

## An examination of the problems experienced by women during and after divorce and their coping methods

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the divorce causes of divorced women and the problems they experience during and after the divorce period and their coping methods with these problems. Twenty-eight divorced women participated in the study. The universe of the study consists of divorced women living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). In this study, criteria-based sampling, which is a purposive sampling method, was used in the determination of the study group. This research was conducted with qualitative data collection technique, and a semi-structured interview form which was developed by the researchers was used as a data collection tool. The interview form which was developed as a data collection tool was given its final version based on expert opinions. The collected data were analysed by means of content analysis. As a result of the analysis of the data, the most important causes for divorce mentioned by women appeared as differences of opinion, lack of interest and financial irresponsibility, whereas the least mentioned causes are age differences and jealousy. The leading problems experienced during the divorce process are psychological breakdown, external interventions and sharing of the property, whereas the least emphasised problems are the failure of the family to give support and failure to divorce due to living in different countries. The most important problems after divorce were listed as the negative viewpoint of the society towards a divorced woman, financial problems and psychological breakdown, whereas the least experienced problems are future anxiety and loneliness. The leading coping with problems method appeared as a social support from family and friends, and the least mentioned method was gaining financial strength. In terms of improvement of responsibility and value perceptions, it is recommended that studies are conducted in the fields of guidance and psychological counselling services and family counselling.

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## 1. Introduction

Marriage is an essential source of satisfaction and happiness for some individuals, while it is a source of miserableness for some people, on the contrary, and acts as a phenomenon which brings about several negative effects. It is observed that when marriage enters into a negative track, spouses develop the idea of divorce. Divorce appears as a phenomenon which occurs with the legal termination of marriage union when such expectations of spouses as respect, love, trust, commitment and life-long happiness are not met for a variety of reasons (Sucu, 2007). Today, the increasing divorce rates both in our country (TUIK, 2010) and in the world (Henslin, 1992: cited in Senturk, 2008) display a result related to the operation of the marriage union. The increase of divorces on a daily basis is a phenomenon which affects the concept of family negatively. Family is the smallest building block which is necessary for a society to continue its existence. For this reason, the protection of marriage union bears huge importance. The increase in divorce rates is associated with the changes in fundamental values, preferring cities due to industrialisation, technological advancements in communication, approaches towards women's rights and divorces, financial problems and the consumption culture and individualism being in demand (Polat, 2012) as well as gender roles, different life expectations, routinisation of marriage life, changes in family and marriage functions, deterioration of intra-family communication, changing roles of husband and wife, and social changes produced by urbanisation and industrialisation (Henslin, 1992: cited by Senturk, 2008). In addition, disagreements experienced in the family and marriage relation, family background of spouses, their upbringing styles and cultural features, and changes in financial situations can be effective in the divorce process (Aktas, 2009).

Individuals who experience the divorce process and its aftermath have to deal with several problems which they did not think about when they were married. The uncertainty of the divorce process can create anxiety in individuals and lead to fears. In addition, they can also feel concerned about the judgements of people in their social environment. Unemployed women who did not work during their marriage and whose financial needs were met by their husbands are faced with the problems of meeting their economic needs in the future (Budak, 2010). Women feel the problems of divorce more intensely compared to men. This is due to both individual and social factors. Women approach events more emotionally and are more intensely affected.

There may be several reasons for terminating the marriage union, meaning divorces. Turkish Civil Code standardised divorce procedures: according to this code, the causes of divorce are categorised under four groups (Sucu, 2007). Specific causes for divorce are listed as adultery, offence against life or vicious or derogatory treatment, committing crime or living an inglorious life, abandonment and mental disease in 161st to 165th articles of the Civil Code. General divorce causes are listed as the shattering of marriage union and the failure to re-establish a common life, uncontested divorce and failure to re-establish a common life due to de facto separation in the 166th article of the code. An examination of the pre-divorce marriage story of women who apply for a divorce shows that sexuality, violence, drinking, adultery and problems with the family of the spouse, as well as financial problems and psychiatric diseases, are listed (Ucan, 2007). The study conducted by Aktas (2011) mentioned adultery, offence against life, derogatory treatment, abandoning the family and mental diseases as causes for divorce. Another study conducted by Sevim (2013) showed disloyalty and adultery as the most important cause. Another research conducted with divorced women (Abali, 2006) listed personal indifference, drinking and gambling as the most cited causes for divorce. Demir's (1998) study revealed financial difficulties, in differences with the husband, failure of the husband to perform his responsibilities, cultural differences and personal disharmony as the most important reasons for divorce. The second-ranking important causes for divorce were mentioned as indifference and lack of love. The study conducted by Zara (2013) on 140 divorced women addressed the phenomenon of

