



ISSN NO. 2320-5407

Journal homepage: <http://www.journalijar.com>

Journal DOI: [10.21474/IJAR01](https://doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01)

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL  
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Studying the Views of the Students of Payam Nour University (PNU) of Urmia Iran about Marriage and Engagement.

Ali Davtalab<sup>1</sup> and TugcaPoyrazTacoglu<sup>2</sup>.

1. Department of Sociology, Humanities College, PayamNour University, Bahonar St., 8 Sheriver Urmia, Iran.
2. Department of Sociology, Institute of Social Sciences, Hacettepe University, PO BOX 06800, Ankara, Turkey.

#### Manuscript Info

##### Manuscript History:

Received: 12 April 2016  
Final Accepted: 19 May 2016  
Published Online: June 2016

##### Key words:

Marriage, youth, premarital counseling, the nomination period

##### \*Corresponding Author

Ali Davtalab.

#### Abstract

**Introduction and purpose:** Present study has examined university students' views on marriage and engagement period.

**Materials and methods:** This study was conducted in the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015 in Urmia PNU, humanities college among senior students who were seventy. This study was conducted aimed to evaluate the demographic characteristics of students and their parents by researcher through survey method and using a researcher-developed questionnaire.

**Research findings:** Study population of the study consisted of 58.6% female students and 41.4% male students, of whom 80 percent were 20 to 22 years old and 20 percent were 23 years and more. The engagement period of 88.6% of students was less than a year, 7.1% was between 1 to 2 years, and 4.3% have been engaged for three years and more. Generally, students and their parents' income is average, more than 94.2% see marriage as accountability, and 98.5% of them have understood mutual understanding in life. They consider the age between 25 and 29 as suitable for marriage and more than half them (57.1%) are intended to get married with their current fiancée. About traits of the person to whom they want to get married, being kind (94.2%) and being educated (97.1%) were considered and 82.9 know their decision as prior to their family and 84.3% of the students are not optimistic about online friendship and marriage.

**Conclusions:** The results of this study show that young people generally have a sensitive approach toward marriage, but they are hopeful. Despite the problems of engagement period and not being comfortable, couples have considered elongation of this period and referring to specialized counseling before marriage as essential.

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#### Introduction:-

Marriage and marital issues have been and are among the important issues of human life throughout the history. Therefore, this issue, in addition to religions, has been paid attention to in different scientific fields such as sociology, law, economics, psychology, philosophy and so on. (Ozguven, 2000:21 )

Forming a family as a small society unit is of great importance in human life. Family functioning and its impact on people make the importance of its formation double (Gunay, 1995: 5 ). Marriage is a complex task that is between two people who did not know each other previously and is for forming a set to solve their problems in social relationships (Ozguven, 2000:21 ). Both in the world and in Iran, in the recent period the rapid changes, often because of new technological and economic conditions, have affected our cultural and social fields ( Cigdem, Dikecligil,1990: 206).

With formation of a family and unity of man and woman, along with children and relatives, new relationships are created that by making the right decision and guiding life in a favorable way, despite many difficulties, hope and success are provided for people in forming a family (Altun,1994:15 ).

If a family is based on the correct basis, the future life of the person is affected by it, meaning that the person has prepared himself before getting married on such issues as knowing oneself, correct relationship, feeling intimacy, and having a sense of responsibility ( Stephen, , Duncan, , Holman,2007:270). Forming a family ensures community health and development so today, in Western societies various methods have been applied for the development and institutionalization of marriage ( Stephen, , Duncan, , Holman,2007:270)and ( Scott, MS., Paul, RA., Christine AJ., Howard, JM,2006:117).

Sustainability and community health in social and family life are very important and young people's taking responsibility for this is considered more important. Since the formation of the independent character of a young person is in the young hood along with other members of the family, young people are expected to be determined in choosing a spouse and a family (8(Halford, Simons ,2005:147 ) – and ( Martin,Specter, Martin, 2003:359).

Youth is a very sensitive period. Doubts, dreams of the future, feelings, and misinformation on the part of friends in the decision to form a family leave a negative impact ( Suzer, Yıldız,2005:24) and( Stahmann,2000:104 ). Therefore, forming a family for students, especially non-native students who live away from parents is of utmost importance. The engagement period is a period of mediocrity that person is prepared to enter into marriage. During this period, the fiancés' connection with each other becomes more, and in this more relationship, people's understanding from each becomes deeper( Sadeghi, 1985: 151).

### **Theoretical Framework:-**

Social scientists are very interested to know why two people choose each other for marriage and as a spouse. In this regard, some views are expressed that we explain some of them.

