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Effects of marriage on the academic performance of undergraduate male students at the King Faisal University

Running Title: Effects of Marriage on the academic performance

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Abstract

Background: Marriage influences the physical and psychological health of human beings. Married people are healthier, more productive, and engage less in risky behaviour. The aim of this study is to determine the effects of marriage on male students’ academic performance, and to explore the determinant factors causing these effects.

Methods: A cross-sectional study including 208 participants was conducted at the King Faisal University in Alhasa, Saudi Arabia, in February 2019. The variables examined were change in GPA after marriage, change in study duration after marriage, marriage duration, having children, income source, amount of monthly income, accommodation availability, the presence of a comfortable means of transportation, satisfaction with family life, the supportive attitude of the wife, the wife’s work status, family assistance in managing household chores, children’s issues and wife residency site.

Results: The majority of participants had an unchanged GPA (45.7%), and a minority had a decreased GPA (21.2%). By comparison, participants whose GPA increased were greater in number (33.2%). Having children, a monthly income, a satisfied married life, and a wife supportive to studying, all had a significant relationship.

Conclusion: This study concluded that marriage does not affect academic performance. Factors that contribute to having a worsened academic performance were having children and having a monthly income of 3000 SR or less. Factors contributing to a better academic performance were a high level of family life satisfaction and the positive, supportive attitude of the wife.

Keywords: Marriage, academic performance, married students, undergraduate students,
Introduction

Marriage is the joining into one life of a husband and a wife [1]. Many studies have been carried out on marriage and its effects on the individual’s mental and physical health. Many of these studies proved that there is an interconnection between a person’s marital status and their well-being. Marriage has positive effects. At a behavioural level, married people drink less and smoke less. A cross-sectional study carried out in 1983 found marriage as the best predictor of happiness. In the same context, Barrett Investigations (2000) revealed that there are major psychological gains from marriage. Not only that, but studies have proven the benefits of marriage on an individual’s physical health. An important study on the effects of marriage with respect to the incidence of Alzheimer’s disease proved that there is a significantly higher risk of Alzheimer’s among the never married [2]. Other studies show that married individuals have more productivity [3], engage in less risky behaviour [4], are healthier [5] and experience higher levels of well-being [6]. Another study compared undergraduate married and single students in terms of personality needs, happiness, and perceived problems. Married students were found to have significantly higher scores for needs associated with intellectualism and academic achievement. Singles were found to be more likely to participate in activities associated with impulsive self-expression and emotional dependence [7].

There are studies that have explored the effects of marriage on academic performance. Data collected by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and analysed by Joseph Price proved that students who were married prior to starting graduate school do not have worse outcomes than students who were single [8]. Another study, which included data of 11,000 graduate students over 20 years, examined and compared married and single students in terms of graduation rate, time taken to obtain degree, publication success and initial job placement. It revealed that married males had better outcomes in all three criteria in comparison with single males, and that married females performed no worse than single females regardless of their marital status [9]. A study was conducted in Nigeria to investigate marital status and age as predictors for academic performance. Students included in the study were both male and female. The investigator concluded that there was no significant relationship between marital status and academic performance [10]. Also, a study was conducted in King Faisal University to explore the effect of marriage on the academic performance of female medical students. It revealed that marriage itself does not affect academic performance, but is highly dependent on the individual [11].

The aim of this study is to determine the effects of marriage on the academic performance of male students, and to explore which determinant factors do affect their performance. This will help to identify the factors that cause adverse academic outcomes so that married students can avoid them, and guide students regarding academic objectives when making their marriage plan decisions.

Subjects and Methods
The study included 208 participants. They were male undergraduate students at the King Faisal University in Alhasa, Saudi Arabia. Data were obtained by a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated by being reviewed and evaluated by three experts, and adjusted accordingly. A convenience sampling technique was adopted to collect data. The inclusion criteria were: married, male, an undergraduate, a current student and newly graduated (less than one year), studying in Alhasa, and completing at least one semester before marriage and one semester after marriage. The exclusion criteria were: being divorced, polygamous or a non-Saudi.

The questionnaire was designed to assess academic performance in terms of grade point average (GPA) and study hours. The questionnaire was also designed to assess selected factors that may affect academic performance after marriage, namely: marriage duration, having children, having a source of income, amount of monthly income, accommodation availability, having a comfortable means of transportation, satisfaction with family life, supportive attitude of wife, wife’s work status, assistance of family with household chores and children’s issues and the place of residence of the wife.