divorce in two dimensions. In the study, two categories, namely, traditional families and liberal families, were created. It was found out that the causes for divorce of traditional families and liberal families were different. In traditional families, domestic violence and excessive intervention of relatives in the marriage were indicated as the causes for divorce whereas in liberal families socio-cultural differences, lack of communication and differentiation of lifestyles were listed as the causes for divorce. Specific causes for divorce in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) are adultery, offence against life, maltreatment and battery, committing a crime and inglorious conditions and actions, abandonment and mental diseases. General causes for divorce are tensions in family relations, de facto separation and uncontested divorce (Esendagli, 2003).

Divorce process creates the need for organising a new way of life. This process also brings about several problems such as economic problems, social prejudices, responsibility of the children and the change of family structure all of which exert pressure on the spouses (Demircioglu, 2000). Although divorce is seen as liberation for spouses who suffer from unhappy marriages, it also amounts to the fragmentation of family union. Divorce also has a dimension which presses spouses in economic terms, batters them in emotional terms and affects their status in the society (Keskin, 2007). An examination of the relevant literature shows that in our society women mostly acquire less education and are raised as 'housewives' not as 'working women' as a result of which they end up with unemployment. Although these women do not experience too many problems during their marriage, they suffer from economic difficulties when they are faced with a divorce and some women descend to the poverty line and even below that line (Arikan, 1996).

After divorce, women can experience several different moods of affection. The leading moods of affection are as follows: lack of love, loneliness, helplessness, indecisiveness, insecurity, feeling oneself in an abyss, being overburdened by responsibilities, sense of insignificance, negative feelings towards the opposite sex, feeling of guilt towards herself or her child, and frustration or rebel. Health problems experienced after divorce can be listed as premature menopause, malnutrition-induced obesity and associated diseases, hazardous habits caused by stress (smoking, drinking, drugs), cardiovascular diseases, hypertension and cancer (Can & Aksu, 2016). Divorce is sometimes seen as a salvation. In other times, it can lead to suicide or mark the beginning of psycho-somatic diseases. In societies where divorce is not forbidden, on the contrary, are common, the suicide rate of women is lower than men. In societies where divorce is forbidden or common, the suicide rate of women is higher compared to men (Ogurtan, 2011). According to Yorukoglu (1997), divorce is a very tough phenomenon for spouses. It becomes even tougher especially for the women who have to take shelter in their family home. Seeking for a job and the responsibility of the children added, women suffer from pessimism, anger towards herself and her spouse, and physical complaints (Keskin, 2007). Divorce is not a situation which creates difficulties only for the spouses; it is also seen as a negative phenomenon for children considering its consequences (Aktas, 2011). Among these problems, lack of respectability in society, the unrest and disagreements experienced during the custody process of the children, pressures exerted by the community, social pressures and the deterioration of financial status are on top of the list (Sarpkaya, 2013).

It can be seen that the divorce process and its aftermath can create deep-rooted impacts in the lives of women and men. Divorce can create negative results both for the individuals and societies. Divorce can become an important social problem by which people become unhappy albeit for a certain period of time. Individuals who experience divorce can suffer from several health-related, economic and social adaptation problems. In this context, the determination of the causes of divorce phenomenon can create serious negative results at individual and social levels and the development of relevant measures bears huge importance. Divorce is a social problem which is a hot topic in family law; it also attracts the attention of public opinion. For this reason, covering this topic bears importance. When the relevant literature is examined, it can be seen that the causes of divorce and its impact on individuals are the most researched topic. In TRNC, like in the world, studies are conducted on divorce phenomenon today, but they are limited in number (Eray, 2011). This study attempts to make a realistic evaluation on the divorce process of divorced women in TRNC and their experiences

in the aftermath and to propose recommendations for taking necessary measures; thus, it is expected to make a contribution to close a serious gap in this area. In addition, this study is also essential in which it will be a point of reference for future studies. In this context, the purpose of this study is to display the problems experienced in TRNC during and after divorce and relevant coping strategies and to develop recommendations for both implementers and future studies in accordance with the findings.