#### **A. Hector' rational choice theory**

Fundamental distinction between this theory and other theories put forward about marriage is that most of the theories of marriage view it more as a moral act, but this theory sees it more from a utilitarian view.

Thinkers like Littel that explain collective action based on rational choice theory believe that people have tendency to behaviors in which their profit is higher. This theory believes that these conscious and purposeful people seek to maximize their profits in all circumstances (Littel, 1994:69).

Regarding marriage by using the theory of rational choice, it can be confirmed that people will try to marry when there is an interest in it, that is they can maintain their social status or improve it through marriage.

#### **B. Complementary need theory**

This theory was developed by Robert Winch et al in 1951. This theory states that humans have a series of needs that can be met through social relations, needs such as: the need for emotional support, care, and sexual gratification. The main assumption of the theory is that among a selection of qualified individuals, people whose needs pattern provides mutual satisfaction choose each other as partners. People select spouses who meet the most needs for them. Maximum meeting of needs happens when the needs of man and woman are complementary rather than similar to each other (William Goode 1982: 14).

#### **C. The theory of balance**

The basic theory about mate selection is the theory of balance by Heider (1985). In general, it notes that, if a person chooses a person as spouse who has the same thoughts and feelings about the ideas, people, and events around him, then less stress is created for the person. Humans usually feel comfortable with people who think and feel like them, they communicate better with them and there is less argument between them. They mostly talk and enjoy being together.

### **Review of Related Literature:-**

In her research as "Studying the point of view of men and women towards marriage and accepting the role of father and mother," Behijeh Akshi (1998) in Corum Turkey, by survey method randomly selected a sample of 100 men and

women, among whom 75% were households of urban nucleus families and 25% were rural households. In the results of the study, 81% of participants stated marriage as choosing a wife and a friend and often stated the time of having children after a year of marriage. Eighty-eight point five percent of the participants said parenthood for raising a child and expressed that having a healthy family and community depends on the selection of a healthy spouse (Ekshi, 2005:75).

Jean Paul Sardin has studied marital status in 21 European countries using generation and cluster analyses to show the differences between Eastern and Western Europe marriage patterns. His research findings indicated that in the past two decades, in Eastern Europe marriage has been early and more common. However, in Western Europe, it is opposite and even high proportion of people have never married. In addition, Sardin found that the average age at first marriage for men and women of Eastern Europe is, respectively, 25.1 and 22.1, while similar figures in Western Europe have been 27.2 and 24.8 (Sadeghi, 1985: 157).

Lishter et al (1992), in their studies have concluded that tendencies towards the importance of marriage and family and women's roles in marriage are effective in the age of marriage. Young women who less believe in traditional values are more likely to postpone marriage for the sake of higher education or entering the workforce (Lishter, 1992: 180).

Mir Mohammad Sadeghi (1985) in his work titled "Marriage, premarital education" has discussed the main issues of choosing a spouse, correct and incorrect reasons of marriage, criteria and standards of a successful marriage, predictors of successful marriage, and understanding. Then he has presented a definition of engagement and its importance and has suggested the length of engagement from 6 months to 3 years (Sadeghi, 1985:172).

### **Research Methodology:-**

#### **Purpose:-**

This study was conducted to examine the views of young students of Payam Noor University of Urmia towards marriage.

#### **Materials and methods:-**

##### **Methods:-**

This study is descriptive-explanatory

#### **The population and sample of the study:-**

This study was conducted during the academic year 2014-15 first semester in PNU of Urmia among final year students of social science (population=88). From among those engaged, 70 people were randomly selected as the sample based on Morgan Table.

#### **Data collection:-**

The researcher has proceeded to develop questionnaire based on characteristics of students, marriage and divorce, the introduction period of their engagement and by referring to literature ( Scott, MS., Paul, RA., Christine AJ., Howard, JM, 2006:117) and (Halford, Simons, 2005:147 ). Participants' having a fiancé is considered as a criterion in the study, so before distributing the questionnaire, a preliminary interview was held with the participants about the objectives and content of the questionnaire, and they read consent form and their approval of it was requested. The questionnaire was distributed among the students in the period from fifth to 25 December 2014 by researcher and was completed and returned in about 15 minutes. In analysis of data, chi test was used for content and the validity of test. The significance level of data was 0.05.

