

Predictors of intention to marriage based on theory of planned behavior among university students in IranReza Shahrabadi¹, Akram Karimi-Shahanjarini², Saeed Dashti³, Alireza Soltanian⁴, Gholamreza Garmaroudi⁵

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Type of article: Original**Abstract**

Introduction: Marriage is a social capital in society, so that makes the behavioral and social stability of parents and children in a generation, productive. Various factors can affect the intention of marriage, including individual, economic, social and cultural factors. The present study aimed to determine predictors of university students' intention to marriage based on the theory of planned behavior (TPB).

Methods: This cross-sectional study was performed among 192 single students (Master and PhD students with five to seven years of dentistry and medicine) in Hamadan, in 2014. The samples in this study were selected through convenient sampling. The data collection tools were demographic and TPB questionnaires. A questionnaire based on the TPB model was used in order to assess attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention. Data were analyzed by using SPSS16 and descriptive indexes, independent-samples t-test, One-way ANOVA and multivariate linear regression at 95% significant level.

Results: The results showed that attitudes toward marriage ($\beta=0.217$; $p=0.001$), subjective norms ($\beta=0.366$; $p<0.001$), and perceived behavioral control ($\beta=0.279$; $p<0.001$) significantly predicted students' intention to marriage. The TPB constructs explained 44% of the variance of intention.

Conclusion: Results indicated that strategies to improve the intention of marriage can include: expression of psychological needs such as having a companion, the importance of responsibility, society attitude of marriage, parents and marriage, the importance of the decision-making power and job position.

Keywords: Marriage, Students, Single person, Theory of planned behavior

1. Introduction

One of the major aspects of demographic research in recent years has been on issues of generational changes in the fields of marriage, fertility and family. In an era of rapid social and cultural changes, generational differences in attitudes lead to a gap between generations, and each generation will find a different philosophy and way of life (1). Marriage is a contract whereby, men and women live together in a united partnership and form a family (2). Delayed marriage can cause much damage in different aspects of life. The damage includes time of child-birth and damage caused by it, poor quality of partner and fading participation in society (3, 4) and also physical and mental poor health (5). Various factors delay the age of marriage such as economic factors, social norms, expectations of young

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people and education level (6, 7). Human societies during the last two centuries, have witnessed a significant increase in marriage age. The first increase took place in European countries, then, in the twentieth century proceeded to developing countries. A significant increase in the marriage age for girls, after years of experiencing early marriage, is a phenomenon in the field of social change (8, 9). Iran, like other developing countries, has experienced this phenomenon. According to the National Organization for Civil Registration of Iran, the average age of marriage for men and women from 1970 to 2010 increased from 25 to 26.4 years and from 18.5 to 23.5 years respectively (10). In Iran, the age of marriage among people who are studying in universities has increased (11). The average age of marriage among male and female students of the University of Medical Sciences is 29.1 and 27.2 years respectively, which shows the age of marriage in these students is 3 years longer than the average age of marriage in society (12). Because of the length of time in education, compared to other young people, students in the fields of Medical Sciences are faced with more obstacles and problems in their marriage and family formation (8, 9). Rezadoust's study (13) showed that Iranian girls with university education, marry later in life than other girls. The study showed that as education increases, delay in the marriage age increases, so that now, 78.5 percent of master students and above, have delay in the marriage age. Also, the Bahiraei study (14) revealed that 89.6 percent of MSc and PhD students have not intended to marry. In recent researches (11-14), education has been raised as one of the effective factors in the age of marriage and this study determines the reasons. Also, there are many theories for assessing the determinants of behavior (15). One of these theories is the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (16). In situations that assessment of behavior is difficult or impossible, TPB studies could be limited to assessing the intention to the given behavior (16). the theory of planned behavior can be useful in determining factors affecting the desire to get married (intention to marriage). the theory of planned behavior was introduced in 1985 and developed in 1991 by Ajzen and Fishbein. According to this theory, the most proximal determinant of behavior is individual intention to engage in a given behavior. In turn, intention is formed by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude refers to a feeling or responding positively or negatively to something or someone. It is composed of beliefs and evaluations of behavioral outcomes. The subjective norm is defined as perceived social pressure that people feel to conduct a behavior. It is composed of normative belief and motivation to comply. The perceived behavioral control refers to people's beliefs about the ease or difficulty of the particular behavior. It is composed of control belief and perceived power (17). The theory of planned behavior predicts a wide range of health and non-health behaviors such as consumers' purchase intentions (18), healthy eating behaviors (19), physical activity (20) and oral health behaviors (21). Therefore, with regard to effects of university education in the age of marriage and that TPB can predict factors of such behavior (intention to marriage), this study aimed to investigate the determinants of university students' intention to marriage based on the TPB.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Research design and selection criteria