## 2. Method

In this section of the paper, the study group, the data collection tool used in the study, the collection and analysis of data are explained. This study was conducted based on a qualitative data collection technique, and a semi-structured interview technique was used. Semi-structured interviews are often preferred by researchers as they are not subject to the limitations of tests and questionnaires and help researchers acquire in-depth information on a certain topic (Yildirim & Simsek, 2003).

### 2.1. Study group

Criterion sampling, which is a purposive sampling method, was used for the determination of the study group. In the study, researchers chose divorced women participants in accordance with the basic criterion determined. After the first interview conducted with a divorced woman, this first interviewee directed the researcher to another divorced woman. The study group created with this method consisted of 28 divorced women living in the cities of Iskele, Famagusta, Nicosia and Kyrenia in TRNC in the year 2019. The interview questions, which were prepared previously, were asked to 28 divorced women on a face-to-face basis.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the study group**

Characteristics of the study group		f	%
Age	20-30	8	28.57
	31-40	8	28.57
	41-50	12	42.85
Sector	Public	18	64.28
	Private	10	35.71
Education level	Elementary	5	17.85
	Middle School	2	7.14
	High School	10	35.71
	Undergraduate	10	35.71
	Graduate	1	3.57
Marriage term	0–1 year	4	14.28
	2–5 years	10	35.71
	6–10 years	6	21.42
	11–15 years	3	10.71
	16–20 years	2	7.14
	21+ years	3	10.71
Number of children	None	7	25
	1	13	46.42
	2	7	25
	3	1	3.57
Type of marriage	Own will	22	78.57
	Arranged	6	21.42

An examination of Table 1 shows that 28%of the interviewees are aged 20–30 years, 28%are aged 31–40 years and 42%are aged 41–50 years. Sixty-four percent work in the private sector and 35%work

in the public sector. As for their education status, 17% are elementary school graduates, 7% are middle school graduates, 35% are high school graduates, 35% are university graduates and 3% have graduate degrees. Of the marriages which end with a divorce, 14% continued for 0–1 year, 35% continued for 2–5 years, 21% continued for 6–10 years, 10% continued for 11–15 years, 7% continued for 16–20 years and 10% continued for 21 years and more. As for the number of children, 25% have no children, 46% have one child, 25% have two children and 3% have three children. Finally, as for the type of marriage, 78% married with their own will and 21% married on an arranged basis.

## **2.2. Data collection tools and collection of data**

In this study, a semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. The interview form was developed for divorced individuals according to the research questions and information in the relevant literature. In the interview form, questions on the reasons which force women to divorce, problems experienced during and after the divorce process, and coping methods with problems experienced during and after divorce are included. While preparing the interview questions which were developed by the researchers, effort was paid to ensure that questions were easily comprehensible, not multi-dimensional and not directing the interviewee to a certain direction as basic principles (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; cited in Yilmaz & Altinkurt, 2011). Expert opinion was sought in order to see the extent to which the prepared interview form served the purpose of the study, as well as its comprehensibility and applicability. The interview form was prepared in line with the opinions of the experts. In the second stage, a preliminary application was conducted with a divorced woman, and it was seen that no problems were experienced. In the study, the periods spared for expert examination, participant approval and interviews held with managers were kept long, and internal validity (plausibility) was added through long-term interaction. In addition, in order to increase the plausibility of the data, the consistency of the findings obtained from the collected data was checked. The literature was searched first before developing the questions; then, interviews were held with a family counsellor and three experts in the field of education after when questions were prepared. The data of the study were collected in environments where interviewees could express themselves comfortably and their voice could be recorded in time periods when they gave an appointment. Interview questions were asked to each interviewee with the same wording and intonation that would connote the same meaning. Voice recording and note-taking were applied together in the interviews conducted with divorced women. Then, the records were transcribed. From the transcription of the interviews, 62 pages of data were obtained. First, the data were put into writing, the accuracy of transcription was ensured and data were processed according to the determined themes; then, the findings were interpreted with direct citations. In order to ensure the reliability of data, the records and their transcriptions were examined by a researcher other than the authors and the results were compared with the transcriptions of the researchers (Uzuner & Colak 2004: cited in Yilmaz & Altinkurt, 2011). Some minor deficiencies were identified between records and transcriptions, and these deficiencies were remedied.