## Data Analysis and Findings:-

**Table 1: Distribution of students according to some biographical features**

Biographical features	Frequency N	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Woman	41	58.6
Man	29	41.4
<b>Age</b>		
20-22	56	80.0
23 and higher	14	20.0
Education level of spouses of engaged students		
Diploma	13	18.57
MA/MS and higher	27	24.36
University student	40	57.13
Status of the length of engagement period		
Less than a year	62	88.6
1-2 years	5	7.1
3 years and more	3	4.3
Where have you mostly lived until this year?		
Provincial capital	58	82.5
City	12	17.5
Students living situation		
Good	40	57.1
Average	25	35.7
Weak	5	7.2
Total	70	100.0

In Table 1, as can be seen of men and 58.6% are men 41.4% are women, 80 percent are between the ages of 20-22 years and 20 percent 23 years and more (Table1), 57% of students' fiancés are university students, 24.36 MA/MS and higher and 18.57% high school graduates.

The engagement period for students: 88.6% of students less than a year, 7.1 percent between one and two years and only 4.3% three years and more three years. In terms of location, 82.5% have live for many years in the provincial capital and 17.5% in the city. Finally, in terms of living conditions, 57.1% are good, 35.7% are average and 7.2% are weak(1).

(1). Min: 20, max. 27

**Table 2: Students' attitudes regarding marriage**

Criteria in relation to marriage	Frequency	Percent
In your opinion, what does the concept of marriage state?		
Accountability	66	94.2
Understanding, coexistence	69	98.5
Hope	33	47.1
Regular life	23	32.8
Uniformity	18	25.7
In your opinion, what is the right age for marriage?		
20-24	24	34.2
25-29	46	65.8
In your opinion, what is the right age of men for marriage?		
20-24	13	18.6
25-29	41	58.6
30-34	16	22.8
Currently, are you willing to marry your partner?		
Yes, I do	40	57.1
No, I do not	9	12.9
I have not decided	21	30.0
How do you expect your future spouse to be?		
Elegant / stylish	44	62.8
Be good-natured	66	94.2
Be educated	68	97.1
Have the same culture	33	47.1
Have the world view close to mine	57	81.4
How do you decide in mate selection,?		
First, I decide then inform my family	58	15.7
First, I inform my family then I decide	12	17.1
What do you think about online marriage?		
I am optimistic	11	15.7
I do not approve of it	59	84.3

In Table 2 as can be seen, students have mostly seen marriage as to take responsibility (94.2%) and understanding and cohabitation (98.2%). Students have considered suitable marriage ages as 25-29, more than half (57.1%) have decided to get married to their partner. Regarding traits, (94.2%) want the spouse to be good-tempered, (97.1%) educated, and 82% consider their own decision in selecting a spouse prior to family. Among respondents married 84.3% are not optimistic about online and virtual conversations of young people about the marriage.

**Table 3: The existing feature in connection with sexual relations**

Items related to sexual relations	Frequency	Percent
Which marriage of yours is this?		
The first one	52	74.2
The second or more	18	25.8
Do you feel comfortable in talking about sexual matters with your partner?		
Yes, I do	21	30.0
No, I do not feel so comfortable	49	70.0
Have you received professional advice on sexual matters?		
Yes, I have	54	77.1
No, I have not	16	22.9
Identify the topics you have received advice at.		
In the case of sexually transmitted diseases	63	90.1
About ways to prevent pregnancy	52	74.3
Sexual dysfunction	53	75.4
Spousal relationship on conjugal issues	40	57.1
Where have you received advice?		
Expert Advice Center	40	74.0
Hospital / personal physician	14	26.0

In Table 3, as you can see 87.1 percent have experienced their first marriage, 70% are not comfortable speak about sexual issues with their partner not and 77.1% have received counseling before marriage ceremony. 74% have received sex advice from Expert Advice Center, 90.1% have received advice about transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, 74.3% about contraceptives, and 75.4% about sexual dysfunction.

**Table 4: Interview in connection with divorce**

Criteria related to divorce	Frequency	Percent
What percentage do you think is the likelihood of divorce in our country?		
<30	13	18.5
40-60	32	45.7
>70	25	35.8
In which year of marriage, do you think that divorce happens more?		
0-5 years	54	77.1
6-10 years	15	21.4
11-15 years	1	1.4
In which period of life does divorce happen more?		
Before the babies born	39	55.7
After the babies born	29	41.4
After the separation of children from home	2	2.9
"Misunderstanding" leads to the couple's divorce, do you approve this?		
Yes, I do.	61	87.1
No, I do not.	9	12.9
In your opinion, what consequences does divorce create between couples?		
Children live apart from their father or mother	46	65.7
Violence in the family becomes less	57	81.4
Economic power of the family grows	35	50.0
The new order comes in life	49	70.0
Feeling lonely	32	45.7
Not respecting oneself	47	64.2

In Table 4: 45.7 percent of engaged couples have stated the likelihood of divorce between 60-40 percent, in the first 5 years of life 77.1%, and 55.7% before having a child, and 87.11% of the participants have expressed reason for divorce of couples as misunderstanding.