The data collected was encoded into an Excel spreadsheet file and statistically analysed by the SPSS Software (version 23). A chi-square test was used to find out if there was a relationship between marital status and academic grade. A P-value less than 0.05 was considered as significant.

Results

The frequency of students with an increased GPA, an unchanged GPA, and a decreased GPA after marriage was 69, 95 and 44 respectively, as shown in Figure 1. The frequency of students with increased, unchanged or decreased daily study durations were 33, 113 and 62, respectively. 158 students (76%) reported that they had a greater desire to study than before marriage. 89 students (42%) wished that they had not married till after they had graduated.

The relationship between a GPA change after marriage and selected factors were investigated using a chi-square test (Table 1). Having children, a monthly income, a satisfied life with wife and a supportive attitude of the wife towards the studying, showed significant relationship. However, marriage duration, source of income, accommodation, transportation, wife’s work status, family supportive role in household chores and children’s affairs, site of residency of the wife, and college of study did not show any significant relationship.

With regards to the criterion of having children, the number of students with either an unchanged or an increased GPA is significantly lower in the ‘Students Having Children’ category (Figure 2). Regarding the monthly income criterion, the number of students with a decreased GPA is significantly higher in the categories ‘1100 SR or Less’ and ‘1101-3000 SR’ (Figure 3). With regards to the satisfaction with family life criterion, the number of students with an unchanged or increased GPA is significantly higher in the ‘5: High Level of Satisfaction’ category (Figure 4). The number of students with unchanged or increased GPA is significantly higher in the ‘5: Wife’s supportive attitude towards the study’ category (Figure 5).
Discussion

The main aim of this study is to assess the effects of marriage on academic performance. The first variable used to assess academic performance was the GPA change after marriage. The majority of participants had an unchanged GPA (45.7%). The minority of participants had a decreased GPA (21.2%), and participants with an increased GPA formed a greater number (33.2%) in comparison. These numbers show that marriage is not a predictor for academic outcome. This finding is consistent with prior studies [3,4,5]. Factors affecting academic outcomes other than marriage need to be studied alongside marriage in order to examine the effects of marriage more clearly.

The second variable used to assess academic performance was the study duration change after marriage. Nearly one third of participants (29.8%) had a decreased study duration after marriage. This indicates that study duration might be an obstacle for married students in order for them to have good academic performance.

The study explored which factors influence academic performance. Firstly, having children is a strong factor preventing students from keeping themselves with the same GPA or having an increased GPA. The number of participants with an unchanged or increased GPA decreased significantly in the category of students who had children. Secondly, having a low monthly income is a strong predictor for having a decreased GPA. The number of students with a decreased GPA is significantly higher in the categories of monthly income of 3000 SR or less compared to students having a higher income. Thirdly, satisfaction with family life is a strong supporting factor to having a better academic performance. The number of participants with an unchanged or increased GPA are strikingly higher in the categories of high family life satisfaction. Fourth, having a supportive wife is a strong factor underlying better academic performance. The number of participants with an unchanged or increased GPA is strikingly higher in the category of having a highly supportive wife.

Conclusion

This study concludes that marriage does not affect academic performance. The factors contributing to a worsened academic performance are having children and having a low monthly income. The factors contributing to having a better academic performance are having a highly satisfying family life and a supportive wife.

List of Abbreviations

GPA: Grade point average
SR: Saudi Riyal

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Reference


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Tables

Table 1 Relationship between GPA change after marriage and selected factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected factors</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage duration</td>
<td>0.831</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having children</td>
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<td>Source of income</td>
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<td>Monthly income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
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<td>Satisfaction with family</td>
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<td>Wife’s supportive attitude towards the studying</td>
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<td>Wife work status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family supportive role in managing household chores and children affaires</td>
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<tr>
<td>Site of residency of the wife</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of study</td>
<td>0.073</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures

Fig 1 Frequency and percentage of students with GPA change after marriage
Fig 2 Relationship between GPA change after marriage and having children.

Fig 3 Relationship between GPA change after marriage and Monthly Income
Fig 4 Relationship of GPA change after marriage and satisfaction with family life

Fig 5 Relationship of GPA change after marriage and wife’s supportive attitude towards the studying