## **2.3. Analysis of data**

Descriptive analysis and content analysis were used in the study. In data analysis, participants were coded from 1 to 28. Content analysis was used in the analysis of data; in this context, main themes were determined according to the questions asked. The data obtained from the forms were transferred to the Office programme first and read for several times as a result of which relevant coding was performed. Then, these codes were brought together and themes (categories) which would form the outline of the research findings were explored and descriptive and content analysis was conducted. After the completion of writing of interview transcriptions, interview coding key was prepared based on the interview questions. The researchers read the interview transcriptions of each interviewee independent from each other and marked the suitable option which included the answer of each question in the relevant interview coding form. After this procedure, the evaluation of

researchers included the checking of options of answers given to the relevant question belonging to the participant group and 'agreement' and 'disagreement' marks were checked. The themes and sub-themes which emerged after the analysis of the data are given in Table 4.4.1.

**Table 2. Themes and sub-themes which emerged after the analysis of the data**

1. Opinions on the causes which force women to divorce	Individual differences Emotional causes Biological causes Habits External causes
2. Opinions on the experiences of women during divorce process	Emotional problems Problems related to child (ren) Financial problems Social problems
3. Opinions on the experiences of women after divorce process	Social problems Financial problems Emotional problems Problems related to child (ren)
4. Opinions on coping strategies with problems experienced during and after divorce	Obtaining social support Individual methods

As can be seen in Table 2, researchers reached an agreement on collecting the data under four themes. The first main theme, 'opinions on the causes of divorce' consists of five sub-themes. The second theme, 'problems experienced during the divorce process', has four sub-themes. The third main theme 'problems experienced after the divorce process' also has four sub-themes. The fourth main theme 'coping strategies with problems experienced during and after divorce' has two sub-themes.

### 3. Findings

The opinions of interviewees were given with codes based on the principle of confidentiality. Accordingly, divorced women interviewees were coded with 'B' in order to indicate their marital status and each interviewee was given a number such as 'B1, B2, B3, B4...'. In this section of the paper, the questions in the interview form were grouped according to sub-problems and findings were presented.

#### 3.1. Opinions on the causes which force women to divorce

In line with this sub-problem, the question in the interview form was 'what are the reasons/causes that forced you into a divorce?' As a result of the analysis of this question, five sub-themes appeared which are given in Table 3.

**Table 3. The causes which force women to divorce**

Themes	Codes	n	%
Individual differences	Opinion differences	18	64.28
	Character differences	10	35.71
	Cultural differences	3	10.71
Emotional causes	Depletion of sharing	11	39.28
	Lack of interest	12	42.85
	Unhappiness	7	25

	Being abandoned	1	3.5
	Jealousy	1	3.5
Biological causes	Desire for having children	1	3.5
	Age differences	1	3.5
Habits	Gambling	3	10.71
	Financial irresponsibility	11	39.28
	Physical violence	5	17.85
External causes	External interventions	7	25
	Being cheated	9	32.14
	Cheating	1	3.5

As can be seen in Table 3, a majority of participants mentioned differences of opinions in individual differences theme and lack of interest in emotional causes theme among the reasons which forced them into divorce. In the habits theme, the failure of the spouse to undertake financial responsibility, and in emotional causes theme, depletion of sharing was mentioned. Among less frequent causes, age difference was mentioned among biological causes theme, gambling was mentioned in habits theme, and cultural differences was mentioned among individual differences theme. According to this theme, some opinions provided by divorced women are presented below:

