

Section 6. Psychology

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Marital satisfaction in intercultural marriages from the perspective of Ukrainian women married to Turkish men

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate how intercultural couples attain marital satisfaction and communication competence. It enriches previous studies by bringing more clarity to understanding the complex factors contributing to marital satisfaction of partners in intercultural intimate relationships. The outcomes indicated that expanded intercultural communication competence prior to marriage lead to higher marital satisfaction while paucity of it was a stimulant for tension and conflict within intercultural marriages. Such factors as love, jealousy and partnership were found to be most relevant for marital satisfaction, thereby reaffirming evolutionary psychologists' hypothesis about their presence across different cultures as elements of human cohesion.

Keywords: Marriage, Intercultural Communication, Marital Satisfaction, Cultural Diversity.

Introduction

Marriage has existed for centuries as an institution that joins men and women in a social and legal relationship for the purpose of maintaining and, carrying on a family structure. Although the word marriage itself comes along with many positive connotations, it is widely accepted that it includes many conflicts especially if partners are coming from different cultures. Since both parties carry their unique life experiences, personalities and cultures into to the union, some basis conflicts are inevitable.

Generally, people marry people who are similar to themselves. The greater the similarity of the two people, the less they need to adjust to the changes that happen in their lives. The greater the difference between the spouses, the less common the pairing and the greater the difficulty they will have adjusting [8].

Intercultural marriage is a marriage that takes place between spouses of different cultural backgrounds. They may be different in their values, beliefs, customs, traditions, or styles of life so that cultural dimensions are a relatively significant aspect of such a marriage [11].

Intercultural couples have much greater difficulty adjusting to one another and their surroundings when compared to couples who are from the same culture. Couples from the same background have expected differences such as personality, education, and life experiences but in intercultural marriages there are additional differences, mainly customs and values that make it much harder to adapt.

The purpose of this study was to explore the level of adjustment of intercultural couples, specifically Ukrainian fe-

males married to Turkish males, and its relation to achievement of marital satisfaction and communication competence. Intercultural marriage is a complex topic which is difficult to investigate in its entirety in one study. Since cultural differences are considered to be an important aspect of these marriage the investigator focused on the level of adaptation shown by the Ukrainian wives residing in Turkey.

Literature review

There are several areas in intercultural marriage in which differences in goals, values, and objectives, are going to call for adjustment. Landis [7] classifies these areas as religion, social life, mutual friends, in laws, money and sex relations. Blood and Wolfe's [2] study stated eight areas of 'stress' in a marriage: money, children, recreation, personality, in-laws, roles, religion, politics, and sexuality. Every culture has its own rituals with which its members grow-up, and which helps them to go through life transitions. It is very hard for a person from another culture to adapt to the rituals easily. Intercultural marriages affect every level of the social system, which includes the individual, the couple, their children, the culture or ethnic group they live in, and the society as a whole. Preto and Mc-Goldrick [8] believed that the greater the cultural difference between the spouses the harder it would be to adjust to the marriage. Nonetheless, they had a positive view of intercultural marriages; even though intercultural marriage influences every level of the social system, it breaks the old continuity by opening the system to new patterns, ideas, and connections. Becoming familiar with another culture may be an enriching experience that provides flexibility to the social system. The fact that each spouse has different values, patterns and

attitudes might complement and enhance the strength of the marriage. For example, an Asian female who has difficulty expressing her anger for fear of losing control and becomes depressed, may be able to express her anger more comfortably by marrying an Italian male who expresses his feelings directly and spontaneously.

Tseng [11] believes that before two people from different cultures marry, they are quite likely to think of one another in a stereotyped manner. After they get married the problems or differences may become more obvious. The recognition of differences may continue for years. Marriage is a process of developing events which couples face and they must adapt to each new situation or problem when the time comes. These new situations or life transitions may be birth, death, illness, holidays, etc. For example, the couple may have difficulty naming their child or a funeral may put the foreign spouse in a difficult or uncomfortable position. Many people are not ready to face all these differences and when they do they may feel isolated, strange, or like an outsider. This usually happens when the person doesn't know how to behave or that a certain behavior is expected and the individual is not aware of it. An example in the Turkish culture may be when young people kiss elderly people's hands.

Sometimes the two people will not recognize the cultural difference and behave in their own way in a particular situation. One will react to a situation from his own cultural point of view, not knowing his partner is also behaving according to his culture. When differences occur the couples start to speculate about reasons for them and begin to find solutions. It is very important for the couple to talk about their differences and motivations, why some things happened and what was felt. In order to solve their problems, couple must discuss how they should change in order to reduce the chance of a problem. This is an important factor in helping the marriage to succeed [11].

