

Interventions for Remarried Families

Yeniden Evlilikler Yoluyla Oluşan Ailelere Yönelik Müdahaleler

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ABSTRACT

Remarried families become widespread as a type of family that differs from first marriages both developmentally and structurally. Due to its developmental and structural differences, both the quality and continuity of this families emerge as areas that need to be studied. To offer effective interventions to remarried families, researchers and practitioners in the field of mental health should have access to knowledge on this subject. The literature on remarried families emphasizes biological, non-biological and co-parenting related issues. The expectations, knowledge and perceptions of both the married couple, the children and the surrounding social environment of the remarried family is another important issue. Communication, problem solving, and conflict management can be an important tool in strengthening relationships and preventing negative experiences for families established through remarriage. It is seen that the interventions that deal with the mentioned characteristics of families formed through remarriage are given in the form of group practices, adopting a preventive approach, supported by practices that point to skill acquisition in addition to providing information. Programs offered for families formed through remarriage share commonalities such as remarried family development, parenting skills, communication and problem-solving skills. The effectiveness of interventions for remarriage has been tested by various studies conducted since the late 1970s. While testing the effectiveness of such interventions, it is seen that different outcome variables such as family integrity, dyadic satisfaction, relationship quality, marital continuity, conflict level, stress level and behavioral disorders experienced by family members are considered. Research findings show that interventions for remarriage are effective.

Keywords: Remarriage, blended family, intervention

ÖZ

Yeniden evlilik yoluyla oluşan aileler, gerek gelişimsel gerekse yapısal olarak ilk evliliklerden farklılaşan bir aile türü olarak yaygınlaşmaktadır. Gelişimsel ve yapısal farklılıklarından dolayı ailenin gerek nitelik gerekse süreklilik özellikleri çalışılması gereken alanlar olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Yeniden evlilikler yoluyla oluşan ailelere etkili müdahaleler sunabilmek için ruh sağlığı alanlarındaki araştırmacı ve uygulamacıların bu konuda bilgi birikimine ulaşımı önem taşımaktadır. Yeniden evlilikler yoluyla oluşan ailelere ilişkin literatüre bakıldığında; biyolojik olan, biyolojik olmayan ve ortak ebeveynlikle ilgili konuların vurgulandığı görülmektedir. Hem evlenen çift, hem çocuklar, hem de içinde bulunulan sosyal çevrenin yeniden evlilik yoluyla oluşan aileye ilişkin beklenti, bilgi ve algıları bir diğer önemli konu olarak ön plana çıkmaktadır. İletişim, problem çözme, çatışma yönetimi gibi genel beceriler yeniden evlilik yoluyla kurulan aileler için ilişkilerin güçlendirilmesinde ve olumsuz deneyimlerin önlenmesinde önemli bir araç olabilmektedir. Yeniden evlilikler yoluyla oluşan ailelerin söz konusu özelliklerinin ele alındığı müdahalelerin önleyici bir yaklaşım benimsenerek, bilgi sunulmasına ek olarak beceri kazanımına işaret eden uygulamalarla desteklenerek, grupla yapılan uygulamalar şeklinde verildiği görülmektedir. Yeniden evlilik yoluyla oluşan ailelere yönelik olarak sunulan programların; yeniden evlilik yoluyla oluşan aile gelişimi, ebeveynlik becerileri, iletişim ve problem çözme becerileri gibi ortaklıkları paylaştığı görülmektedir. 1970lerin sonlarından itibaren yürütülen çeşitli araştırmalar ile yeniden evliliklere yönelik müdahalelerin etkililiği test edilmektedir. Bu tür müdahalelerin etkililiği test edilirken aile bütünlüğü, çift doyumu, ilişki kalitesi, evliliğin sürekliliği, çatışma düzeyi, aile üyelerinin yaşadığı stres düzeyi ve davranış bozuklukları gibi farklı sonuç değişkenlerinin ele alındığı görülmektedir. Araştırma bulguları, yeniden evliliklere yönelik müdahalelerin etkili olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Yeniden evlilik, karma aile, müdahale

Introduction

While family is considered as the basis of society, marriage is considered as the basis of the family. While a healthy family is a determinant in the formation of a healthy society, a healthy spousal relationship is a determinant in the formation of a healthy family. Features such as communication between spouses in marriage, acceptance of differences, partnership, cooperation, role and power sharing, supportive and close relationship, commitment, desire to spend time together, and conflict resolution indicate the health of marriage (Canel 2011).