One interviewee presented her opinion as ‘He was an indifferent person who did not perform his financial responsibilities. Our characters, ideas were different and we could not get along with each other. In time I understood that I was unhappy and did not want to live under the same roof with him. I was trying to continue my marriage for my child but I had to strength left. I decided to divorce’ (B13). Another interviewee explained: ‘he was very lazy. All financial expenses were covered by me. I could not bear it anymore and wanted to divorce. I was very unhappy with my girl’ (B17). Another participant said: ‘First of all, deciding to divorce is very difficult for a woman with three children. But I took this decision as my ex-husband was lazy, did not take any responsibility and gambled; we suffered from frequent disagreements, character differences; he always insulted me, applied violence and, on top of it, he cheated on me’ (B19). Another interviewee explained: ‘I had an indifferent husband who did not have any financial or emotional connection with his home and child. In time, such problems as disagreements, lack of respect, lack of interest reached to a maximum. Of course, our cultural differences were effective in these disagreements. I tolerated them for my child but in the end, I was cheated, which is the most important cause for my divorce’ (B7). Another interviewee explained her opinions as follows: ‘lack of interest, lack of love, age difference, not being taken seriously increased my unhappiness in time and I wanted to divorce. I continued my marriage for my children for years but in the end I was having depression and wanted to divorce. I could not continue any more with someone I did not love’ (B14).

### 3.2. Opinions on the experiences of women during the divorce process

The question asked in line with this sub-problem was ‘what kind of problems did you experience during the divorce process?’ As can be seen in Table 4, four sub-themes were determined as a result of the answers obtained in line with this sub-problem, namely emotional problems, problems related to child (ren), financial problems and social problems.

**Table 4. Problems experienced by women during the divorce process**

Themes	Codes	n	%
Emotional problems	Psychological breakdown	13	46.42
	Being threatened	6	21.42
Problems related to child (ren)	Child care	3	10.71
	Negative psychological situation of the child (ren)	8	28.57
Financial problems	Unemployment	2	7.14
	Accommodation	8	28.57

Social problems	Financial problems	6	21.42
	Sharing of properties	8	28.57
	Being accused	6	21.42
	Failure to divorce due to being in different countries	1	3.5
	External intervention	9	32.14
	Former spouse opposing divorce	3	10.71
	Family failing to provide support	1	3.5

As shown in Table 4, a majority of the interviewees mentioned psychological breakdown (13) in emotional problems theme, external interventions (9) in social problems theme, sharing of properties in financial problems theme and negative psychological situation of the child (ren) in problems related to child (ren) theme among the problems during the divorce process. The least experienced problems are unemployment (1 person) and the family failing to provide support. Opinions of some interviewees in this subject are as follows: *'We always had quarrels in this process, too. He used a discourse which accused me as if he was very interested in me. They accused me with lack of interest in house-related topics. His family was another problem; all came together in this process. Their son was right and I was wrong; they always attacked me. They worried about sharing of property. I demanded what was rightfully mine; there is the child, in the end. I had emotional problems. It was a difficult process until the lawsuit ended. I can say that I was alone in child-care. It was psychologically difficult for my child, too'* (B2). Another participant said: *'He always created discomfort and quarrels. I went through a difficult process as he did not want to divorce but in the end I managed. When he saw that that was the way it should be, he accepted and we divorced. He tried to use the child which damaged the child's psychology, too'* (B8). Another interview explained: *'After taking the decision I moved away from the house; in this process, I had accommodation problems. I did not have the financial means to rent a house. For this reason, I had the problem of feeling like a parasite. My family and friends supported me in this process. They tried to busy me with something so that I would not feel sad. Thanks to them I never felt alone'* (B9). *'He was threatening to kill me. I had to move to my family home. I was working but I had to quit'* (B12). *'In the divorce process, I especially had problems related to accommodation. He owned the house and I moved to my family home. My family always tried to convince me not to divorce and return to my home. But in time they accepted it. They said that their door was always open for me if I was unhappy. Yes, I was unhappy. I understood that I had to receive psychological assistance, and I received it. I had problems in sharing of property and others. They did not treat me fairly. I had to pay some of the debts'* (B23).