However, even though the couple may talk things over, it is very hard for them to come to a solution, be cognitive aware of the problem, and behave in a different way. Culture is the main reason for this. Culture is something that is learned through experiences in early life. It teaches a style of life which is very hard to overcome and suddenly substitute another way of behavior. Since an individual has developed a system of emotions associated with a set of behaviors it usually takes a great deal of work and time to adjust to a new situation. For instance, a Ukrainian woman married to a Turkish man may have difficulty understanding why her husband is so close to his family. Although she may cognitively understand that these close relationships are part of the culture, they may be very hard to accept. She must find a way that she can feel comfortable with. Tseng [11] suggests that the process of learning should not be hurried but allowed to take time because rushing it might destroy the equilibrium and produce unexpected complications. Tseng also suggests that the person should call 'time out' so that he/she doesn't feel overwhelmed by new situations. The goal of this struggle is to

achieve balance which is part of adaptability. This balance or adaptation occurs when a person discovers and appreciates the values of both cultures, accepts the differences, and is always willing to try new behaviors for better adjustment.

In general, the literature suggests that intercultural marriages have additional problems when compared to intracultural marriages. These problems are mainly based on the cultural differences of the two spouses. The recognition of differences begins during the mate selection phase. These differences include style of life, beliefs, values, and traditions. When there are such differences between two individuals an adjustment pattern must be found in order for the couple to live comfortably. However, even though an adjustment pattern is found additional problems may arise, such as communication, family, relatives, etc. These women need to be adaptable and flexible in order to adapt to each situation. Adjustment to the marriage and culture continues throughout the individuals' life since life transitions forces them to experience different things at different ages. Despite demographic increases in the number of intercultural couples around the world, limited research is available to guide counselors and therapists in addressing the role that culture plays in intimate intercultural relationships [3]. In one review of academic literature on intercultural relationships, Sullivan and Cottone [10] concluded that, overall "little empirical research has been done with intercultural couples to assist with conceptualization of problems and useful interventions".

Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were used to investigate how women in an intercultural dyad deal with cultural differences and achieve marital satisfaction. Intercultural marriages are described through the eyes of Ukrainian women married to Turkish men as it is their lived experience. The interview began with background questions such as age, nationality, length of marriage, education, profession, number of children, availability of intercultural experience. Then, the interview advanced to questions about similarities and differences between spouses, their communication styles, possibility of integration of the two cultures, and conflicts within the marriage.

Participants for this study were recruited through two different Facebook groups: "Ukrainian community in Turkey" and "Ukrainians in Turkey" with 1338 and 3335 members respectively. The sample included seventeen Ukrainian women married to Turkish men who lived in Istanbul. The majority of participants were in their thirties; the youngest participant was 22 years old and the oldest one was 44. The length of intercultural marriage in this sample varied between 3 months and 9 years. Fourteen out of seventeen participants had higher education but only four were officially employed. Most of the respondents (15 out of 17) travelled a lot before getting married and had contact with different cultures in their environment at home, work, school, or neighborhood.

According to female participants in this study most couples were using 2 or 3 languages for better communication with their husbands. Eight women named English as the main language of communication. Six women stated they were

speaking mainly Turkish. Three out of seventeen were using mainly Russian to communicate with their partners.

Research results

The first research question asked: what are the cultural factors that impact the marital satisfaction in intercultural marriages the most? Love, honesty, economic stability, respect and partnership were named as important predispositions of marital satisfaction in intercultural marriages. Among the cultural factors that negatively influence the marital satisfaction and lead sometimes to conflict between spouses, participants named: jealousy, exhausting bureaucratic procedures, homesickness, numerous husband's relatives, little knowledge of language and culture. Most interviewees had some intercultural interaction preceding meeting their life partners. A few participants specified being brought up in a socially differing environment, while some dated outside of their social group before marrying their husband. Only two participants did not have a contact with representatives of other cultures while growing up and lived only inside their own social group before meeting their husband. Even insignificant introduction to different cultures seemed to impact those respondents' perspective and therefore marital satisfaction as they appeared to show more competence in intercultural communication. Religion was not a specific focus of the study; however, most of the participants when asked about holidays celebrated in the family, talked first about celebration both Muslim and Christian religious holidays as a family tradition.

The second research question was: what types of communication competencies partners had to develop in order to address cross-cultural differences? In this research language fluency and cultural competence turned out to be the most considerable factors as it influenced the effectiveness of communication between spouses. Most of the women admitted difficulties in communication with their husband due to lack of fluency in one common language. Most couples were using 2 or 3 languages for better communication with their husbands. In present sample, spouses' abilities such as self-awareness, open-mindedness, self-disclosure and communication skills were necessary appeared to be essential factors contributing to intercultural communication competence the most within these marriages.

Discussion

The results of the study reinforce the hypothesis that both jealousy and love can be seen culturally homogeneous all over the world, independently of country, culture or whatever other variables, since these components are considered essential in relationship satisfaction under any circumstances. They also reflect partners' faith in each other and show that satisfaction gets higher as partners grow closer emotionally and partnership gets stronger [9]. As one of the participants explained: "I don't think about my marriage as about marriage with representative of a different culture but as a union with a person whom I love".