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Received: 10.08.2023 | **Accepted:** 05.12.2023

The family institution and marriages as the basis for the formation of the family institution, have been widespread throughout human history. Although various social changes may lead to differences in family structures, it seems that the tendency to marry continues. Although a significant portion of marriages are the first time for both spouses, marriages that are not the first time for one or both spouses are also becoming common (Güler and Ulutak 1992, Turgut 2017).

The family life cycle approach, which includes stages such as preparation for marriage, marriage, having children, raising children and leaving home, and old age, may differ in remarriages. In addition, structural features such as the spousal subsystem, parental subsystem, parent-child subsystem and siblings subsystem, which also describe the network of relationships in the family, include also the non-biological parent-child subsystem which emerges in remarriage and the biological parent-child subsystem which is outside the home. It may also include a complex network of relationships such as the non-biological siblings subsystem and the ex-spouse subsystem (Mavili-Aktaş 2002, Çamur-Duyan 2003, Cihan 2020).

It is reported that restructured families formed through remarriages often encounter various difficulties. Issues such as parent-child relationships, the presence of an ex-spouse, the social surroundings, economic, legal, cultural myths and privacy can be given as examples of fields of difficulty frequently reported by families with this structure (Sülü Akgül 2020, Sülü Akgül and Yıldız 2022)

Developmental and structural differences can make remarriages more vulnerable to problems and termination. Family and marriage counseling includes interventions offered to address problems in marriage and family in a healthy and effective manner, as well as to ensure a healthier and more qualified formation of marriage and family. Considering that remarriages have various unique features and difficulties, interventions can also be offered for remarriages (Çobanoğlu and Tek 2021).

Various social changes cause changes in family structure. Changes in issues such as preferring marriage, age at marriage, and continuity of marriage lead the need to work with families with different structures. Changes such as the prevalence of divorce, as well as the prevalence of restructured families resulting from remarriages in single-parent families due to reasons such as divorce or loss of a spouse, require an understanding of families in this category. A better understanding of the characteristics of families in this category is seen as a necessity to provide them more effective interventions. The purpose of this review is to discuss the basic characteristics of remarriages, to reveal the difficulties specific to remarriages, and to outline the psychological counseling services that can be offered for remarriages. It is seen that various approaches and interventions have been developed at other countries in the field of remarriage. However, it seems that there is a need for studies to be carried out in this field at our country. This review was handled in order to draw attention to this need. It can be said that researchers and practitioners working in the field of family and marriage and individuals who may be members of a family formed through remarriage can benefit from this review.

Remarriages

Remarriages often follow divorce or the loss of a spouse by at least one of the partners. Both divorce and the loss of a spouse bring about significant changes that necessitate adaptation. Individuals may pursue remarriage after experiencing divorce or the death of a spouse, driven by economic, social, and emotional needs (De Graaf and Kalmijn 2003, Dewilde and Uunk 2008). Research and explanations concerning first marriages provide insights into the nature and characteristics of initial marital unions. Marriages formed subsequent to first marriages share some common features and processes but also exhibit distinct characteristics. The presence of a previous marriage, serving as a reference or a basis for comparison, can influence the approach to future marriages. Moreover, it is reported that remarriages present a greater number of unique challenges and problem areas compared to first marriages (Hetherington and Kelly 2002, Schramm et al. 2002, Pasley and Lee 2010).

Remarriages are reported to result in high rates of divorce (Bumpass and Sweet 1972, White and Booth 1985, Bumpass et al. 1990, Clarke and Wilson 1994, Bramlett and Mosher 2001, Bramlett and Mosher 2002, Kreider and Fields 2002, Kreider 2005). Various factors that pose risks for remarriages have been discussed. Each of the problem fields, in other words issues that may trigger crises, that are likely to arise in blended families formed through remarriage are independent from each other and can effect each other. It is emphasized that the presence of one or more of these field and failure to address them effectively may trigger the termination of remarriages. (Walsh 1992). It is possible to group the risk factors for remarriages as; issues related to children and parenting (Bray and Kelly 1998, Bernstein 2000, Hetherington and Kelly 2002, Adler-Baeder and Higgenbotham 2004, Sullivan-Schoppe et al. 2007, Demirci 2015), formation of a new family structure (Golish 2003), relationships with relevant people, such as ex-spouse and extended family (Prado and Markman 1999,