### 3.3. Opinions on the experiences of women after the divorce process

The question asked in line with this sub-problem was 'what kind of problems did you experience after the divorce process?' As shown in Table 5, it is seen that the answers received in line with this sub-problem are the same with the sub-themes related to the problems experienced during the divorce process.

**Table 5. Problems experienced by women after the divorce process**

Themes	Codes	n	%
Social problems	Negative viewpoint towards divorced women	12	42.85
	Pressure for remarriage	2	7.14
	Family problems	2	7.14
	Financial problems	10	35.71
Financial problems	Unemployment	2	7.14
	Accommodation	6	21.42
	Psychological breakdown	8	28.57
Emotional problems	Feeling of insecurity	1	3.5
	Loneliness	1	3.5



Problems related to child (ren)	Being threatened	6	21.42
	Future anxiety	1	3.5
	Negative psychological condition of the child	6	21.42
	Failure to assume responsibility in child-care	4	14.28
	Guilt and sadness because of the child (ren)	2	7.14

As can be seen in Table 5, a majority of the interviewees mentioned among post-divorce problems the negative viewpoint towards divorced woman (12 interviewees) in social problems theme, financial problems (10 participants) in financial problems theme, psychological breakdown in emotional problems theme and negative psychological condition of the child in problems related to child (ren) theme. Among less indicated problems, they listed insecurity, loneliness and future anxiety. The opinions of some interviewees in this subject are as follows: *'After the divorce the only problem I experienced was the viewpoint of the society for a divorced woman. A few friends of mine quitted seeing me after the divorce. I had depressing experiences. In addition to the sadness of divorce itself, some moved away from me as if it as an epidemic. Those days I was badly affected psychologically (B10). 'Gossips, regrets, people who tried to abuse me as I was a widow; in short, it was a difficult process. My family and friends were very supportive in this process. My psychology was in a very bad situation but in time everything gets lighter. Due to our community, I suffered from much slandering and ugly imputations. I did not have the financial means; if I had, I would move to another place (B19). 'I was always unhappy. But not because I regretted or I lost my spouse. It was about myself. I began to recover as I received psychological support. My awareness increased. I had financial problems. My family gave me support but it was still difficult. (B23) 'As I lost my job, I became powerless financially. I had the problem of not being able to go outside at night. I became a nervous person I was affected psychologically by the threats and restraints on my life. (B12) 'I did not have any problems after divorce. I put my life in order and I am happy. My family always provided me support. The only problem was that my child was psychologically affected' (B2).*

### 3.4. Opinions on coping methods with problems experienced by women during and after divorce

The question asked in line with this sub-problem was 'what were your coping methods with problems you experienced during and after divorce?' As can be seen in Table 6, the answers given in line with this sub-problem are determined as receiving social and individual support.

**Table 6. Coping methods with problems experienced by women during and after divorce**

Themes		Codes	n	%
Receiving social support	Family support		19	67.85
	Friend support		12	42.85
Individual methods	Receiving professional support		8	28.57
	Positive thinking		7	25
	Attending social activities		7	25
	Spending time with children		6	21.42
	Gaining financial strength		5	17.85

As can be seen in Table 6, a majority of interviewees said that they received social support from family and friends in the social support theme as regards coping methods with problems during and after the divorce process. In individual methods theme, they mentioned receiving professional support, positive thinking, and attending social activities. Less mentioned methods (5 interviewees) were listed as spending time with children and gaining financial strength opinions of some interviewees as regards this sub-theme are as follows: *'with the financial and emotional support of my family and friends, I coped with the problems I experienced during and after divorce. If it was not for them, everything would be more difficult. I travelled with my friends, went to places I had not been to before and attended social activities often. We travelled and went on vacation with my children and family. When I became a*