This cross-sectional study was performed in October 2013 among 192 single students in Hamadan, a city in western Iran. The following inclusion criteria were considered: 1) Being master or PhD students and five to seven years of dentistry and medicine 2) Being single 3) Having written informed consent to participate in the study. Exclusion criterion was students who were divorced. The samples in this study were selected through convenient sampling (120 graduate students (Master and PhD), 31 dentistry students and 41 medical students).

2.2. Instrument

The demographic characteristics were obtained including age, gender, job, income, history of physical and mental illness, family financial status and number of family members. The TPB constructs was measured using a questionnaire including attitude toward marriage, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intention. The questionnaires were designed by the researchers using review of related literature. Attitude was measured indirectly, based on behavioral beliefs and evaluations of behavioral outcomes by 18 items (e.g., If I marry I will have better social relationships with others) (Cronbach's alpha =0.88). Subjective norms were measured indirectly, using 11 items and based on motivation to comply and normative belief (e.g., what do you think about marriage of your single friends?) (Cronbach's alpha= 0.82). Perceived behavioral control was assessed indirectly by 10 items (e.g., I am able to decide on marriage during education) and based on control belief and perceived power (Cronbach's alpha =0.60). Behavioral intention was measured using 3 items (Cronbach's alpha =0.69). This questionnaire (Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Behavioral Control) was designed based on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, neither agree nor disagree=3, agree=4, and strongly agree=5). Behavioral intention was a question with yes (Score=2) or no (Score=1) and two questions were designed based on a 5-point Likert scale (not at all=1, slightly=2, moderately=3, very=4, extremely=5). The Content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by a panel consisting of five experts. Questionnaires were completed with self-report.

2.3. Statistical analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS 16 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois, USA). Descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-test, one-way ANOVA and Multivariate Linear Regression were conducted to analyze data. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

2.4. Ethics of research

The ethics committee of the Hamadan University of Medical Sciences approved the study protocol. Completing the questionnaire was voluntary and students were thoroughly assured about the confidentiality of the data. Informed consent was obtained from all the subjects.

3. Results

This study included 92 female and 98 male students, with the mean age of 25.57 ± 2.99 years old. Demographic status of students is presented in Table 1. Among participants, 116 students (61.41%) had intended to get married. The results showed that the mean of TPB constructs was more than half of the obtainable scores (Table 2). Multivariate linear regression showed that attitude ($\beta=0.217$; $p=0.001$), subjective norms ($\beta=0.366$; $p<0.001$), and perceived behavioral control ($\beta=0.279$; $p<0.001$) were the significant predictors of students' intention to marriage (Table 3). The TPB constructs explained 44% of the variance of students' intention to marriage.

Table 1. Demographic status of student (Their relation with intention to marriage)

Criteria	Demographic Variable															
	Birth order				History of mental illness		History of physical illness		Family financial status			Financial status			Job	
	$\geq 4^{\text{th}}$	3 rd	2 nd	1 st	No	Yes	No	Yes	Good	Medium	Weak	Good	Medium	Weak	No	Yes
Number	44	33	57	48	180	6	179	8	77	100	8	12	17	11	140	45
Percent	24.2	18.1	31.3	26.4	96.8	3.2	95.8	4.2	41.6	54.1	4.3	33.3	40.5	26.2	57.7	24.3
p-value	0.43				0.48		0.73		0.30			0.63			0.12	