Adler-Baeder and Higginbotham 2004), social perspective (Stanton 1986, van Eeden-Moorefield and Pasley 2013). According to a grouping of possible problem fields of families formed through remarriage; the first category includes basic family issues and the topics in this category are; how to name new parents in families with children, interaction with the non-biological parent - interaction with the separated parent, loss of the biological parent, emotional communication between new family members and the fantasies about the old family structure. The second category is the formation of family-related issues and includes the non-biological parent's understanding of discipline, confusion in family roles, conflicts between siblings, competition for shared time between the separated parent and the non-biological parent, expanding kinship network, sexual harmony between the couple in the newly established family, changes over time, children's moving away and joining cycles in the new family. The third category concerns feelings about oneself and others and includes society's view of remarriage, individual self-perception and familial self-perception. The fourth category is adulthood-related issues and includes the impact of parenthood on the new family relationship, financial concerns, ongoing conflicts between adults, and conflicts between parents over custody (Walsh 1992).

Families formed through remarriage have to deal with various issues that are not included in the content of current family educations. These issues are reported as leading to remarriages terminating in divorce and include relationships with non-biological children, relationships with ex-spouse, and non-biological siblinghood (Ganong and Coleman 2004). The importance of awareness that families formed through remarriage differ from nuclear families developmentally and structurally is emphasized (Papernow 2008). For example, the biological parent-child relationship occurs before the couple relationship; relationships such as non-biological siblinghood and ex-spouse-new spouse are specific to families where remarriages occur. It is reported that accepting these differences and creating realistic expectations are necessary for healthy remarriage functionality (Visser et al. 2003, Falke and Larson 2007, Papernow 2008)

Early studies on remarriages essentially adopted a deficit-comparative approach, emphasizing the ways in which remarriages lacked nuclear families rather than emphasizing well-being and adjustment (Coleman et al. 2000, Ganong and Coleman 2004). On the other hand, a normative-adaptive approach views families formed through remarriage as a separate family structure, not as imperfect copies of nuclear families, and adopts a strength-based approach that focuses on the characteristics and processes of successful remarriages and emphasizes developing and supporting strengths to cope with difficulties. Ensuring and strengthening healthy relationships between spouses and between parents and children in families formed through remarriage leads to positive results in long-term well-being, marital quality and marital continuity (Adler-Baeder et al. 2010).

Characteristics of Interventions for Remarriages

Interventions for remarriages include a cognitive and behavioral approach. In other words, the assumption that providing information and developing skills about remarriages will lead to positive consequences. In addition, it is based on an ecological and systemic perspective. In other words, it is predicted that an intervention for an individual or subsystem within the family will provide positive consequences for other individuals, subsystems and the whole family (Lucier-Greer et al. 2014).

While offering psychological counseling services to families established through remarriage, the general characteristics and dynamics of marriage and families as well as the specific characteristics of remarriages should be recognized, the variability inherent in the scope of remarriage should be taken into account, the expectations of spouses and other family members should be evaluated starting from the pre-remarriage, and the process that it is required for restructuring should be emphasized (Lawton and Sanders 1994, Hetherington and Kelly 2002, Halford et al. 2003, Visser et al. 2003).

The basic topics included in family education programs are reported as; communication skills, conflict management skills, effective stress and anger management, emotional regulation, relationship skills (such as showing interest, emotional expression, empathy, attempts to establish connection) (Bradbury et al. 2000, Gottman and Levenson 2000, Adler-Baeder et al. 2004, Bradbury and Karney 2004, Moore et al. 2004).

Comprehensive programs for remarriages need to include basic relationship skills from which all couples can benefit, as well as insight and skills into the unique aspects of remarriages. In addition to the unique characteristics of families formed through remarriage, the unique personal and contextual characteristics of each remarriage case must also be considered (Adler-Baeder et al. 2010).

Those who remarry are influenced by social norms that view the nuclear family as an ideal form, reinforcing a negative perspective on families formed through remarriage. Considering the norms around remarriage within

the broader cultural context in family education programs is important as it plays a significant role in determining the cognitive context in which individuals view themselves, others, relationships and situations (Dallos 1991, Coleman et al. 1994, Leon and Angst 2005). It also includes the awareness of norms specific to remarriage, the awareness of the time required to adjust and the awareness of the model of functioning in remarriages. In addition, participants' awareness of their own bias and negative viewpoint towards remarriage should also be addressed (Adler-Baeder et al. 2010).