*policewoman everything turned better for me; now I secured my future as well as my children's future. Feeling financially secure is actually the solution to several problems. I met new people, I became more social; I am happy' (B3). 'I overcame this process and its aftermath thanks to my family and friends. I also received psychological support for a short period. When I look back I say 'fortunately'. This is my new life and I comforted myself by thinking that I should open a new page' (B5). 'I began to let it go and think positively. In the end, words do not harm me. Slandering is their weakness. These bad experiences made me more mature. I raised my children; my conscience is clear. Then I found a job and began to do baby-sitting. Standing on one's own feet is a nice thing. I coped with these problems with the support of my family' (B19). 'I overcame them with the support of my family. I built my house with their help. I am with my children. I have a job; I am happy. That I have a job helped me overcome the problems. Financially. (B21) 'I can say that I coped with the problems with psychological assistance. I began doing sports. I began to spend more time with my friends. Everything went better in time. I received huge support from my family and friends. I am so glad I have them' (B25).*

#### **4. Discussion**

When the opinions of women with regard to the causes for divorce are examined, it can be seen that differences of opinion and character in individual difference sub-theme, lack of interest and sharing in emotional causes theme, financial irresponsibility in habits theme and adultery in external causes theme are among the most mentioned reasons. Less cited causes compared to the foregoing are cultural differences in individual differences theme, unhappiness in emotional causes theme, gambling in habits theme and external interventions in external causes theme. An examination of the findings of similar studies shows that Ucan (2007) mentioned sexuality, violence, drinking, adultery, problems of the spouse with his family, financial problems and psychological problems among the divorce causes of women. Another study conducted by Abali (2006) claimed that personal lack of interest, drinking and gambling were among the most important causes of divorce. The research conducted by Sevim (2013) indicated disloyalty and adultery as the most important cause of divorce. Different from other studies, this research which is conducted in TRNC did not indicate drinking as a cause for divorce. This is due to the fact that because of the cultural structure and viewpoints, women in TRNC do not see drinking as a cause for divorce. In addition, in this study which is conducted in TRNC, adultery is indicated as a cause for divorce by fewer interviewees than other researches. This may be due to the fact that TRNC is a smaller society which creates the pressure of being exposed, which, in turn, serves as a deterrent factor. Another cause may be that due to the high incidence of divorces in the environment, this situation is internalised.

Divorce process creates the need for organising a new way of life. This process also brings about several problems. This study shows that the main problems experienced during the divorce process are psychological breakdown, children being negatively affected, accommodation, sharing of property and external interventions. Looking at similar studies, these problems are economic problems, social prejudices, responsibility of the children and the change of family structure all of which exert pressure on the spouses (Demircioglu, 2000). In this study, the most frequently cited problem in the process after divorce is found as the negative viewpoint towards divorced women which is in social problems theme. It is followed by financial problems in financial problems theme and psychological breakdown in emotional problems theme. The research findings of Keskin (2007) and Ugur (2014) also support the findings of this study. The research conducted by Ugur (2014) explored that some interviewees had difficulty in adapting to the community as the married women they met were or could be jealous of their husbands. Social value judgements can be the factor which turns into a problem the negative viewpoint of the society towards divorced women. In this regard, the patriarchal structure of the family and the society is especially effective (Ilkaracan, 1998). The cause for which women are not accepted by their families after divorce is the concerns for preventing the loss of status in the family. The resistance of the society towards divorce and especially the attitude towards divorced women, and the understanding which sees divorce as the failure of the woman, is a factor which leads to the

intolerance of families for divorce (Ozar & Cakar, 2012). It can be claimed that the negative viewpoint of the society towards divorced women prevails in TRNC which is a small island country.

An examination of the coping methods of women with problems experienced before and after divorce shows that social support provided by the family which is in receiving social support theme is the most important coping with method. It is followed by the social support provided by friends and receiving professional assistance and attending social activities which are in individual methods theme. When similar studies are examined, it can be seen that findings as regards coping with problems methods are similar. In Ugur's study (2014), a majority of divorced women (12 women) stated that their friends and environment supported them in divorce period, thanks to which they could overcome the difficulties of divorce more easily. Yildirim's (1997) opinion which supports this finding is as follows: 'several studies displayed that social support system is a powerful source in the solution, prevention and treatment of sociological and psychological problems of the individual, and his/her dealing with strained situations'.

