

# An Analysis of Interactions in Intercultural Marriages: A Field Study of Alanya\*

Hatice Ersoy Çelik  
Bedir Sala

**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the dimensions of the conflicts arising from the interactions of two different cultures in intercultural marriages and to examine under which conditions and the level to which cultural adaptation is provided. This study was conducted with 35 participants who have an intercultural marriage and live in Antalya Province's Alanya District, where people from many cultures and nationalities can be encountered due to Alanya being a tourist region. This study obtained the data using the semi-structured interview method to investigate the conflict and adaptation that may occur as a result of intercultural marriages. The snowball technique has been used to access the participants. At the end of the interviews conducted with these individuals, foreign spouses' process of adapting to the Turkish family structure and culture, what they've acquired from experiencing cultural conflict, and what conflict and adaptation processes they experienced were examined within the scope of family and social environments. The findings from the study have been compiled within the framework of conflict and adaptation as a result of cultural interaction.

**Keywords:** Intercultural marriage, cultural interaction, cultural differences, family communication, spousal interactions.

**Öz:** Bu çalışma kültürlerarası evliliklerde iki farklı kültürün etkileşiminden doğan çatışmanın boyutları ve kültürel uyumun hangi koşullarda ve düzeyde sağlandığının incelenmesini amaçlamaktadır. Turizm bölgesi olması sebebiyle pek çok kültürden ve milletten bireyin karşılaşma olanağının bulunduğu Antalya ilinin Alanya ilçesinde kültürlerarası evlilik yapan 35 katılımcı ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Kültürlerarası evlilikler sonucunda ortaya çıkabilecek çatışma ve uyumu araştıran bu çalışmada veriler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği ile elde edilmiştir. Katılımcılara ulaşmak için ise kartopu tekniği kullanılmıştır. Kültürlerarası evlilik yapan bireylerle gerçekleştirilen mülakatlar sonucunda yabancı gelin ve yabancı damatların Türk aile yapısına uyum süreçleri, kültürel uyum ve kültürel çatışma sürecinde elde edilen kazanımlar, yaşadıkları çatışma ve uyum süreçleri aile ve sosyal çevre kapsamında incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları, kültürel etkileşimin sonucu olarak çatışma ve uyum çerçevesinde derlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kültürlerarası evlilik, kültürel etkileşim, kültürel farklılık, aile iletişimi, eşler arası etkileşim.

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@ Sociologist, haticeersoy.90@gmail.com  
Assist. Prof., Afyon Kocatepe University, bedirsala@aku.edu.tr

id https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7327-9530  
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6892-2664

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## Introduction

Culture is closely related to economic, social, and political institutions. Cultural and social institutions emerge together, developing and affecting one other. As the main starting point, culture affects social institutions in various ways. The types of social arrangements of economic and political life depend on societal wealth, how societies organize authority, and the meanings societies attribute to these arrangements. Just as culture shapes economic, political, family and education institutions, so too do these institutions shape culture. Thus, a mutual interaction exists between social institutions and culture. Family as an institution exists at one of the most important points of these interactions.

Families are established through marriage as small groups where kinship ties connect individuals to one other and involve adults who take care of raising their children. Many family functions can be mentioned such as renewing the population, transferring national culture, socializing children, economic functions, and fulfilling individuals' biological and psychological needs. Families as an institution have transferred some of their functions to social institutions with modernization. Other changes have also occurred in the family institution alongside social changes.

Thanks to today's technological developments, the restrictions of time and space have largely been eliminated, and the possibility of individuals' coming together from different cultures has increased. Cultural interactions have increased through technological developments, increased global transportation (e.g., development of transportation facilities), and the relocation of economic centers. For example, individuals traveling to other countries in the scope of tourism activities have the opportunity to meet individuals from different cultures; cultural interaction takes place in this way. When individuals from different cultures meet, they can decide to become a family, and so intercultural marriages happen. Although such intercultural marriages have occurred in many societies in the past, this case continues to increase in the global world. Such marriages offer individuals multicultural life experiences. The new generation born from these marriages in particular grows up in an environment where two cultures intersect, allowing this generation the opportunity to experience multiculturalism from the moment of birth.