Improving relationships between the non-biological parent and the child is seen as an important component. The development of both disconnected and authoritarian relationship between non-biological parents and children is reflected negatively, and the aim is to develop a relationship that includes trust, interest and emotional bond between the non-biological parent and the child (Bray and Kelly 1998, Cohen and Fowers 2004, Ganong et al. 1999, Hetherington and Kelly 2002). For non-biological parents, it may be beneficial to provide basic information that can be useful in parenting, such as child and adolescent development and behavior management techniques (Adler-Baeder et al. 2010).

Developing skills to successfully co-parent with an ex-spouse when there are children from previous marriages is also a component that should be included in training programs for remarriages. In order to successfully co-parent, it is useful to support skills such as non-emotional and supportive communication, using positive expressions, using written communication, protecting privacy in other fields of life and supporting the child's connection with the other parent (Ahrns 2004).

New roles and rules need to be established in families formed through remarriage. It becomes important to develop negotiation skills through family education programs in creating new roles and rules. In addition, it should be emphasized that the formation of new roles and rules has a dynamic nature and is not an instantaneous event, but an ongoing process that evolves according to the family's experiences and developmental changes (Adler-Baeder et al. 2010).

A three-level approach has been proposed. The first level includes psycho-education to answer the "what" question. The second level includes how interpersonal connections can be used and how skills can be internalized when coping with difficulties in order to answer the "how" question. The third level includes addressing the reasons for resistance that may be experienced in order to answer the question "why?" There are several challenges that need to be addressed when working with remarriages. In families formed through remarriage, insider and outsider positions are intertwined and influenced by cultural factors such as stigma. Children have to cope with challenges that include a variety of losses, commitments and changes. Parenting duties need to be shared and differentiated by the biological parent, non-biological parent, and out-of-home parent, necessitating cooperation with the ex-spouse. Building a new family culture and creating a sense of "we" in families formed through remarriage is another field. Psychoeducation can be used effectively to normalize these difficulties. Interpersonal interventions to address these difficulties include teaching and shaping basic skills. At the level that includes intrapsychic and family of origin issues, the situation of those who are more triggered by these difficulties and experience stronger emotions than others is addressed. Although considering the whole family together is the recommended to work on, working on specific subsystems or individuals may also be necessary (Papernow 2017).

Intervention Programs for Remarriages

Several programs appear to have been devised for remarried individuals. One such program is Smart Steps (Adler-Baeder 2001), which comprises a 12-hour training course conducted over six two-hour sessions with 8-18 participants. This program is structured with parallel sessions for adults and children, covering various aspects such as parenting, non-biological parenting, co-parenting skills, communication, conflict resolution, and stress management. Additionally, it addresses expectations and myths associated with remarriage. Emphasizing skill and strength development, the program incorporates diverse teaching methods, including information presentation, resource listing, media presentations, group discussions, and role-play (Lucier-Greer et al. 2014).

Designing Dynamic Stepfamilies: Bringing the Pieces to Peace (DDS) (Taylor and Taylor 2003) provides didactically information on lack of institutional support, non-biological parent-child relationships, prioritizing the couple relationship, emotional separation from the ex-partner and supporting co-parenting skills. It consists of four and a half hours in total.

Learning to Step Together (LST) (Currier 1982) consists of six two-hour sessions. The program, which also includes sessions on support regarding legal and economic issues, covers non-biological family myths, expectations, and family development. The program, which emphasizes the importance of "I messages" and

family meetings to facilitate communication, devotes extensive emphasis on non-biological parenting issues and supports positive parenting and effective discipline strategies. In addition to improving the couple relationship, it also includes developing a relationship with the ex-spouse like a business relationship. The program includes both didactic and interactive lessons, discussions, role-play and exercises, and handouts and reading lists are shared.

New Beginnings: A Remarriage Preparation Workbook (NB) (Chidwick 1994) is an eight-hour program. Each session includes presentation of information on the subject and experiential exercises to ensure that the information is internalized and integrated by the participants. Sessions include; realistic expectations about the development of families formed through remarriage, building the couple relationship, relations with the ex-spouse and solving problems arising from individual histories (ex relationships, family of origin, past conflict resolution patterns). The program, which places less emphasis on non-biological parenting, also emphasizes spirituality and value systems. Reading list recommendations are also shared during the program, which is carried out in the form of information presentation, practice exercises and discussions.

