



Research Article

A Qualitative Exploration of Married Students Attitudes toward Marriage

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Article Information ABSTRACT

Key words:
Content Analysis;
Marriage Experience;
attitudes toward
marriage;
Qualitative Study

The purpose of this paper is to clarify of experience process and formation of the attitudes to marriage in married students. The sample of the study consisted of 18 married students who were selected by purposive sampling. This paper was a qualitative study and content analysis kind. The data was collected by the in-depth and semi-structured interview. When the data reached to the data saturation; after that the data was analyzed by content analysis method. 588 concepts in primary coding, 81 sub-themes in open coding, and 15 final and main themes in Axial coding were extracted from the analysis of obtained data. The findings of study showed needing the young men and women to financial and moral supports, supporting of government in cultural and social planning, importance of adherence or weakness toward religious, traditional, and ethnic values in youth's attitude to marriage.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage, as a first step to the formation of the family institution, is to link between the two perspectives and life that they include different values and ideologies. In fact, it is the first and most important stage of the family life cycles which selecting mate is carried out and succeed in other stages of life depends on it (Nietzel & Harris 2008). Wilcox stated that although the marriage rate has had the reducing rate in the new generation, but it has kept its importance as an important institution (Wilcox, 2010). Also, people who experience it at least before forties are about %80 of the adult population (Settersten & Ray, 2010). Attitudes and values of people change and form consider to the requirements and changing conditions of the environment (social, cultural, political, and economical) as well as their experiences forms and changes during the sociability process. Nowadays, the marriage problems have its particular aspects in Iran. Iran like other third world countries is at the stage of transition from tradition to modernity which faces with wide changes in all social phenomena such as marriage and mate selection. Such changes that make new

attitudes in males and females to marriage that not only look at it as sexual relationship and having children but also as creates a perfectionist life with love (Nobles & Bутtenheim, 2008). Except of problems arise from transition from tradition to modernity, changing in last decades in Iran's society such as interest to have academic degrees (Rezadoost & Mombini, 2011) and better condition for participation in labor market have led to increasing exceptions and dealing the marriage (Dixon, 1987., Becker, 1981., Oppenheimer, 1994., Oppenheimer and et al, 1997., Jejeebhoy, 1995., Singh & Samara, 1996., Sweeney, 1992). The youth's attitudes have been become negative to the marriage and formation of the family in last years, so they have dealt with moral depravity and economic and social problems (Jonsson, 2000). Incorrect attitudes to mate selection lead to irrational beliefs and unrealistic views to the marriage and imagine it as an easy and simple matter that doesn't need many tries. There are a set of superstitious and legend beliefs behind these unrealistic exceptions and inefficiency attitudes about marriage (Crosby, 1985). In fact, perceptions and attitudes toward marriage is particularly considered as cognitive and mental phenomena, because if this standards become distorted

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(to be incorrect and extreme) lead to disturbance in marital life (Sharp & Ganeng, 2000). Attitude affects on the possibility of marriage and determining the marriage (Parrott & Parrott, 2005). So, one factor of unsuccessful marriage is the incorrect attitude toward marriage process and mate selection. Unrealistic beliefs about marriage lead to extreme unsatisfying toward the marriage and finally high rate of divorce (Hetrington, 2010). Researchers have been interested in investigating the attitude toward to divorce and marriage consider to the importance of marriage and the impacts of divorce in human life. For example, many studies and theories have been presented about how the formation of these attitudes and some researches showed the attitudes toward marriage depend on items like age, education, gender, financial factors, and so forth (Ferguson, 2009). According to Young's view, schematic and schematic processes due to their impacts on our realization from ourselves and others affect on attitudes and our decision in life such as mate selection and marriage that are the most important of them (Young & et al, 2003). Ellis believes the attitudes and irrational imagines of people can play an important role in making the inefficient emotional relationships (Shayeste & et al, 2006). Based on cognitive therapists the route of many misunderstandings in marital life is dogmatic and irrational thoughts of couples (Shayeste & et al, 2006). Also, other studies have implicated to the role of starting point family, culture (Reid, 2003), sociability process and opportunity structure (Harris & Lee, 2007).