Accordingly, intercultural marriages have increased in Turkey in recent years. According to data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), the number of marriages with a foreign spouse in Turkey has been determined as follows: the total number of foreign brides was 18,814 in 2015 and rose to 23,264 in 2019. The

number of foreign grooms was 3,566 in 2015 and rose to 4,580 in 2019 (TurkStat, 2016, 2020). Along with these increases, the interactions in intercultural marriages will need to be further researched from various perspectives.

In this regard, conflict and adaptation issues in the analysis of the intercultural interactions that may occur as a result of marriage between individuals from different cultures have been researched in the scope of this study. The main purpose of this study is to examine the dimensions of the conflicts that arise when two different cultures intersect in intercultural marriages as well as the conditions and course of cultural adaptation.

### **Theoretical Overview**

Families are social institutions that ensure social integrity, maintain social relations, establish economic partnerships, and continue existence due to emotional attachments. Families are inevitably affected by cultural, social, and economic factors both both nationally and internationally. Even if families have undergone changes with the changing and transforming world, they still protect their feature of being the smallest social unit holding individuals together.

In today's societies, defined as late modernity, the assumption is that the fluidity facilitating the movement of people, goods, information, and places will develop rapidly in the near future (Ritzer, 2010, pp. 24–25). Rapid developments in transportation and communication technologies have increased intersocietal interactions. Hence, the acceleration of the circulation of knowledge and individuals in the world has also accelerated cultural interactions. In this context, the concept of culture is a term that cannot be precisely defined due to the exceptional complexity it contains. While culture as a term was used in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as the overall lifestyle of certain people, it was used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the development of anthropology to mean a holistic and separate lifestyle. The sociological use of the term manifests itself as the overall lifestyle of a social group (Williams, 1993, pp. 8–10). The concept of culture refers to the legacies from past to present that are kept alive through traditions, that reveal customs and produce new ones, and that maintain social continuity. Culture is positioned so as to combine coexistence with organized collective thought. From this point of view, culture can be said to be a human-discovered reality and representation (Kartari, 2014, pp. 29–30).

With globalization, the rate of cultural interactions has increased even more especially as a result of technological developments (Parekh, 2002, p. 209). As a result of mutual cultural interactions, changes occur in both cultures. Intercultural

interactions can be realized consciously or unconsciously. When evaluated from this point of view, cultural interactions are seen to emerge as an inevitable situation. When considered in general, cultures are seen to influence each other more or less because of their nature, even from the most primitive cultures to modern cultures. Cultural exchanges make this a mandatory situation.

Families are considered to be an important institution of cultural interaction. Families play a particular role in preserving social order, biological continuity, the reproduction of social relations, and the intergenerational circulation of assets and capital (Bourdieu, 2015, pp. 129–135). Communication and interactions in multicultural families are assessed through interpersonal relationships and psychological dimensions. When considering the familial and cultural interactions established by individuals from different cultures, intrafamilial relations are important at the microlevel while migration and ethnic relations come into play at the macrolevel (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2014, pp. 121–123). Marriage migration is defined as the moving of one or both spouses from the native geography they lived in before getting married to the place where the other spouse lives or to an entirely new place. Marriage migration involves family formation and better life opportunities for women in most countries, such as immigration from India, Philippines, Bangladesh, Thailand, or China to Western Europe or the USA (Deniz & Özgür, 2010, p. 152). Marriage has an important place regarding family formation and cultural interaction. When addressing intercultural marriage, at least one of the spouses performs a marriage migration. In intercultural marriages, one of the spouses migrates from their own cultural environment and settles in the venue where the other spouse lives; how this spouse is met in the new culture is important in terms of cultural harmony. As such, not only the spousal relation but also the relationship with the spouse's family and social environment can affect family life.

Marriage is not limited to spousal relationships and interactions. Marriages that occur between different cultural groups increase interactions between individuals and groups. Therefore, families consisting of intercultural marriages have the characteristic of being structures where cultural interactions occur often. Also, such families may experience attitudinal changes toward the other spouse's culture (Altun & Dinç, 2016). Children born in families formed through intercultural marriage are another important issue to consider. The main issues that researchers analyze are how these children will define themselves in the future and according to which culture will they be raised. The way children define themselves can provide important clues about the extent to which cultural interactions take place.