Skills Training for Stepparents: A Personal Developmental Approach (STS) (Levant and Nelson 1984) consists of eight three-hour sessions. It focuses on the process of interaction, such as being aware of emotions, expressing emotions, and listening to the emotions of others through a variety of scenarios associated with families formed through remarriage. It is reported as a limitation of the program that it does not provide information on issues specific to families formed through remarriage.

Stepping Stones (StSt) (Olsen 1997) is a six hour program. It covers all the expected topics like child development and general parenting strategies. It includes information presentation, resource list, discussions and practice activities.

Stepping Together (ST) (Bosch et al. 1992) is carried out in six didactic and interactive two-hour sessions for adults and children over the age of 5. Topics such as the differences between first marriages and remarriages, the non-biological parent-child relationship, realistic expectations, principles of couple communication, and the non-biological parent's handling of authority and discipline are addressed through lectures and practice exercises. It emphasizes the practice of the information presented based on the stages and the stressors and tasks they contain to the family situations of the participants.

Stepping Together: Creating Strong Stepfamilies (ST-CSS) (Visher and Visher 1997) takes twelve hours. It discusses the stages of family formation through remarriage, myths and realities, improving the non-biological parent-child relationship, strengthening the couple relationship and maintaining healthy relationships with ex-spouses.

Research Addressing Interventions for Remarriages

There are research testing interventions for remarriages and meta-analysis studies examining these research. Due to the inherent risks of remarriage, it seems that a preventive approach has been adopted to address these risks. Based on the view that family members who remarry do not have individual problems, a psycho-educational approach is adopted in order to meet the educational need for the difficulties inherent in remarriage, rather than a therapeutic approach. It is seen that in these studies the number of participants is low, and few studies include a control group and conduct short-term follow-up evaluation. In addition, the measurement tools used in these studies are another important issue. It may be difficult to compare and summarize studies because the same variables are not addressed in studies and the measurement tools used contain subjective and non-standardized evaluations. Providing interventions for remarried families in a group setting can be beneficial in terms of helping participants see that other families are experiencing similar situations and reducing the social isolation they may be experiencing. It is reported that interventions for families formed through remarriages include education about families formed through remarriage, including developmental processes and common challenges. It is anticipated that obtaining this information will contribute to more realistic expectations regarding remarriages and normalize experiences. The interventions offered focused on and include components that will contribute to preserving and strengthening the spousal relationship, developing healthy biological parent-child and non-biological parent-child relationships, co-parenting with ex-spouse, developing healthy ex-spouse-new spouse and non-biological siblings relationships and improving communication and problem-solving skills. Interventions provide support for parenting skills and include a component that addresses parenting behaviors that involves discipline and closeness dimensions and communication, cooperation and consistency among those who are performing parenting duties. Findings are reported that the interventions offered in the studies lead to the development of awareness about the basic characteristics and developmental

processes of families formed through remarriage, a decrease in family conflicts and an increase in marital satisfaction and quality (Whitton et al. 2008).

Various studies were initiated in the 1970s and 1980s. Messinger et al. (1978) examined a group intervention consisting of four sessions in his study in which 22 remarried couples participated. Common topics such as myths about families formed through remarriage, non-biological parenting, relationships with ex-spouses and children's commitment conflicts were addressed. According to research findings, it has been reported that there is an improvement in understanding and positive evaluations of the remarriage experience. Pill (1981) conducted a family life education group intervention consisting of six sessions in her research in which 6 remarried couples participated. Family development and challenges of remarriage, nonbiological parenting, co-parenting with an ex-partner, and couple empowerment were discussed. According to research findings, positive changes in expectations and skills have been reported. Brady and Ambler (1982) conducted a training group intervention consisting of four sessions with the participation of 33 couples. Issues of family life through remarriage, non-biological parenthood and changes in non-adaptive expectations were discussed. According to research findings, it has been reported that there is a decrease in the level of conflict and non-adaptive expectations.

