

Social Factors Affecting Spouse Selection Criteria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify spouse selection criteria among Islamic Azad university students in Malayer. The research was based on survey method and a questionnaire is used to collect data. The sample size was 365 participants who selected based on classified sampling. The data was analyzed using statistical analysis. Also sociological theories including theories of marriage used to study families and theoretical framework. The results were classified into categories such as material/nonmaterial, personal/family criteria for spouse selection. As if university students valued both nonmaterial criteria like romance and love. The findings show there are significant relationships between socio-economic status, education, age, and spouse selection among university students. Implications of this study are also discussed.

Keywords: Spouse selection criteria, Social factors, Islamic Azad University, Students.

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1. Introduction

Families are universally important social institution. Although the majority of families around the world have certain things in common, the specifics of how these things are accomplished may vary substantially across time and space.

The present study focuses on the perceptions of university students regarding their marriages and selection of marriage partners. Marriage is the foundation of social relations which further will constitute the family.

First, Americans place more emphasis on their Western counterparts in the ideals of romantic love as a basis for marriage. Second, the United States has higher rates of marriage than other Western nations. Third, the United States also has higher rates of divorce than other Western nations; for example, 42% of American marriages end in divorce after 15 years, compared to only 8% in Italy and Spain. Fourth, Americans are much more likely to remarry once they are divorced, to cohabit in short-term relationships than other Western citizens, and, in general, to move from one intimate relationship to another. This practice called *serial monogamy* leads to instability that can have negative impacts on any children that may be involved.

The U.S. emphasis on romantic love helps account for its high rates of marriage, divorce, and serial monogamy. It leads people to want to be in an intimate relationship, marital or cohabiting. Then, when couples get married because they are in love, many quickly find that passionate romantic love can quickly fade; because their expectations of romantic love were so high. The American emphasis on independence and individualism which also makes divorce more likely than in other nations; if a marriage is not good for us, we do what is best for us as individuals and can end the marriage. As Andrew J. Cherlin (2010, p. 4) indicates that Americans are conflicted about lifelong marriage: they value the stability and security of marriage, but they tend to believe that individuals who are unhappy with their marriages should be allowed to end them.” Still, the ideals of romantic love persist even after divorce, leading to remarriage and/or other intimate relationships.

When people consider spouse selection, it is generally not only a personal matter but also a cultural one. Various factors influence this process around the globe such as educational background, parental influence, religion,

socioeconomic status and occupation, etc. From sociological perspective marriage can be defined as an act by which a man and woman unite for life, with the intent to discharge toward society (Schouler, 1982, p. 19).

According to Reiss (1980), marriage is:

"A socially acceptable union of individuals in husband and wife roles with the key function of legitimating of parenthood" (p. 50).

By these definitions it is obvious that marriage is a universal institution which performs similar set of functions in different societies. It is foundation of all social relations of human society. Man is social by nature and cannot live in isolation. But marriage is the only institution which recognizes and certifies these relationships with legal authority. Therefore, in spite of varied cultural patterns, religious orientations and ethnic consideration and significance of marriage are universally accepted.

2. Theories of Mate Selection

Structural-functionalists see the nuclear family, for example, as the key to the social and geographical mobility undergirding a universalistic, achievement-based occupational system, while socializing and nurturing children and adults at the same time (Parsons and Bales, 1955). From this perspective, researchers have argued that family businesses expand opportunities to people from humble origins (Lippmann et al., 2005). Capitalist societies provide many opportunities for people to obtain the capital required to start businesses and provide families resources. In contrast to structural functionalists, Marxists see the family as the mechanism through which hegemonic relations of production are reproduced over time (Yanagisako and Collier, 2004). In particular, they argue that family businesses perpetuate inequality because entrepreneurial parents imprint entrepreneurial values in their children (Miller and Swanson, 1958). Furthermore, rich families possess at least an important business resource. Some researchers have asserted that liquidity constraints inhibit startups (Fischer and Massey, 2000; Blanchflower and Oswald, 1998), although others have disputed that assertion (Kim et al., 2003).

Empirical studies have showed that there is no consistent relationship between the levels of household wealth and propensity to create businesses

(Kim et al., 2003), although the opposite is true: many families become wealthy because of family-owned businesses (Keister, 2000). Families can have a major effect on social inequality because of their potential impact on the intergenerational transmission of wealth and the uneven distribution of opportunities between and within families. Despite the recognition of the intimate relationship between social and economic organization, sociologists have tended to separate the study of production, mostly performed through firms in capitalist society (Yanagisako and Collier, 2004).