Although marriages and family formation that occur due to individuals from two different cultures getting married have been seen in many societies in the past, this situation continues to increasingly occur in the global world. These marriages offer individuals a multicultural life experience (Deniz & Özgür, 2013, p. 162). The cultural values from both sides find the opportunity to be transferred to each other through marriage, and these values both change and become affected objects because of this change.

Conflicts and adaptations are inevitably seen in marriages that occur through the interactions of individuals from different cultures. The dominance of one spouse's culture compared to the other spouse's culture in a marriage is also an important determinant of the level of conflict and adaptation. The hegemonic relationship between two cultures in particular may affect the level of conflict and adaptation. Georg Simmel (2009, pp. 87–91) emphasized that families must involve relationships with both conflict and adaptation in order for a family to reach a certain form. As a matter of fact, transforming society from small groups such as families to large communities with a certain form must involve tendencies such as incompatibility, conflict, and competition. Marriages can be considered as a social group, as two different individuals bring two different perspectives and two different cultural characteristics with them in marriage. These differences also occur in the communication processes within social groups. Individuals in social groups and marriages are not homogeneous but heterogeneous. Therefore, even when conflict occurs, individuals in marriages have the feature of taking an entirely different shape together, and social groups can also coexist and take different shapes. Thus, conflict in a group may act as a unifying and integrating force. Completely harmonious and consensual social relations are not always possible. Thus, situations involving understanding, helpfulness, and solidarity among different social elements should not be ignored. Adaptation and unity also play important roles in maintaining social life.

Each individual must have a common consciousness and common goals and interact with other community members in order to wholly adapt to society, as the adaptation process consists of subjective components such as sense of belonging and the desire to share the values of the host society (Öztürk & Taş, 2018, p. 58). The cultural adaptation process requires a long time. In order to realize cultural adaptation, the individual must experience it. Young Yun Kim (2008) referred to the tendencies that can take place in individuals as the individualization and universalization that occur through these experiences. Kim studied individuals

under the theory of acculturation. Individuals leave the home environment and move to a completely different place. However, he stated that as long as the world changes, individuals may not need to change places for acculturation to occur (as cited in Renalds, 2011, pp. 9–10).

Acculturation means the occurrence of a change in different cultures as a result of their mutual interactions. As a result of the interactions between different cultures, changes occur in both, though perhaps to different degrees (Aydın, 2011, p. 60). A family established through intercultural marriage inevitably affects the mutual cultures. In the process of being affected, the geographical environment and accordingly the culture will influence the lifestyle of the family.

## Method

This study is important for understanding intercultural relations and interactions, particularly in regard to marriage. This study investigating the conflict and adaptation that may occur as a result of intercultural marriages obtained its data using the semi-structured interview method. The snowball sampling technique has been used to access the participants. In this regard, the intercultural marriages in Alanya constitute the universe of the study, and the 35 surveyed individuals accessed using the snowball sampling method constitute the study's sample.

This research uses content analysis to analyze the data. Content analysis is a method used to characterize, compare, and analyze documents, interview documents, or records. The main purpose of content analysis is to ensure the orderly decomposition, sorting, and definition of the interviewees' opinions (Altunışık et al., 2010, pp. 322–323). The data obtained at the end of the interviews was first read in detail several times. After examining the interview texts in detail, the answers participants gave to the questions were combined and classified internally. Various themes were created based on the collected data. Content analyses have been performed alongside these procedures; participants' opinions were analyzed in detail under the headings of conflict and adaptation in accordance with the content of participants' views.