Stroup (1982) implemented a structured family group therapy comprising eight sessions with the participation of seven couples. The sessions focused on creating family integrity, problem-solving, forgiveness, non-biological parenting, and examining influences from previous families. Research findings indicated positive developments in terms of family climate, intimacy, and marital adjustment. Nadler (1983) conducted six sessions of psychodynamic and behavioral group intervention involving 31 couples. The discussions centered around family development, challenges arising from remarriage, and training in communication and problem-solving skills. The research findings reported positive developments in parenting, relationships with children and spouses, as well as improvements in communication and understanding of each other. Cuddeby (1984) implemented a four-session training group with 24 participating couples, addressing family issues related to remarriage, communication, conflict resolution, and the development of parenting skills. Research findings indicated increased knowledge about families formed through remarriage and improvements in conflict management. Ellis (1984) conducted six training group sessions with nine couples, emphasizing a realistic family model, strengthening the couple, and normalizing the remarriage experience. Research findings showed improvements in marital and parenting relationships. Weber et al. (1988) organized six training sessions with 29 couples, focusing on problem-solving discussions, developing skills to strengthen the couple relationship, and structuring the non-biological parent-child relationship. Research findings reported an increase in marital satisfaction and a decrease in problem areas.

Various studies were conducted in the 1990s. Mandell and Birenzweig (1990) conducted six sessions of family life education and therapeutic group intervention with the participation of 3 couples. Family development through remarriage, role clarification and problem-solving skills were discussed. According to research findings, it has been reported that there is a decrease in the stress levels and an increase in the hope levels of the participants. Nelson and Levant (1991) conducted a four-session group intervention with the participation of 34 parents. Emphasis was placed on communication skills such as listening, responding and self-awareness and parenting skills such as rules, family meetings and consequences. According to the research findings, it was reported that there was an increase in the level of positive communication with the child. Bielenberg (1991) conducted six sessions of preventive education in which 15 couples participated. Emphasis was placed on family development through remarriage, strengthening the couple relationship, co-parenting with the ex-spouse, structuring roles and supporting children's adjustment. According to research findings, an increase in the level of coping has been reported. Duncan and Brown (1992) conducted eight sessions of training groups with the participation of 22 couples. Six booklets containing activities that enhance knowledge and family strength were used. According to research findings, it has been reported that there is an increase in family power. Higbie (1994) conducted eight training sessions with 22 couples. Topics include family development through remarriage, non-biological parenting, couple empowerment, communication, supporting the child's adjustment and financial decisions. According to research findings, a more positive attitude towards oneself, more knowledge about families formed through remarriage and an increase in couple time were reported. Fausel (1995) implemented six sessions of group intervention with the participation of 52 couples. Information about family formation through remarriage, stress management skills, parenting skills, co-parenting with the ex-spouse, communication and maintaining the couple relationship were covered. According to research findings it was reported that there was a decrease in the stress level of the participants. Gibbard (1998) conducted eight training sessions with 13 couples. Information about difficulties and complexities of families created through remarriage, non-biological parenting, communication skills, couple empowerment and co-parenting with an ex-spouse were

discussed. According to research findings, improvements in conflict resolution and family integrity have been reported. Nicholson and Sanders (1999) implemented eight sessions of behavioral family intervention with the participation of 42 couples. Family education through remarriage, positive and cooperative parenting skills, problem-solving and communication skills and family activities were covered. According to research findings, a decrease in conflicts and behavioral problems has been reported.

Numerous studies were conducted during the 2000s. Henderson (2001) led five training sessions with 30 couples, covering topics such as family development in remarriage, strengthening the couple relationship, family communication, fostering the non-biological parent-child bond, and supporting the child's adaptation. Research findings indicate reported improvements in family integrity, as well as enhanced couple and parenting relationships. Trone (2002) presented a thirty-minute training video with the participation of 132 remarried families, discussing family development and changes in family structure due to remarriage. The research reported an increase in family adjustment. Michaels (2006) implemented a five-session preventive training group intervention with eight remarried couples, involving education and group discussions to normalize the experience, boost marital satisfaction, improve the non-biological parent-child relationship, and effectively involve the ex-partner. Positive changes were reported in the understanding of family experience, family interactions, children's behavior, co-parenting, and marital quality. Forgatch et al. (2005) conducted thirteen sessions of parent management training with 110 remarried couples, focusing on non-coercive discipline, skill encouragement, effective monitoring, problem-solving, strategies to address family issues through remarriage, and couple empowerment. The research findings reported improvements in couple relationships, parenting, non-biological parenting relationships, and a decrease in children's problem behaviors..