Riggio and Weiser (2008) believes probably the attitudes of marriage may form from the personal experiences, parents or perception of filtering process and it affects the formed negative or positive attitude, beliefs, and individual's behavior about future relationships. The findings of Ston and Hutchinson's study showed that self-attitudes and attitude toward others (such as partner and marriage) is under the influence of the family (Stone & Hutchinson, 2009). Furthermore, the studies indicated that the structure and environment of the main family effects on attitudes and family life of children (Carey, 2005). Sergin and Nabi evaluated the impact of watching television on unrealistic attitudes toward marriage and relationship. 285 students participated in this survey. The results showed that there was a negative relationship between watching television and ideal exceptions from marriage. While, the relationship between watching the romantic programs was positive (Sergin & Nabi, 2003). Amoto and Rogers indicated that the attitudes toward marriage and divorce are good predictive for life quality of marital life. People who have the positive attitude toward marriage and negative attitude to divorce improve their life quality during the time (Amoto & Rogers, 1999). Many studies have conducted on marriage, but the researchers presented their theoretical models for some specific region of the world (Carroll and et al, 2007., Hall, 2006 & 2012). Also, each study used the

particular tool or material for investigating it, it seems that a valid and more widely tool such as in-depth interview can investigate the attitude toward marriage better than the other tools. Using this tool helps us to more proper investigation and this causes effective and timely intervening, increasing the stability, and improving the quality of marital life. The aim of the current study is exploring that how married students experience the marriage process and what conditions lead to the formation of mental concepts from marriage in the mind of participants?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Consider to the purpose of study that is clarifying of marriage experience and how formation of attitudes toward marriage from the standpoint of married students, the qualitative content analysis method was used to exploring the experience that provide some tools for achieving the valuable and depth information from the sample (Lichtman, 2010). The current study was a qualitative study and content analysis kind. In this study used the conventional content analysis that the researcher avoids from using predetermined categories and instead of it allows to categories and their names come out from data (Krippendorff, 2004). Thus, the researcher is completely melted in data until reaching to a perception or a new understand. Then, the texts are read word by word until extracting the codes. This process is carried out continuously from deriving codes until naming them. Next, codes are categorized based on their different and similarities and finally some examples are prepared for each theme. Advantages of this method are that the results are directly obtained from participants without imposing believes (Elo & Kyngns, 2008., Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The sampling was based on purposive sampling and the students were preferred that they were married. Other features were considered due to controlling the disturbance variables like having the similar life, not having separation experience, living with mate at the moment, passing on year of marital life, and the age below 40. The purpose of considering to limiting conditions of the sample was selecting the people who experience the marriage in the first step and thereby it is possible to more depth experience of participants. Namely, we sought to a sample that gives the most information about research questions (Creswell, 2007). The information was collected by in-depth interviews and semi-structured interviews after presenting the introduction letter, explanation of the purpose of study and how to do that ensure to keep security of information, having right to abundant, and informed in written consent. The interviews were carried out in Persian at the counseling center of psychological Faculty of Shahid Chamran University and it is continued after interview with 18 students until reaching to enough saturation and repeating the obtained information from

interviews and finally the data reaching to saturation. the Interview starts with a general question about marriage experience and the reasons of interested in it and then it was evaluated in-depth. Some questions were as a guidance of the interview includes: what occurs that you decide to marriage? And what important problems affect on your attitude toward marriage? Also, participants were required saying other items that come to their mind during the interview. The interview was for 45 to 60 minutes and it immediately recorded on the cast and write down at the paper, then it is analyzed by handle method. Due to increasing the validity and reliability, it was used from suitable place and enough time for collecting data, made good relationship with participants, used complementary colleagues, reviewed the handwritings for participants and investigated data by other researchers.