## Participants' Demographic Characteristics

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education	Participant	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education
1	Female	29	Ukrainian	Bachelor's	19	Male	31	Turkish	High School
2	Male	30	Turkish	Bachelor's	20	Female	43	Russian	Bachelor's
3	Female	40	Russian	Middle School	21	Male	50	Turkish	High School
4	Male	37	Turkish	High School	22	Female	43	Ukrainian	High School
5	Male	43	Turkish	Primary	23	Male	53	Turkish	Primary
6	Female	39	Belarusian	University	24	Female	44	Russian	Middle School
7	Male	39	Turkish	University	25	Female	37	Ukrainian	High School
8	Female	33	Ukrainian	Middle School	26	Male	43	Turkish	High School
9	Male	43	Turkish	Middle School	27	Female	38	Russian	PhD
10	Female	48	Russian	High School	28	Male	43	Turkish	Bachelor's
11	Male	36	Turkish	Primary	29	Female	36	Russian	Bachelor's
12	Female	39	Russian	University	30	Male	36	Turkish	High School
13	Male	40	Turkish	High School	31	Female	33	Lithuanian	Middle School
14	Female	37	Austrian	High School	32	Male	33	Turkish	Bachelor's
15	Male	35	Turkish	High School	33	Female	31	German	Bachelor's
16	Female	38	Russian	Bachelor's	34	Male	42	Turkish	High School
17	Male	45	Turkish	Primary	35	Female	40	Turkish	Bachelor's
18	Female	34	Ukrainian	High School	-	-	-	-	-

Resident foreigners from 82 countries compose 10% of Alanya's population (approximately 310,000). The demographic characteristics of the 35 participants who participated in the interview phase of the research are as follows: their ages range from 29 to 53 years old ( $M = 39$ ), 18 are female and 17 are male, 2 are divorced, 4 are primary school graduates, 13 are high school graduates, one has an associate degree, 11 have undergraduate degrees, five completed their graduated degree, and

one has a doctorate. Of the participants, 17 are from Turkey, nine are from Russia, five are from Ukraine, one is from Belarus, one is from Lithuania, one is from Austria, and one is from Germany. Of the 17 Turkish participants, one is female and 16 are male; of the 18 female participants, 17 are foreign brides. In addition, eight of the 18 foreign participants are fluent in Turkish. In terms of profession, 10 are tourism professionals, eight are housewives, two are dentists, two are engineers, two are business managers, two are tradesmen, and two are tailors, one is a hairdresser, one is a laborer, one is a photographer, one is a furniture designer, one is an accountant, one is a cook, and one is a pharmacist.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

### Religious Beliefs

When considering the changes in the world from the first human being to the present, remarkably different forces have occurred that pushed societies toward change. Human beings need physical and non-physical things to survive. In this respect, the need to believe in a divine power has great importance. This belief has been the cause of conflicts among individuals and societies throughout all of history. Individuals socialize primarily within the family in terms of religion. Individuals in the family tend to adopt their parents' religion (Kurt, 2009). This situation can lead to conflict in intercultural marriages.

In addition to getting used to being included in two different cultures, individuals may experience conflicts as a consequence of two conflicting religious beliefs. Other factors can be found in terms of respecting spouses' religious beliefs. For example, pressure originating from one spouse's family or the social environment in which one lives may impact the family and marital life. Some participants' views about religious beliefs follow. P20 (Russian female spouse) stated:

*A few months after getting married, my husband arrived at home with his mother, father and a man. I was told to repeat whatever the man said. Everything happened suddenly and I repeated what was said because I did not know what to do at that moment. Later, I realized that the male who came was the Imam and our religious marriage ceremony was realized. There had already been pressure from his mother and father on this issue, but I told my husband that I would never be a Muslim because this behavior happened without my initial consent.*

P19 (Turkish male husband) said:

*My wife is a Christian and doesn't want to be Muslim, even though I want her to. We argued a lot about this matter, especially in the first year of our marriage. We argued again because I told her she shouldn't wear a crucifix. We got married fondly, and she accepted what I told her about the environment and conditions we live in; I told her that we had to have a religious marriage ceremony, and she accepted. I know that she is not Muslim, despite having an Islamic wedding. I accepted this to stop the argument and to preserve our family's peace.*