When the subject is evaluated in general, it can be said that TRNC has a multi-cultural structure as it has been receiving considerable migration in recent years. It can be seen that some units in the society are affected by multi-culturalism from time to time. Some of them might be the changes in the viewpoint of society towards marriage, family, divorce and divorced women. Due to these cultural differences which also reflect upon marriages, changes might have happened in the viewpoint of spouses towards and their expectations from each other. The most important factor which is behind all these changes is cultural differences. In this study, it is believed that cultural factors can explain the results which are different from other studies. According to Bowen family theory, the patterns of individuals which come from previous generations will be seen in the next generations. Patterns brought from past generations will be experienced in the next generations both emotionally and physiologically. If the level of anxiety in individuals and families is minimised, problems will also be decreased. In this case, the emotional order of the family will be preserved (Gladding, 2015).

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

An examination of research findings shows that the most important factors which force couples to divorce are differences of opinion and lack of interest. They are followed by the spouse failing to undertake financial responsibility and depletion of sharing. Less mentioned causes are age difference, cheating, gambling and cultural differences. The most frequent problems experienced during the divorce period are psychological breakdown, external interventions, sharing of properties and the child(ren) being adversely psychologically effected. The least important problems emerge as accommodation and financial problems. The last identified reasons are losing one's job and failure to divorce due to living in different countries. Among the problems experienced after divorce, the most cited problems are the negative viewpoint of the society towards divorced women and financial problems. They are followed by psychological breakdown and child (ren) being adversely affected psychologically. Among the less mentioned causes is future anxiety. The most common coping with problems method during and after divorce period is social support from family and friends. They are followed by attending social activities and receiving professional support. Gaining financial strength is a coping method which is less common than others.

The phenomenon of divorce creates negative results both for individuals and the society. Divorce can become an important social problem in which people become unhappy albeit for a certain period of time. Individuals who experience divorce can suffer from several health-related, economic and social adaptation problems. Below are the recommendations offered in accordance with the findings of this study in order to prevent these problems:

1. It is observed that women suffer from serious problems both during and after divorce. In order to reduce the problems experienced by women and alleviate their consequences, social awareness studies can be conducted with the purpose of ensuring that they overcome this

- process and reach the future in a more healthy manner. Taking into consideration that divorce rates are increasing in TRNC despite the fact that it is an island country, marriage therapists should be visited before marrying so that marriage can progress more healthily for spouses. Guidance and psychological counselling as well as family counselling services can be provided in order to improve responsibility and value perceptions. In the same vein, family counsellors can be assigned to family courts so that divorces can be healthier and potential problems can be minimised.
2. Family counselling centres can be integrated into local governments in order to ensure that all individuals in the society can benefit from these centres. Local governments can perform awareness-raising studies with regard to coping with the problems which can occur when marriages are terminated with divorce.
  3. TRNC is a rather small society and it is known that migration to and from abroad has a considerable impact on its balance. Based on the opinion that this situation can reflect on marriages and differences of opinion and conflicts can occur between spouses due to the intermingling of different cultures, education programmes can be delivered by expert people on mass communication channels in order to reduce and partly prevent divorces.
  4. One of the important problems experienced during and after the divorce process is the financial problems of divorced women. In order to prevent this from acting as a problem, measures can be taken to remove the obstacles which prevent women from entering into working life. As indicated in some studies, the ratio of respondents who say that husband decided whether women would leave the house and work or not is rather high. For this reason, the social perception that husband has the prior right to say in allowing women to enter into working life in the society can be overcome.
  5. Taking into consideration that women receive essential support from their families in coping with problems, programmes which will improve the communication and problem-solving skills of these women as well as their families can be developed and applied. In addition, assistance can be obtained from experts in more effective coping methods and relevant programmes can be organised.
  6. The following can be recommended for future studies: more comprehensive and multi-dimensional studies can be conducted on more extensive study groups in the future. As scientific studies on divorce increase, training activities on prevention of divorces or coping with the post-divorce depression will increase, as a result of which the subject of divorce can be examined in various dimensions.
  7. It is known that cultural factors are considerably effective in family perception. For this reason, studies can take into consideration these subjects in marriage and divorce studies in both urban and rural areas parallel to the region of living, dominant socio-economic conditions, traditions and religious laws.

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