Table 2. Mean, Standard deviation, and range of TPB constructs

Variables	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Mean percentage of maximum score
Attitude	4.09	0.52	2.61	5	1-5	81.81
Subjective Norm	3.38	0.70	1.45	5	1-5	67.60
Perceived Behavioral Control	3.16	0.62	1.30	5	1-5	63.38
Behavioral Intention	7.37	2.96	3	12	3-12	61.41

Table 3. Analysis of multivariate linear regression of theory of planned behavior for intention to marriage

Variables	Standardized beta	Unstandardized beta	T score	p-value	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Change in R ²
Attitude	0.217	0.069	3.351	<0.001	0.664	0.441	0.431	0.441
Subjective Norm	0.366	0.144	5.082	<0.001				
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.279	0.132	4.265	<0.001				

4. Discussion

This study was conducted to identify predictors of intention to marriage among students. In this study, there was no significant relationship between demographic variables with the intention to marriage. This finding is consistent with the results of Williams and French (22). Reasons of no significant relationship can be: 1) this study is measured by behavioral intention variable, not behavioral variable: to become the intention (marriage intention) to behavior (marriage) should be considered enabling factors such as money and facilities (23). So, it seems that demographic variables (that are concerned with enabling factors) are related with marriage (behavior). In this study, it was not possible to assess behavior. 2) This study was conducted on students who were in marriage age and older (with regard to cultural and social conditions) (9), and most of them (more than 50%) were employed or were salaried by the university, so it seems that the role of economic factors is limited to form students' intention to marriage. Based on the findings, attitude was the significant predictor of intention. This result was similar to results of the study by

Ajzen et al. (24) that was conducted on fertility intentions, and confirms the results of this study. In our study, in the case of this variable (Attitude), “Need to have a companion” and “Responsibility” were important to beliefs and evaluations of behavioral outcomes, respectively. Other studies also showed these results, for example, Ibarra-Rovillard et al. (20) and Rodrigo-Gonzalez et al. (21) found that need to have a companion is a basic psychological need, for to take behavior and responsibility is an important factor to engage successfully in many behaviors. Therefore, the attitude toward behavior is an important factor to get married.. It seems that belief in having a companion and responsibility should be improved to encourage students to get married. Subjective norms were the significant predictor of intention, similar to findings by Collins et al. (27) about behavior of drinking. In this study” The acceptability of marriage in society morally” and “parents” were considered by students as normative belief and motivation to comply respectively. Farzadnia et al. (28), in their study, showed that acceptance of a behavior in society is an important factor to perform the behavior. Also, Hamdan et al. (29) found that parents can be the most influential to perform behavior and they are very important for youth’s behavior. Therefore, based on our results, it can be concluded that the role of parents and acceptability of marriage in society is essential in marriage of students. In this study, perceived behavioral control was the significant predictor of students’ intention to marriage. Lee et al. (30) revealed similar results about behavior of driving. In our study “be able during education” and “proper job” were found to control belief and perceived power, respectively. Gutnik et al. (31) showed that decision-making power is an important factor to perform a behavior and Seyfzadeh et al. (32) found that having a proper job is an important factor affecting the population intention of marriage. Thus, in this study, it was found that two important factors (due to perceived control structures), which include sense of empowerment and proper job, are effective on marriage of students. Limitations of this study were the questionnaire and its being self-reported and lack of cooperation by some of the students in completing the questionnaire.

5. Conclusions

Findings showed that there is significant relationship between attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control with behavioral intention (Intended to marry). The results indicated that strategies to improve the intention of marriage can include: expression of psychological needs such as having a companion, the importance of responsibility, society attitude of marriage, parents and marriage, the importance of the decision-making power and job position. It is recommended to use this model for intervention to marriage considering the variables mentioned above. These determinants can help in increasing marriage in students with mental approach (having a companion and decision-making power) and social approach (responsibility, society attitude, parents, job position).

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Conflict of Interest:

There is no conflict of interest to be declared.

Authors' contributions:

All authors contributed to this project and article equally. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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