P20 and P19 stated having conflicts with their spouses about religious beliefs. The spouses stated disagreeing about religious beliefs due to family and environmental pressures. P20 could not stand the pressures from her husband's parents while her husband thought he could trick his wife into being Muslim through the Imam, but the wife did not accept and conflict occurred. P19 stated his wife's crucifix necklace was a religious symbol not welcomed by the people around them, and they argued. Wearing a crucifix is considered a concrete expression of a religious belief, which led to conflict between the couple. Individuals do not want to change the beliefs they bring with them. When factors beyond spouses come into play in terms of religious beliefs, the aspects of the conflict may change and family relationships can be affected negatively. P32 (Turkish male spouse) stated:

*I wanted my wife to be a Muslim for a long time and she never accepted. In our last argument, she asked me whether I lived as a true Muslim, whether saying that I believe in a religion is more important than living that belief; since then, I've been ashamed to talk with her about this.*

P32 and his wife are conflicted about religious belief. The participant's spouse questioned P32 about his lifestyle based on his belief. In this regard, the spouses are conflicted about whether they fulfill the requirements of the religion rather than what religion they belong to formally or in word.

Religion can restrict or prohibit their members from marrying someone from another religion in order to preserve their believers and protect their belief system. In this regard, religions consider families as a tool for protecting the belief system in society. Religions also advise their believers to have children and raise their children in accordance with the moral structure of the religion. Therefore, interreligious mixed marriages have been considered dangerous and a degenerating factor in ensuring religious continuity and its transfer future generations (Baycar, 2019, p. 385). Religions develop their own internal mechanisms in order to protect their values and ensure biological, cultural, and social integrity. One of the tools composing this mechanism

is marriage adjustment, which is a guide to choosing a spouse (Cavan, 1970, p. 313). According to Baycar (2019, p. 394), Muslim spouses generally stipulate the choice of Islam as a religion to their Christian spouse in marriages of Turkish-German spouses. Turkish spouses are generally seen to stipulate that their spouses do not eat pork, do not drink alcohol, and do live according to Turkish traditions and customs.

According to our data, the issue of religious belief has caused more interspousal conflict. Nineteen conflicts and 16 adaptations are seen to have occurred regarding spouses' religious beliefs. While similar views were expected to occur for the children on this issue, the opposite was seen to have occurred. Thirty children are seen to comply with their parents' religious beliefs, while two children are seen to be in conflict. Thus, spouses are seen to have conflicts regarding their religious beliefs, not their children's.

### Child-Raising Attitudes

Children are inevitably affected by both cultures in an intercultural marriage. Parents are expected to transfer their customs to their children, willingly or unwillingly. Because the parents grew up in different cultures, parents will inevitably have different approaches to situations. These different approaches toward raising children may stem from differences such as Eastern and Western cultural differences or differences in the spouses' education levels. In terms of child raising attitudes, the participants had the following views. P29 (Russian female spouse) stated:

*Children do not grow up so freely in Russian culture, and I have the same opinion as a Russian. However, my husband behaves very comfortably on this point, which both gets reflected onto our child's personality and makes me angry. Also, mothers in the region we live behave very loosely, especially toward their boys, so I have the impression that Turkish mothers are very lenient toward raising children.*

This observation is also supported in a study comparing parental attitudes in Estonia and Russia (Chirkov & Ryan, 2001, pp. 618–635), whose findings showed Russian parents and teachers to be more disciplinary than Estonians.

P34 (Turkish male spouse) stated:

*Since our child spends more time with his mother, he is raised mainly according to Russian culture. I do not have a lot of time for my child due to my full work schedule. When I say, "I'm tired" when I get home, I experience a conflict my wife. That's why I think our child will really get acquainted with Turkish culture after starting school.*

Cross-cultural differences in individuals' child-raising attitudes in terms of causes, determinants, and consequences is a topic that has been emphasized by social, developmental, and personality psychologists for years. If behaviors are assumed to be guided by attitudes, the relationship between parents who show love and closeness to their children with those who show control over their children is something that should be taken into account (Dinn & Sunar, 2017, p. 96).