Discussion

Families formed through remarriage are becoming more common as a type of family that differs from first marriages both developmentally and structurally. Due to its developmental and structural differences, both the quality and continuity characteristics of the family emerge as fields that need to be studied. In order to provide effective interventions to families formed through remarriage, it is important for researchers and practitioners in the field of mental health to have access to knowledge on this subject.

When we look at the literature on families formed through remarriage it seems that biological, non-biological and co-parenting issues are emphasized. Another important issue is expectations, knowledge and perceptions of both the married couple, their children and the social surrounding in which they live, regarding the family formed through remarriage. General skills such as communication, problem solving and conflict management can be an important tool in strengthening relationships and preventing negative experiences for families established through remarriage. It is recommended that interventions addressing the characteristics of families formed through remarriage be presented by adopting a preventive approach. It can be predicted that the preventive approach can be most effective before remarriage or in the early stages of remarriage. Although providing information is necessary, it may not be sufficient on its own, supporting it with practices that indicate skill acquisition can make the programs more effective. It can be said that group practices contribute to normalizing experiences and seeing their universality.

Programs like Smart Steps (Adler-Baeder 2001), Designing Dynamic Stepfamilies: Bringing the Pieces to Peace (DDS) (Taylor and Taylor 2003), Learning to Step Together (LST) (Currier 1982), New Beginnings: A Remarriage Preparation Workbook (NB) (Chidwick 1994), Skills Training for Stepparents: A Personal Developmental Approach (STS) (Levant and Nelson 1984), Stepping Stones (StSt) (Olsen, 1997), Stepping Together (ST) (Bosch et al.1992), and Stepping Together: Creating Strong Stepfamilies (ST-CSS) (Visher and Visher 1997) have been formulated and put into practice. These programs, designed for families formed through remarriage, share common features such as aspects of family development, parenting skills, and communication and problem-solving skills.

Since the late 1970s, various studies (Walker and Freeman 1978, Piliavin 1981, Brady and Ambler 1982, Stroup 1982, Nadler 1983, Cuddeby 1984, Ellis 1984, Weber et al. 1988, Mandell and Birenzweig 1990, Bielenberg 1991, Nelson and Levant 1991, Duncan and Brown 1992, Higbie 1994, Fausel 1995, Gibbard 1998, Nicholson and Sanders 1999, Henderson 2001, Trone 2002, Forgatch et al. 2005, Messinger, Michaels 2006, Whitton, Nicholson and Markman 2008) have assessed the effectiveness of interventions for remarriage. These interventions have been evaluated based on diverse outcome variables, including family integrity, couple satisfaction, relationship quality, continuity of marriage, level of conflict, stress experienced by family members,

and behavioral disorders. The accumulated research findings suggest that interventions designed for remarriages demonstrate effectiveness.

While interventions for remarried families are a topic of discussion in various countries, research on this subject appears limited in our country. Given potential cultural differences, there is a need to underscore the importance of incorporating culture-specific components into these interventions. With the increasing prevalence of families formed through remarriage and their growing need for support, it is recommended to plan and conduct more research in this field. A notable observation in existing studies is the predominant focus on families with children, with remarried individuals without children often excluded from research groups—a limitation that should be acknowledged. To address this gap, it is advisable to recommend interventions specifically tailored for the childless remarried group.

Researchers exploring culture-specific interventions for remarried families, both with and without children, will contribute significantly to filling this research void. Furthermore, practitioners working with remarried families should consider addressing various aspects such as family characteristics, developmental differences, potential risk factors, areas of concern, expectations, beliefs, procedural necessities, essential skills, parenting skills (both biological and non-biological), co-parenting skills, communication skills, and problem-solving and conflict resolution skills in their interventions.

Conclusion

Marriages follow a development process and can be evaluated in terms of functionality, quality and satisfaction. Although remarriages share the general characteristics of marriages, they also include various developmental and structural differences. These differences may indicate difficulties that may be experienced in such marriages. If preventive interventions are not offered or support is not provided for such difficulties, the quality, the satisfaction and the continuity of remarriages may be negatively effected. It seems that various interventions have been developed for remarriages in other countries. There are limited studies in Türkiye that examine remarriages. It is important that studies focusing on interventions for remarriages become more widespread in order to make the interventions that can be offered to individuals who remarry more effective.

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Authors Contributions: The author(s) have declared that they have made a significant scientific contribution to the study and have assisted in the preparation or revision of the manuscript

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: No conflict of interest was declared.

Financial Disclosure: No financial support was declared for this study.