Obviously, there are exceptions to this dichotomy, such as the literature on family/work spillover (Glass and Estes, 1997) or the more comprehensive frameworks of family businesses discussed elsewhere in this volume. However, as a general rule, sociological theory has separated the study of families and firms. As this volume is about ‘family firms’ rather than about families and firms, we will concentrate on sociological theories that deal with what we consider key issues in the study of firms: survival and growth. We explore how three sociological theories of organizational survival and growth can be integrated within a family framework: network theory, new institutional theory, and evolutionary theory (Martinez, Martha, Aldrich, Howard, 2014).

Structural-Functional theory studies groups of people or organizations in society and looks for the events. The question that fits this theory is "What are the consequences of marriage in the society?" By looking at the consequences of marriage, Structural-Functionalists are looking for the most significant functions that hold a marriage united and make it prosperous.

The Social-Conflict theory studies the differences in people, and the disputes and problems that are caused by them. Conflict theorists also study a macro or broad perspective looking at the major trends of different ethnic groups’ roles and acceptance in society. The question that fits this theory is, “How does marriage benefit women and men unequally?” When this theory is applied, men are viewed as being superior to women. This creates conflict because the men are trying to maintain their power and women are attempting to seize more power. By studying the benefits that men and women receive from marriage, they are actually comparing men and women.

When understanding the family, the Family System Theory has proven to be very powerful. Family Systems Theory claims that the family is understood best by conceptualizing it as a complex, dynamic, and changing collection of parts, subsystems and family members. Much like a mechanic would interface with the computer system of a broken down car to diagnose which systems are broken (transmission, electric, fuel, etc.); a therapist or a researcher would interact with family members to diagnose how and where the systems of the family are in need of repair or intervention. Family Systems Theory comes under the Functional Theory umbrella and shares the functional approach of considering the dysfunctions and functions of complex groups and organizations.

The Symbolic-Interaction approach looks at a situation from the point of view of an individual that is in the situation, and what the individuals think and how they communicate based on the society they live in. The question that fits this theory is, "What do people think about the meaning of marriage?" They view a setting from a micro or close-up perspective. They view each setting or situation from the inside out, by studying the people that are in the situation and finding out how differences in the society make people think differently about the situation. They also study how people act in a situation and the symbols or languages they use according to how they have taught by the society they live in.

Social exchange theory proposes that social behavior is the result of an exchanging process. The purpose of this exchange is to maximize the benefits and minimize costs. According to this theory, developed by a sociologist George Humans, people weigh the potential benefits and risks of social relationships. When the risks outweigh the rewards, people will terminate or abandon that relationship. Most relationships are made up of a certain amount of give-and-take, but this does not mean that they are always equal (Kendra Cherry, 2018).

Murstein's Stimulus-Value-Role Theory (1970) emphasizes free choice in selecting a mate. In an open field, male and female do not know each other but are free to relate to each other with no roles assigned. In a close field, they relate to each other in assigned roles. In the second stage, the partners learn

about each other through self-disclosure. They can find out what they have in common and what they disagree on. If they find that they are compatible, they move on to the next stage. Finally, in the role stage, the partners work on their marital roles and their expectations. Researchers have found that when a couple agrees on marital roles, the chances of marital satisfaction are increased (Bahr, Chappell & Leigh, 1983).

Nye (1980) proposes a general theory called Choice and Exchange Theory which incorporates the other isolated theories. People tend to seek relationships that provide them with social approval, autonomy, predictability, a mate with similar beliefs and values, conformity to norms, and money. Therefore, they make choices and exchanges based on these sources of rewards.

Like other corners of the globe, also in Pakistan people have specific criteria for mate selection. They also have certain filters through which possible spouses are screened. Similarly, perspectives of social exchange and homogamy also exist in Pakistani culture (Masood et al., 2007). Pakistan is a patriarchal society where caste, family traditions and religion have more influences on mate selection process. Usually cultural traditions of Pakistan do not encourage young adults to make their marital decisions independently (Hamid et al., 2011). Therefore, filters and choices and exchanges for spouse selection are changed in Pakistan as compared to any western country (Banerjee et al., 2010). Similarly, dowry is considered as best bargaining option in exchange of better social status or even better caste. However, because of cultural variations these theories are not as applicable in Pakistan as in any other developed countries.

3. Material and Methods

The present study was carried out in order to investigate the effective factors on spouse selection criteria among Islamic Azad University students in Malayer. Since this is a survey study, a questionnaire is used for the data to be collected. The sample of the research includes a group of 386 university students. Construct and face validity of the questionnaires are achieved and their reliability are estimated using Alpha Chronbach coefficient. The analysis of the data is carried out at descriptive and inferential statistics levels.