P34 stated his child to spend more time with the mother because of the father's time spent at work, so the child is affected more by the mother's culture while the child is growing up; however, this situation may change after the child starts school. P16 (Russian female spouse) stated her husband to not help much with raising their child and that he also wanted to raise the child with Russian culture. However, when the child leaves home, she thinks that Turkish culture will be more effective in school life. The child may have dilemmas in and out of home due to this and may have trouble adapting. P12 (Russian female spouse) stated:

*My first husband was Russian and now my first son is 15 years old and he is more familiar with Russian culture as he grew up in Russia until the age of 7. But my other two children from my Turkish husband are more familiar with Turkish culture. My first child being inclined toward Russian culture and leads to disagreements with his father. One of my greatest disagreements with my husband is that he gets angry and says my first child does not act appropriately. My husband already knew about my first marriage and child when we got married. We didn't have any problems until we had our own children.*

Culture has the potential to change and transform. Culture implies the formation of a whole from separate parts. Symbols and meanings can be transferred from one culture and gain meaning and be adapted to another culture. Individuals can identify and adopt various symbols and patterns to the socio-cultural life in which they live (Kartarı, 2001, p. 17). The opposite may also happen. Individuals may have difficulty placing symbols and meanings from their own cultures into their new culture. As P12 stated, the child who lived and grew up in Russian culture until the age of 7 had difficulty positioning the symbols and meanings they had brought from Russia into the new culture after settling in Turkey and thus experienced cultural conflicts.

Six participants stated both cultures to have been effective in raising children and to have not experienced any conflict about this issue while raising their children. Thus, these participants stated this issue should not damage family relationships; they try to raise their children according to their own culture, but this subject shouldn't be a point of debate because they live in Turkey.

## Language & Communication

Language is a means of communicating between individuals. Language undertakes the function of ensuring communication between individuals, which raises the problem of how to communicate when individuals from two different cultures are involved in a relationship. The verbal elements of communication are important. How communication is provided and how effective communication is in intercultural marriages is also an important issue because the language used is what will determine the course of communication during marriage and individuals' social lives.

Intercultural communication can be expressed as an interdisciplinary branch of science that studies the interactions between individuals from different cultures, how meanings are transferred, how foreigners are perceived, and how cultural differences are considered. Each individual has their own individual-psychological conditions and socio-cultural qualities from their culture, as well as their own various coding, perception, and interpretation patterns in the communication process in intercultural communication (Kartarı, 2001, pp. 23–24). In this regard, some participants' views on how language and communication affect interspousal relationships follow. P10 (Russian female spouse) stated:

*I have never tried to learn a language other than my native language... My husband does not want me to meet with my friends because of this behavior, and he is worried about how long this situation will continue without my speaking any Turkish.*

P13 (Turkish male spouse) stated:

*My wife does not speak Turkish. We have a neighbor with a child whose age is close to our child's. Even though the children have a good time, the spouse said that she had to be silent after a short while due to the language problem and she became very bored. Sometimes we visit my relatives. It is not very different there, either.*

P35 (Turkish female spouse) said:

*My husband is a German citizen, and we live in Turkey. Although he tries hard, his inability to speak Turkish well created a problem for us at first, and my husband wanted to move to Germany... Having German friends has helped us overcome this problem considerably. We still live in Turkey, and my husband doesn't want to come to big organizations such as weddings and engagement ceremonies because he can't communicate well.*

The participants stated the ability or inability to speak a language to have caused various problems in the communication process. P10 and P13 stated not experiencing

any problems with their spouses while communicating, but not being able to speak the language was a problem in terms of communicating with their spouses' families and children. In this regard, the relationships can be said to have been negatively affected by this because a common language includes the life and world views of the individuals shaped by the culture.

Regarding the subject of language and communication, eight participants had statements in common where they said they had not encountered any communication problems because they'd learned Turkish. In addition, the use of a common language while communicating affects this process positively as well as individuals' ability to adapt to the culture in which they live.

The data we obtained on language and communication have shown the factors affecting intercultural communication to be quite impactful on the marital life of individuals from two different cultures. Individuals experience conflicts about language and communication in their marriage because of the factors that affect the intercultural communication process. These primary factors are: values and norms, social scenarios and roles, ethnocentrism, uncertainty and anxiety, stereotypes, and prejudices. Individuals are seen to be unable to comprehend or care about the values and norms that other cultures give much importance to while communicating after getting married and settling in Turkey. The inability of a spouse to comprehend the level of importance their spouse from a different culture attributes to the values and norms from the other culture causes conflict.