FINDINGS

All participants were married and one-year passed from their marriage. The age mean of participants was 30. Mean passed time of marriage was 4 years. Also, other features consist of current residence, degree, major, and ethnic (Arab, Persian, Lor, Kord, Turk, and Bakhtiari) was various. All participants were from a family with marital status married (one father and mother) except participant 12. Income of participants varied from 0 to 3 million Rials and most of them have low income or didn't have the job and supported from their parents. Only 9 people out from all participants 18 people have children. the religion of all participants was Islam and almost 6 people out from 18 people stated that they live in a village. 588 primary codes, 81 sub-themes, and 15 themes were derived summarized from analysis of the data. Each theme will explain with some examples:

Knowledge and understanding of each other (code 48)

This theme included five themes such as equality in mate selection, honesty and ethnic orientation, transparency and insight to choose, personal features and character, and consider to the ratio of criteria. Many couples believe that enough knowledge from the partner before marriage is the main factor of successful. They stated that their evaluation and positive attitude toward their marriage due to enough knowledge from their partner. The participant 2 says about his/her marriage:

"While both of us were the student and from different city and culture, but fortunately we became familiar with complete honesty and now thank god, we have a successful life. In my opinion, enough knowledge from each other is a basic condition of happiness in couples' life." Also, participant 10 says: "the only thing that I request my wife was honesty, I have many people that have to oath for saying I love you."

Marriage forces (code 11)

Marriage forces have two sub-theme included psychological and social pressures. Kindness and interest between two partners are like a foundation of marriage house that all building materials based on it. The marriage without the goal, motivation, and kindness and exclusively based on forced conditions is like a house that doesn't have the strong foundation and it is destroyed with low pressure. If it is to keep forcibly doesn't have the signs of the successful marriage and Optimistic attitude toward it. In interview with three participants faced with such reluctant signs that arise from forcible condition:

" This my life and I see who is suitable for me and I interested in his/her," (Participant 15). Or participant 12 says "because my mother is sad, I feel guilty. I felt alone after my father died and marriage of each my three sisters, I felt our house didn't have warmness and happiness environment." Also, participant 6 says about social pressure in marriage: "in first I preferred that didn't marriage below thirties, but people say about you as much as possible you are under pressure that you hurry up about it. If I didn't do, in your opinion don't people tag me with many faults? Didn't say maybe he has many faults?"

The revision of the values and beliefs (code 26)

This theme had five sub-themes consisted of tending to joint values, orientation to tending to maintain moral values (such as equality and patient), reducing the badness of termination of marriage or divorce, different view to marriage and its facilities (like dowry), hesitate in values and traditional customs, and analysis of profit and loss in marriage.

Participant 1 says about considering to equality in relationship and management the home *"if a man understands the importance of role of wife and husband, not only doesn't disagree with doing the household tasks, but also he may agree with doing all that."* Or participant 3 says about tending to have common values: *"it is important for me that my husband has beliefs same me, particularly about religion and the issue like hijab. I never like in during our life one of us feels who is better or worse toward another in some cases".* Participant 16 states that *"in my opinion, divorce is law affair and although it is a bad and the unholy action but we mustn't fear from it and it exist from the view of legality and juridical. Also, instead of conflict and argument and the couples and their families can easily separate and it is not any problems".* Participant 4 says his opinion *"this is the common thing that says the life is complicated and a child with 20 years old can't manage it. I agree with it. Suppose I married in less than age, when I faced with any problem what should I do, certainly I was confused".* Participant 2 says about the rational relationship and mental loss and profit analysis: *"when I want to do anything, say to myself that it is worthy or not. While I decided to marry, it is an advantage for me. Becoming familiar with an educated and match with my*

standards that is a chance for me. I don't want to leave her without reason. Because it is difficult finding a person match with your criteria and you have to much seek to find her. Of course girls are abundant, but one who confirmed and like it is few. So my advantage to marry was finding a person equality with myself".