Of the respondents to the question "What is the impact of divorce in the family?" 81.4% have seen divorce as the factor to decrease differences and argument within the family and 70% Systems have announced it to cause a new family lifestyle.

**Table 5: The quality of participation of engaged students in connection with the marriage**

Items related to marriage	Commenting on the status of items									
	Totally disagree		Disagree		No idea		Agree		Totally agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Get counseling before marriage	5	7.1	14	20.0	15	21.4	25	35.7	20	28.6
Hope is accessible	8	11.4	11	15.7	26	37.1	18	25.7	13	18.6
Now, I have no communication problems	29	41.4	18	25.7	8	11.4	9	12.9	6	8.6
In connection with my fiancé, we solve our problems	3	4.3	1	1.4	14	20.0	19	27.1	33	47.1
Due to the time of engagement period, it is possible to terminate	25	35.7	23	32.9	14	20.0	4	5.7	4	5.7
I think of sexual problems after marriage	3	4.3	7	10.0	27	38.6	17	24.3	16	22.9
If I get divorce from my fiancé e, I remarry	22	31.4	16	22.9	17	24.3	8	11.4	7	10.0

In Table 5: Most students wanted pre-marital counseling, (64.4%); hope in life cannot easily be achieved, (44.3%); currently do not have a problem with their partner, (67.1%); compromise and agreement in the problems, those who think thin of the likelihood to experience problems after marriage, (74.2%); and no optimistic to remarry after separation (54.3%).

$$(X^2=0.620 \text{ P}=0.734 \text{ P}>0.05)$$

Marriage relations were examined by age of students, the views of female students, who were engaged, towards completion and married life is far more than that in men. At the same time, female students do not consider divorce at engagement as acceptable and have opposed remarriage, but statistically no significant difference was observed between them.

$$(X2 = 0.620 \text{ P} = 0.734 \text{ P} > 0.05)$$

Female student see marriage as understanding, hope, responsibility, and at the same time, male students see it as to have a regular life, responsibility and understanding.

$$(X^2= 1.806 \text{ P}=0.42 \text{ P}>0.05)$$

Students of both sexes have stated the probability of divorce between 60-40% and within the first 5 years of marriage.

$$(X^2=2.582 , \text{P}=0.275 , \text{P}>0.05)$$

$$(X^2= 3.481 , \text{P}=0.303, \text{P}>0.05)$$

There was no significant difference between them and male students believe that the possibility of divorce before the birth of children is more and female students believe that, it occurs more after the birth of a child.

$$(X^2= 4.266 , \text{P}=0.118, \text{P}>0.05)$$

Both have the same opinion about the results of divorce. In the results of the items related to marriage, female students want premarital counseling more than the male ones.

$$(X^2= 2.334 , \text{P}=0.345, \text{P}>0.05)$$

In relation to the question about "Being hopeful in the marriage is easy" those who have a negative response.

$$(X^2= 8.713 , \text{P}=0.069 , \text{P}>0.05)$$



Those who are able to continue living together despite problems.

$$(X^2 = 2.110, P = 0.456, P > 0.05)$$

The percent of students who want to marry a person their par scientific level in this study are 40%.

$$(X^2 = 12.30, P = 0.046, P < 0.05)$$

### **Discussion:-**

Not being ready for marriage and hasty decisions, despite the short period of engagement cause a lot of problems to young people (Silliman, Walter, 2004:513) and (Halford, Simons, 2005:147). However acquiring the necessary skills and experience is necessary for couples (Martin, Specter, Martin, 2003:359). Therefore, young people assume the greatest risk in marriage. In this study, students who were interviewed are generally serious in marriage and want engagement to be for family formation with certainty (Table 2.1). In a similar study, this issue was studied by a Turkish researcher Ekshi and the participants stated understanding and trust as the main purpose of marriage ( $P < 0.05$ ).

In our society, because of cultural and socioeconomic changes arisen, different views have been proposed for marriage. Especially women's involvement in social issues, the issue of aging in the marriage age, and the views of the youth to choose a spouse have changed. Despite these issues, importance of marriage has a great status in Iran. Within this study, students see Internet marriage as inappropriate (84.3%) and on the subject of marriage to future spouse, they put their priorities with their own decision (82.9%). Most students have preferred marrying a beautiful, stylish, and educated spouse (Table 2). In general, young people are more focused on their decision. Marrying of men and women to start living happens with a bilateral agreement and this is true about decisions made about the education of children. However, it is said that the young people live in a dual and fantasy world about marriage (Martin, Specter, Martin, 2003:359) and (Stahmann, 2000:104). According to research by Turkish researchers Arsalan and Demirkahn in 12 Turkish universities, most students see appropriate marriageable age as 29-25.