## Communication and Distribution of Chores in the Family

Family members verbal and non-verbal behaviors, reactions, and messages toward each other represent interfamily communication. When proper communication is established, family members can better understand each other's feelings and thoughts. Clear, effective, and quality communications are some of the most effective conditions for a harmonious marriage (Ekşi & Kahraman, 2012). The views from various participants regarding family communications and distribution of chores follow. P35 (Turkish female spouse) said:

*We can always find a social activity that appeals to us. We are also a very harmonious couple at home. For our chores, we always share them at home. While one of us cooks, the other sets the table; both my husband and I adhere to a shopping list of what we need to buy. My husband always helps me clean the house. We argue about rare issues, and such little arguments can happen in any family.*

P34 (Turkish male spouse) stated:

*Due to the intensity of my business, my wife does all the home decorations and shopping chores in the house and also buys my clothes. This is because I trust my wife's tastes and preferences.*

P31 (Lithuanian female spouse) said:

*My husband and I both work. Because my husband works in the tourism sector, he has greater interest in housework for 3-4 months in the winter, while I have more interest in the summer to his work hours. We are used to this situation anymore.*

P23 (Turkish male spouse) mentioned:

*My wife generally comes up with the ideas for social activities, and she gets angry when I don't suggest much. However, when she comes up with an idea, I definitely don't object to it, and we have a good time together.*

Individuals have to co-manage both home and work life. Regarding this, the participants stated being compatible with their spouses as long as they communicate with each other and share chores. P31 and her husband stated that they both work and share the responsibilities of marriage according to their work hours and seasonal work conditions. P34 stated having an intense business life and the responsibility of house chores to mostly belong to his wife; however, he stated that this situation did not cause any conflict between them and they were used to it. In addition, six participants stated having conflicts in regard to communication and house chores.

The majority of spouses are compatible with each other in terms of communication and distribution of chores in the family. The factors providing family communication and distribution of chores can be listed as follows: what they learn from their role models, spouse's work conditions, educational status, presence of harmful habits, thoughts on gender-based distribution of chores at home, and the way spouses approach housework in their marital life.

## Interfamily Meetings

Interfamily meetings are important in Turkish culture, and this situation is noteworthy reflected in interspousal relationships. Some participants' views on inter-family meetings follow. Participant 8 (Ukrainian female spouse) said:

*We live in the same building as my husband's family, and we meet almost every day. We get along very well and usually spend time together to eat or drink tea and coffee with*

someone. We spend about a month each year in my home country with my family, and they have a good time with my husband.

P23 (Turkish male spouse) stated:

*Even if I am at work, I am comforted that my wife spends time with my sisters, my aunt, and my family, they even come from their home with my wife to ours after work. I've always felt lucky because of this. My wife feels as if she has been a member of our family for many years. Of course, I show my respect and love to my wife's family in the same way. We find the opportunity to meet with them several times a year.*

P27 (Russian female spouse) said:

*Especially when setting up our house before the wedding, the support from my wife's family and siblings was very important to me, because in Russia, such work is usually done individually. Therefore, our family relationships have always been good from the beginning of my marriage. My husband also gets along well with my own family, but we can only meet at most once a year.*

Many factors are found to affect the harmony of married couples. These factors can be expressed as individuals' personal features, their characteristics as a couple, and environmental factors. Environmental factors involve things like interfamily meetings, being independent from the family, support from parents, and spouses' relatives (Deniz, 2019, p. 27). Individuals' faithfulness toward groups, primarily family and relatives, is significant in Turkish culture and Turkey. Individuals are expected to maintain their familial relations, especially after marriage in Turkish culture. When individuals get married and establish a family, their societal status changes. A married individual gains a more respected position in society. Upon marrying, the individual undertakes the duty of being the culture carrier to the next generation. Based on the participants' opinions about interfamily meetings, individuals from a more individualistic culture such as Slavic nations noteworthily had greatly adapted to Turkish culture.