Importance for marriage of such competencies as self-consciousness, acceptance, and language fluency dis-

closed by this study reiterated Chen's [5] statements that communication competence involves both effectiveness and appropriateness in interactions. One of the Chen's [5] theorem related to intercultural communication competence deals with individual's message skills namely verbal and nonverbal communication. According to it individuals with the ability in the host language are more likely to be competent in intercultural communication than individuals without it. In this study couples who struggled with language had similar challenges in their marriage such as a lack of autonomy and a sense of dependence.

Intercultural marriages involve a blend of two distinct lives with different histories, personalities, values, and expectations. It can be viewed as an active creation of a new culture that has never existed before. Casmir [4] introduced the concept of a new culture building and defined it as a third-culture, or new interactive relationship, which would represent an expression of mutuality, and can be understood, supported and defended by all participants of its development. As couples in this study described their interactions and current dynamics within the marriage, the combination of norms, values, and traditions could be conceptualized as a third culture.

The final dimension dealt with cultural knowledge or awareness about the partner's cultural values, customs, norms, and systems. The change in previously held beliefs about particular cultures represented in this study aligns with Allport's [1] Contact Hypothesis Theory. His theory stated that meaningful, continues, comprehensive interactions with one who is culturally different have the potential to modify previously held beliefs about the one's represented culture and it supported the findings in this study. When meaningful communication occurs between people who feel that they are evenly matched and possess a common purpose it can promote ameliorations to earlier, inaccurate perceptions.

Conclusions

Culturally diverse spouses may experience additional challenges primarily due to lack of the language fluency, different communication styles, and family opposition. The research has shown those who have had significant contact with different cultures in their environment at home, school, or neighborhood prior to marriage seemed to have an expanded communication competence and as a result were more satisfied with their marriages. Other respondents represented in this study revealed that a lack of intercultural communication competence was a catalyst for misunderstanding and sometimes lead to a conflict within intercultural marriages. Along with the challenges participants acknowledged how their marriage was personally advantageous. It helped current study to uncover additional knowledge about how intercultural dyads co-create a completely new culture. Moreover, having a long-term contact with each other's culture allows dyads the opportunity to build up a unique third culture which is composed of the best qualities of two different cultures.

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Kreative Selbstverwirklichung der Persönlichkeit in der beruflichen Tätigkeit

Abstract: In jedem Bereich der Berufstätigkeit gibt es die Probleme der kreativen Selbstverwirklichung der Persönlichkeit. Man kann jedoch bestimmte Richtungen festhalten, um das neue Niveau der kreativen Selbstverwirklichung im Beruf zu steigern.

Keywords: die Kreativität, die Persönlichkeit, die kreative Selbstverwirklichung.

Die moderne, sich ständig weiter entwickelnde Gesellschaft stellt immer größere Forderungen an das Subjekt der beruflichen Tätigkeit. Derzeit ist die Ansicht verbreitet, dass ein Fachmann auf einem gewissen Gebiet nicht nur derjenige ist, der für seine Aufgaben die notwendigen Kenntnisse und Übung besitzt, sondern auch persönlich in seine Arbeit involviert und einbezogen ist. In Russland sowie in Ausland haben sich folgende Forscher mit der Selbstverwirklichung im Berufsleben beschäftigt: in Deutschland (W. Stern, O. Lippmann, F. Giese), Großbritannien (C. Meiers, C. Spearman, J. Cox), Frankreich (A. Bine, T. Simon, V. Henry, A. Pieron), USA (G. Munsterberg, W. James, R. Catell). In Russland sind viele Forschungen der Selbstverwirklichung im Beruf gewidmet (K. K. Platonov, B. F. Lomov, V. D. Shadrikov, V. N. Druzhinin und andere), wobei besonders die zeitgenössischen Arbeiten hervorzuheben wären (K. A. Abulhanova-Slavskaya, L. I. Anziferova, L. A. Korostyleva, S. I. Kudinov) [2].

Die Probleme der kreativen Selbstverwirklichung der Persönlichkeit in jedem Bereich der Berufstätigkeit sind nur Teil der allgemeinen Problematik der Selbstverwirklichung der kreativen Persönlichkeit im Beruf, und können deshalb nicht getrennt davon gelöst werden. An diesen Fragen arbeiten nicht nur Psychologen, sondern auch Pädagogen, Soziologen, Philosophen, Betriebswirte und Verwaltungswissenschaftler. Das ist kein Zufall. Die Suche nach den Fragen erfordert eine genaue Betrachtung und Beschäftigung mit den Konzepten, die sich schon auf diesem Gebiet ergeben haben. Deren interdisziplinäre Verallgemeinerung, Bildung einer Gesamtlehre über die kreative Selbstverwirklichung, die Antworten über deren Ursprünge, treibende Kräfte, Bewegungsrichtung, Möglichkeiten, Bedingungen, Technologien, Effizienz usw., Deutung vieler Begriffe, die mit Problemen der Selbstverwirklichung einher gehen, deren Anwendung und Verständnis in verschiedenen Wissenschaften noch nicht eindeutig ist.