4. Statistical Findings

As a table 1 shows, there is a significant relation between the gender of students and spouse selection criteria (sig=0.00) based on the related correlations.

Table1. Chi-Square correlation coefficient between gender of students and spouse selection criteria

	Value	df	. Sig. (2-sided)
Chi-Square correlation	195.239 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	213.432	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	99.080	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	365		

Table 2. Correlation coefficient between gender of students and spouse selection criteria

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.731	.000
	Cramer's V	.731	.000
N of Valid Cases		365	

According to the above tables, there is a positive and significant relation between the gender of students and spouse selection criteria.

Table 3. Chi-Square correlation coefficient between socio-economic status and spouse selection criteria

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Chi-Square	246.221 ^a	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	260.272	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	153.806	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	365		

As a table shows, there is a significant relation between socio-economic status of students and spouse selection criteria (sig=0.00) based on the related correlation

Table 4. Coefficient between socio-economic status and spouse selection criteria

		Value	Approx. Sig
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.821	.000
	Cramer's V	.581	.000
N of Valid Cases		365	

According to the above table, there is a positive and significant relation between socio-economic status of students and spouse selection criteria.

Table 5. Chi-Square correlation coefficient between ethnicity and spouse selection criteria

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	504.229 ^a	28	.000
Likelihood Ratio	514.647	28	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	26.661	1	.000
N of Valid Cases		365	

Chi-Square correlation coefficient between socio-economic status and spouse selection criteria shows that there is a significant relation between above variables.

Table 6. Coefficient between ethnicity and spouse selection criteria

		Value	Approx. Sig
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	1.175	.000
	Cramer's V	.588	.000
N of Valid Cases		365	

According to the above table, there is a positive and significant relation between ethnicity of students and spouse selection criteria.

Table 7. Chi-Square correlation coefficient between age and spouse selection criteria

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Chi-Square	310.320 ^a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	353.416	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	32.818	1	.000
N of Valid Cases		365	

Chi-Square correlation coefficient between age and spouse selection criteria shows that there is a significant relation between above variables.

Table 8. Coefficient between age and spouse selection criteria

		Value	Approx. Sig
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.922	.000
	Cramer's V	.532	.000
N of Valid Cases		365	

According to the above table, there is a positive and significant relation between age of students and spouse selection criteria.

Table 9. Chi-Square correlation coefficient between education and spouse selection criteria

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	305.731 ^a	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	364.610	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.679	1	.006
N of Valid Cases		365	

Chi-Square correlation coefficient between education and spouse selection criteria shows that there is a significant relation between the above variables.

Table 10. Coefficient between education and spouse selection criteria

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.915	.000
	Cramer's V	.647	.000
N of Valid Cases		365	

According to the above table, there is a positive and significant relation between education of students and spouse selection criteria.

Table11. Individual selection and family selection

	Mean
Individual selection`s criteria	4.16
Family selection`s criteria	4.01
Chi square	234.132
freedom	2
sig	.000

As the above table and the related statistics the mean of individual selection is higher than the mean of family selection .So the significant difference is concluded.

Table 12. Nonmaterial criteria and material criteria

	Mean
Nonmaterial criteria	4.13
Material criteria	4.03
Chi square	244, 325
Freedom	2
Sig	.000

As it is shown by the table, the mean of nonmaterial criteria is higher than the mean of material criteria. So it is concluded that the mean difference of nonmaterial/material criteria is significant at levels 000.

5. Conclusion

Human life is composed of different stages and cycles. The most difficult and complicated of which is marriage and starting life. So young people in the university face with new opportunity to select their future path; marriage is one of the most important selections. Romantic marriage is a modern style in families. The factor of love and kindness between spouses are so important today, and it can be accompanied with a higher quality of life but in some cases it will likely be associated with divorce or failure and decreased stability of marriage, because traditional society doesn't work as before for keeping them like past decades and it includes many changes in society as whole. In some

studies, it was indicated that young and old married individuals were not satisfied with their married lives; however, dissatisfaction was higher among young married couples. Also, many researches revealed that the appropriateness of educational level and homogeneity between university majors can be a positive and influential factor in couple's mutual understanding, because it provides sufficient motivation and appropriate cultural atmosphere for verbal and spiritual communication between couples, which creates grounds for deeper cultural and intellectual convergence.

The results were classified into categories of criteria such as material/nonmaterial, personal/ family criteria for spouse selection. As if university students valued both nonmaterial criteria like romance and love. The findings show that there are significant relationships between socio – economic status, education, age and spouse selection among university students.

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