The values and beliefs in life of each person leads to some behaviors and performances that if they have negative internal and external feedbacks, so the person accepts the inefficiency of them and due to dangerous prediction toward the future he changes them by removing and revised them which the results from it will become better relationship and satisfying from life.

Motivations and perceptions from marriage

The codes of this category mainly obtained from the answer to this question that "what was your motivation from marriage? And what did you go to the marriage?" undoubtedly, satisfying the needs is one of the main stimuli of human for responding and creating a behavior. These needs may get many aspects in marriage and each person may explain particular needs and motivation. Sometimes these exceptions are irrational and ideal and sometimes the motivation is based on protecting from guilt. Participants 8, 7, 1, 12, and 11 have stated their motivations include maintaining the regional values, commitment and to be responsible, perfection and enhancing, acquisition of social identity and Credibility. Generally, this category included 7 sub-themes.

Parental involvement and intergenerational transfer

Consider to different views and attitudes of two generations (parent and children), some participants implicated to the involvement of parents as the problem. It seems that parental involvement sometimes is necessary for adding rational aspect to emotional, but the presence of restricting criteria of family is an undue interference particularly related to mate selection, customs, and ceremony increase the problems of youth:

"I have said many times to my father, my dear I agree with you and I know the girl is the daughter of your brother, but they are still in the village. How you want I marry with her while she is a villager at the middle school and I am a graduate student only for they are our relative. Sometimes I was alone, I was thinking and some decision passed from my mind. All these negative thoughts make worse the relationships between families. Conflicts were increased and even these pressures led to the person left the house for a while. That time I lived in the dormitory and although my city has 1 and half hours distance with University sometimes I didn't go to the house." (Participant 15).

This theme included four sub-themes: lack of distinction and dependence on family, the styles of upbringing in families, the gap of between two generations (parent-children), extreme restrictions and constraints.

Participant 9 belies that emphasizing of the family on the order of birth in marriage shows the intellectual gaps between parent and children. He says:

"among families like my family it is common that say first the older should marry. That time I wasn't prepare, I think it is incorrect that we do everything based on age." (Participant 9).

Due to summerising in explanations we tabulated another 10 themes in Table 1 and for each theme presents an example of participants' statements:

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study isn't clarifying and testing the hypotheses in qualitative studies. These studies are a kind of exploratory research that starts with a research question (Creswell, 2003). The current study also was conducted for clarifying the process of experience and formation of the attitude toward marriage. From the view of psychological scientists, individual's attitude toward an object is not a thing that occurs suddenly and without actions and reactions, but having an attitude may be the result of various determinants and during the time (Willoughby & et al., 2013). The interesting point is same in this study. Most previous studies in the field of attitudes toward marriage only state being negative or positive attitudes toward marriage and they didn't have any implication to the formation of these attitudes. Namely, if the individual's attitude is negative or positive toward marriage what determinants and how they form this kind of attitude. Even similar studies that were conducted about the reluctant to marriage and increase the age of it couldn't fill this research gap. Because these researches have investigated the marriage's obstacles (negative attitude) and advantages of it (positive attitude) from the quantitative view and they never investigated in way of qualitative and in-depth the formation of this process (Davis & et al, 1997., James, 1998., White & Cones, 1999., King & Allen, 1999). For example, it is imagined before that the economic factors are one of reluctant to marriage in youth, but the economic factors were allocated 26 codes in this study. The social and cultural problems included more than 96 codes. So, it can be stated that exact identifying of the importance of these themes in the formation of the attitude toward marriage is one important advantage of this study. In the current study, the main factors were obtained in three areas included cultural-social-economic, experiences and perception of incomplete and inefficient patterns, and elements of modernization in changing attitude toward marriage and value of it for students as educated class in society. It is obviously that Iran's society has experienced drastic changes in fields of