## Traditions and Customs

Traditions and customs can be expressed as unwritten rules that have been accepted in society since previous times. They also reflect the characteristics of a society's concerns. Some participants' views on traditions and customs follow. P8 (Ukrainian female spouse) stated:

*We respect each other's views because we have already talked enough about the traditions and customs we might encounter when we decided to marry... Also, I became a Muslim of my own free will after I got married. My tradition of decorating trees for the New Year continues not in the context of religious belief but only as a way to celebrate the start of the New Year. We both observe religious and national holidays and celebrations of both my family and my husband's family. Our general principle is to respect both ourselves and our families and our environment and not to restrict their freedoms.*

P7 (Turkish Male Spouse) said:

*We do not have any problems with my wife, who is a Belarusian citizen, with regard to our traditions, customs, and practices. We both treat differences with respect. We can celebrate special days such as New Year's Day, March 8, and religious and national holidays as a family, individually, or with our friends. While I can visit neighbors with my wife during Ramadan and Eid al-Adha, she can comfortably celebrate New Year's Eve with me.*

P8 and her husband stated that they did not experience any conflict regarding traditions or customs since they got married because they have realized a synthesis of the customs and practices of the cultures they belong to. Likewise, P7 and his wife have emerged as a harmonious couple in terms of traditions and customs by not abandoning the practices of their own cultures and by implementing the practices of each other's cultures. P14 (Austrian female spouse) stated:

*After living in my own country, it was a bit difficult to live in Turkey and to adapt here at first, but I adapted quickly. In fact, it would be more correct to say I had accepted and gotten used to it rather than fully adapted.*

P14 stated that she had not fully adapted to the traditions and customs in Turkey but had gotten used to them. In fact, she chose to accept the dominant culture rather than conflict with it. Individuals can sometimes use this as a way to make their lives easier.

When analyzing the data on traditions and customs, giving importance to love and respect between spouses and the sanctity of the family has been concluded to play an important role in coping with the difficulties experienced due to cultural differences (Altun & Dinç, 2016). The similarity of Slavic culture with Turkish culture can be said to have affected and facilitated adjusting to customs and traditions after starting to live in Turkey. In addition, 11 participants stated having conflicts about traditions and customs.

## Conclusion

This study has investigated the conflict and adaptation issues that may arise in intercultural marriages by using the interview technique with 35 people who have intercultural marriages in Alanya. The findings reveal no pure conflict or adaptation to have occurred on any issue in intercultural marriages, but individuals instead to have synthesized their two different cultures.

Significant areas were found to have gained prominence in regard to conflict. In terms of spouses' religious beliefs, some of the Turkish spouses noteworthy suggested to their spouses to become Muslim, or some of them noteworthy had oppressive attitudes. Most brides from different religions did not want to compromise their own religion, and so refused to convert. Meanwhile, the past habits of spouses, their upbringing, working conditions, educational status, and their approach toward raising children noteworthy caused conflict regarding cultural matters. Lastly, language and communication issues are understood to be considered as one of the most important factors affecting marriage, with individuals having experienced conflicts regarding language and communication during their marriage. After getting married and settling in Turkey, conflicts have arisen between spouses in the communication process because of their failure to understand the values and norms that are very important in other cultures. In addition, stereotypes and prejudices affecting communication have created conflict for individuals from both cultures.

In terms of adaptation, one of the most important determinants is communication and the distribution of chores within the family. The factors enabling family communication and distribution of chores are: what they learned from their role models, spouses' employment status, educational status, presence of bad habits, thoughts on gender-based task distribution of chores, and approach to chores in their marital life. The majority of participants can be said to have adapted to this issue. Turkish spouses were observed to be dominant in terms of children's religious beliefs, resulting in their children tending to adopt Islam. Spouses who have adopted different religions can be said to have conflicts regarding becoming Muslim, but in terms of their children being Muslim, they experience conflict but accept the dominant tendency in the society in which they live for peace of their children. Spouses were determined to be more compatible with traditions and customs. Love and respect between spouses have been concluded to play an important role in coping with difficulties on this matter. The similarity between Turkish and Slavic cultures in particular can be said to have facilitated adjusting to traditions and customs after individuals started to live in Turkey. Most of the foreign spouses learning a good

level of Turkish is an important factor in their adjustment to the local culture and tradition over a short time.

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