenience marriages (Yanar Güngör, 2019). In contradiction with the findings of our research, Üçgül (2019) conducted a study with married females and revealed that marital disaffection of females who had arranged marriages was higher than of ones who had convenience marriages. Similarly in Çimen's research (2007), it was concluded that the satisfaction level which individuals who had convenience marriages perceived was higher than the perceived satisfaction level of individuals who had arranged marriages.

In this research, it was also focused on if there was a difference between marital disaffection of married individuals according to the duration of their marriage. The findings confirmed the hypothesis that marital disaffection of married individuals differed according to the duration of their marriages. The results of the analysis showed the marital disaffection of individuals who had been married for 11-20 and over 21 years differed significantly compared to those who had been married for 10 years or less. Although it is possible otherwise, when the family development process starting with marriage is taken into consideration, while couples are young, energetic and have high coping skills in the first years of marriage, they later face socioeconomic changes, recurrent problems, having children, caring for the child and crises in the child's growth and development process. Therefore, it can be thought that marital disaffection would increase over

the years. There are also some research findings which overlap ours. It was found in Sancaktar's study (2016) that marital satisfaction of newly married couples were higher than that of long-term married couples. Güren (2017) determined that marital satisfaction differed significantly according to the duration of marriage and the couples had the highest marital harmony in the first 5 years. Şener & Terzioğlu (2002) concluded that marriage satisfaction of couples decrease as the duration of their marriage increases. In contrast to the findings of our research, Yalçın (2014) claimed that marriage harmony of individuals increase as the duration of their marriages increases. Taycan & Kuruoğlu (2014) and Çelik (2006) presented that there was not a significant correlation between the increase in the duration of marriages and the marriage harmony between couples.

In this research, it was also investigated whether there was a difference between marital disaffections of married couples according to the number of children they had. The hypothesis that marital disaffection of married individuals differs according to the number of children they had was confirmed. The results of the analysis showed that marital disaffection of individuals who had 3 or more children differed significantly according to the number of children they had compared to ones who had 1 or 2 children. Marriage contains many responsibilities. The responsibility of having a child is one of the most critical among them. In addition to the psychological and social needs of children, especially in countries with economic problems such as Turkey, it is thought that the responsibilities brought about by the increasing needs of children may increase the marital disaffection of married couples in parallel with the number of children. Similar to the findings of our research, it was observed in Üçgül's study (2019) that marital disaffection increased as the number of children increased. Şendil & Korkut (2008) concluded that the increase in the number of children predicted the decrease in the couple harmony. On the contrary to our findings, Yanar Güngör (2019) and Yıldız (2013) revealed that marital satisfaction did not differ significantly according to the number of children.

### **Conclusion**

When life satisfactions and sexual self-consciousness of individuals were considered, it was revealed that the variables of both life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness were significant predictors of marital disaffection, there was a negative moderate level correlation between life satisfaction and marital disaffection and there was a low level significant correlation between sexual self-consciousness and marital disaffection. While marital disaffection decreases as life satisfaction increases, marital disaffection increases as sexual self-consciousness increases. It was observed that 28% of total variance about marital disaffection could be explained by life satisfaction and sexual self-consciousness together. When marital disaffection was investigated according to the determined demographic variables, it was concluded that marital disaffection of individuals differed significantly in terms of gender and marital disaffection of females was significantly higher than that of males. It was seen that marital disaffection of individuals differed significantly in terms of the type of marriage and marital disaffection of couples who had convenience marriages was significantly higher than that of couples who had arranged or love marriages. It was concluded that marital disaffection of individuals differed significantly in terms of the duration of marriages and those who had been married for over 21 years and 11-21 years had significantly higher marital disaffection than those who had been married for 0-5 and 6-10 years. It was revealed that marital disaffection of individuals differed significantly in terms of the number of children; the couples who had 3 or more children had significantly higher marital disaffection than those who had 1 child or 2 children and those who did not have children.

The results of this study might be beneficial for professionals who work in the field of marriage and family counselling to hold views about the factors that make marriages dissatisfying and to develop approaches to make individuals become satisfied with their marriages. Besides, while the experts working in the field of marriage counselling or premarital counselling are assessing marital disaffection, they can consider the effects of gender, type of marriage, duration of marriage and the number of children on marital disaffection with the help of this study. It is seen that there are very few studies in our country about the concepts of marital disaffection and sexual self-consciousness.

### **Limitation and Recommendations**

This research has some limitations and delimitations. This research was conducted during the COVID- 19 epidemic, which caused changes in the lives of individuals. The fact that couples are in the same house more

than before due to quarantine during the pandemic and their efforts to make their marriage (which is a private subject) look good may be a confusing factor in understanding marital disaffection among couples. This situation is thought to be a limitation in the research. On the other hand from this study, sexual self-consciousness was evaluated based on the total score which was a delimitation. In researches about sexual self-consciousness, the sub-scales of sexual self-consciousness scale, self-consciousness and sexual shyness can also be included in the analysis. Couples did not participate in this study together. In researches new about marital disaffection, ensuring the participation of married couples together in the research might result in obtaining more productive results.

On the other hand, for Turkish literature new studies aimed at increasing the understanding of the concepts of marital disaffection and sexual self-awareness may contribute to the relevant literature. Especially considering the values attributed to family and the importance of family in Turkish society, researchers in the future should act together with a community-based approach; It is thought that the situations/variables that cause marital disaffection and perhaps indirectly divorce should be further investigated.

This research topic can be dealt with by including more dependent variables which might affect marital disaffection (marriage satisfaction, attachment injuries, conflict solving strategies, attachment dimensions, psychological resilience, communication strategies, coping with stress, the use of social media) and socio-demographic variables that could not be included in this study (economic status, presence of chronic diseases, women's working life, number of marriages, relationships outside of marriage, sharing household responsibilities). In this research, the concept of marital disaffection was tried to be described by quantitative research methods. Marital disaffection can also be identified using qualitative research methods and techniques, such as Online Photovoice (OPV), Online Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (OIPA), or the Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach, which aims to solve problems and contribute to well-being by developing commonalities with individuals and groups.

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