cultural and social in last decades that have affected the attitudes of people. Also, increasing the rate of divorce, family disputes, social damages, poverty, reducing life quality, and welfare level are the examples of observation incomplete patterns in Iran's society. Furthermore, increase the number of universities, educational centers, education level, and tending to live in cities are the reasons of formatting the individualism and social indifference. The experience of the present generation in communication and information era causes face with many information and new life styles that have increased expectations level. The marriage as social phenomena is not out from this scope. Marriage not only is social value in our Iranian and religious society, but also a necessary that is emphasized by religious. Youth such as participants in this study took different strategies at the time of marriage due to their local and religious beliefs and depends on underlying and intervening factors in marriage and the experience of people the coping strategies were different. For example, the religious strategies like faith, trust, patience, and perseverance are the part of strategies of participants who know themselves the commitment to religion values. Investigating the primary themes showed that the most of participants have the positive attitude toward marriage (42 primary themes). But the negative attitude and casual attitude (20 themes) almost are equal. The casual attitude was presented in this study for the first time that stated the condition of Not determined decision when the participants experience at the beginning of their marriage. In the other hand, making decision for marriage caused a desirable feel. Sometimes this desirable feel with removes with hearing the complaints of married persons, seeing the fail marriages, the fear of and thinking about the responsibilities and commitment by marriage. The most important issue about this is which setting up the counseling centers can help to this category of people (casual attitude toward marriage) and removing the problem of increasing the age of marriage. The results of the present study strongly suggest the consequences of infamous being single for people higher thirties in traditional parts of society. So, the future studies can review this infamous tag in other parts of society besides changing of values in youth about marriage. It seems that the infamous tag of being single is reducing in growing the new middle class in the metropolis and to be successful in other aspects of life is acceptable and even preferred. About the studies which have consistent results with the present study may be implicated to the effects of source family on the formation of attitudes was conducted by Wise and King (2008) and Ston and Hutchinson's study (2009). In field of the impact of cultural and social factors on attitudes process and changing the values can be implicated to Show and Lum (2008), the relation of attitude with life quality Riggio (2008), the impact of media on attitudes Sergin and Nabi (2003); the impact of perception or experience of divorce and family violent Dillon, Chair, Dixon and Ellis (2005),

the parent patterns and upbringing styles Heater (2005), changing in mate selection criteria Simpson (1986), and also industrialization and changing the surrounding and urban environment Stevenson and Wolfers (2007). At the ending, it can be stated that we are the witness of a kind of changing in values and attitude toward marriage in some parts of society and especially in more young and educated generations. Traditional marriage is recognized as an obstacle in front of succeeding in the field of personal and occupational. Today, many functions of marriage are denied or replaced by other processes. While the traditional body of society resists on the marriage as the most important identifying factor particularly for girls, the modern part or the parts is modernising imposes conflict pressures on youth for dealing it or changing the life styles. How celibacy will desirable or not desirable in the future or will be an infamous tag is an important question that need to more research in different levels and classes.

Limitations of the Study

Considering to being the security of personal and couple information, some participants concerned about voice recording. Researcher besides trust building and presenting his information (such as personal information and mobile phone number) to participants made a friendly environment in session.

One of the disadvantages of a qualitative study is the lack of ability to generalizing the results, but the purpose of the in-depth qualitative study is not generalizing. Of course, for generalizing the results, this model can be studied in the way of quantitative.

Research Suggests

It is suggested that each given theme information of attitudes investigate by qualitative research like keep up with the joneses or social comparative in marriage, envy, and so forth. Quality survey of the difference between males and female in attitude toward marriage presenting a model of local pre-marriage based on equality in marriage it is suggested that experts consider to cultural, social, religious, and moral factors in the marriage.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors stated that did not have conflict of interests.

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