In a similar study, 81.2% students put their own decision about marriage in priority and placed their parents in the next category (87.1% girls, 74.8% boys). 56.5% of students disagreed with online marriage that is similar to the results of this study. In this study, they have announced that among three students one was relax talking about issues related to sex (33.33%). On getting advice, it was specified getting it from professional consultants (77.1%), from the center of expert advice (74%), about sexually transmitted diseases 90.1%, pregnancy issues 74.3%, and about sexual dysfunction 75.4% (Table 3).

The results of this study are consistent with the results of the work by Ozlemcan et al (Arslan, Engin, Can, 2000:94) in Turkey ( $n = 1000$ ). On a larger scale, women show avoiding pregnancy as 69.6, preventing sexual diseases 60.7%, and the period of being pregnant as 51.8%. In this study, students of both sexes have stated the probability of divorce between 60-40% and within the first 5 years of marriage (Table 4).

According to research conducted within the country, increased rate of divorce than the previous years is seen: divorce from 94 thousand divorces in 2006 has reached 110 thousand in the year 2008, 137 thousand in 2010 has reached 150 thousand in 2012, and 160 thousand in year 2014 (Statistical Center of Iran, 2009).

Of course, these figures are lower compared to neighboring Turkey and other Western countries. Generally, in Iran, 44.8 percent of divorces occur in the first 5 years of marriage (Turkish Prime, 2006:14). In countries like America, percent of divorce is between 40-60 percent, where 18% of couples have divorced in the first year of life. Couples together-life length in America has been recorded an average of 6 years so; even not married they think of divorce (Sullivan, 2004:175).

In this study, lack of understanding of the couple's about divorce was granted as normal, decrease of discussion among couples indoors and forced child responsibility with the parent, decreased or increased financial strength, loneliness, feelings of inferiority and changes in lifestyle have been declared as the results of divorce (table 4). ( $P < 0.05$ )

In a study conducted in 2005 (Ekshi, 2005: 45), divorce results are discussed and the findings are as follows: physical health 54.8%, mental health 57.4%, monetary growth 27.5%, self-confidence 42.6%, and quality of life 38.7 are negatively affected after divorce.



In relation to the subject of research, other studies have been done showing that premarital counseling programs have significant effects (Sullivan,2004:175) and (Vural, Temel,2007:34) .

In divorce, re-marriage of girls is less than male students.( $P>0.05$  )

This is while, in the research by Ekshi, the tendency to remarry among women is more than in men. ( $P<0.05$ )

Sex plays an important role in the strength of family and evolution of male and female. Getting married is not just having sexual relations, but in the event of a sexual problem couples divorce under the Civil Code (Purnine, Carey,1997:1017). Divorce is said to be closely associated with social functioning, psychological, and physical health of the couple's (Dunn , Croft, Hackett, 2000:141 ). However, most students believe in a direct relationship between the engagement period and establishment of family, this means as the engagement period is prolonged recognition of couples and their understanding will be more.

In this study, only 28.2% of students stated having sexual problems, so to control and deal with possible problems, couples need more counseling in various aspects of life are more ( Scott, MS., Paul, RA., Christine AJ., Howard, JM,2006:117)and(Halford, Simons ,2005:147 ). In this study, half of the students 64.3% have stated counseling before marriage (Table 5). In the history of this issue, it is stated that regular marriage programs are common in the West, and necessary training is given in high schools and universities. Marriage compiled programs include solving problems, making decisions, making a living, meeting the expectations, beliefs and values are taught to t young people in form of life skills, while in Iran no written programs have been developed or published in serious about marriage and engagement ( Stahmann,2000:104 ).

### Conclusions:-

The results of the analysis of research data show that in general, students look positively toward marriage, but act with caution. From this perspective, marriage can lead to happiness in life. Female students assume give and take in dealing with life's problems and often believed in getting pre-marital counseling and see life training programs in the form of life skills inevitable from the experts, sociologists, and psychologists.

The results of this study are obtained in the academic year 2014-15 from students of Payam Noor University of Urmia and do not include other groups (not generalizable). In this regard, a study on a larger scale with a more population can be conducted and the views of young people towards getting married and meeting the requirements of the engagement period can be interviewed and reviewed.

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