

The Effects of Marriage before College Graduation on the Educational Attainments and Personal Fulfillment of Saudi Women

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Abstract

This research explored the effects of marriage before college graduation on the educational attainments and personal fulfillment of Saudi women. The purpose of this study was to gather and analyze data from women who were married before completing a college degree and women who were married after completing a college degree in order to measure how marriage has affected their lives in different ways. The data was gathered by surveying 215 Saudi women. According to the findings of the study, marriage before college graduation did limit educational attainment to some extent. The survey results suggested that a significant percentage of the total participants did not complete their education after marriage. A substantial percentage of the total participants believed that getting married limited their educational prospects or reduced the likelihood of continuing their education. Moreover, according to the findings of the study in regard to the personal fulfillment, marriage before college graduation did impact the personal fulfillment in some areas of the participants' lives, yet not for other areas of their lives. Career satisfaction and achievements were the most impacted areas as the survey results suggested that the majority of the women who were married before college graduation were unemployed. Also, survey results suggested that a significant percentage of the total participants believed that getting married limited their career achievement prospects or reduced the likelihood of pursuing a career.

Keywords: *Marriage, College Graduation, Educational Attainments, Personal Fulfillment.*

1. Introduction

1.1. The purpose and Significance of the Study

The intent of this study was to examine and investigate the effects of marriage before college graduation on the educational attainments and personal fulfillment on young Saudi women. Marriage before the age of 18 and before completion of college is more common in Saudi Arabia than in most developed countries, and according to cultural and religious traditions and beliefs, it is considered acceptable and is sometimes encouraged. Due to the fact that marrying at early ages among Saudi women is still persistently practiced and acceptable and there is no clear law of the minimum age of marriage, there is a great need of this study and more research to emphasize the effects on the lives of young Saudi women.

The focus of this study will be on the women's age at marriage and its consequences on their life events, including educational attainments, vocational opportunities, marital satisfaction, and personal fulfillment. This study intends to clarify these consequences in order to help Saudi society recognize the benefits of delaying marriage and changing attitudes towards later marriages for the sake of education and fulfillment of Saudi women in these changing times.

This study will benefit Saudi society by providing leaders and decision-makers with much-needed information about the effects of marriage before the completion of college. Indeed, this issue affects not only Saudi women themselves, but also Saudi society as a whole and future generations. With the data, analysis, and suggestions provided here, these effects can be further examined and changes such as limiting the practice of early marriage to protect young girls from the risk of pregnancy before they are physically and psychologically ready for motherhood can be discussed. It is hoped that the awareness raised through this study will provide evidence which can assist all members of Saudi society in reconsidering early marriage in order to protect the young women from negative consequences.

2. Hypothesis

The process of investigating and understanding the relationship between the women's age at marriage and its correlation with education and personal satisfaction in this study will be facilitated by testing two hypotheses. First, women who are married before college graduation will have a lower probability of completing college and graduate studies. Second, women who marry before college graduation will have less personal fulfillment.

3. Definition of Terms

- Early marriage is defined as a formal marriage or informal union before the age of 18 years (UNICEF, 2001). Also, early marriage is sometimes referred to as child marriages, which fall within the context of arranged marriages (Khasiani, 1995; Uche, 1976, & Dolphyne, 1991).
- Educational attainments are defined as the highest grade completed within the most advanced level attended in the educational system of the country where the education was received (Glossary of Statistical Terms).
- Personal satisfaction refers to the individual's experience of a sense of fulfillment of a need or want and the quality or state of being satisfied. (U.S. National Library of Medicine). The term is also defined as a subjective evaluation, judgment, or attitude expressed by an individual with respect to the attainment of certain goals or needs based on his/her level of aspiration or expectation (Biology Online Dictionary)
- Marital satisfaction refers to the subjective attitude that individuals have towards their marital relationship. It is also referring to positive feelings that a spouse derives from a marriage. The term marital happiness is based on an active evaluation, whereas marital satisfaction seems to have a more cognitive basis that involves a relation of one's circumstances to some standards. (Beveridge, et al., 1976).

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The data of this study was obtained using a quantitative survey collected from groups of married Saudi women who were living in the most populated cities in Saudi Arabia. The survey questions were self-created and also sourced from existed surveys. The questionnaires included, along with other information, current age, age at first marriage, and level of education at marriage and after marriage. In order to understand the effects of marriage before college graduation on Saudi women, the researcher gathered data from Saudi women using a detailed survey. The data was gathered from two groups of respondents: women who were married before college graduation, and women who were married after graduating from a post-secondary institution.

4.2. Participants

The participants of this study were 215 married Saudi women who were living in different cities in Saudi Arabia. The sample of the study was divided into two groups: Saudi women who were married before college graduation, and Saudi women who were married

after college graduation. More than 54% of the participants were married after college graduation. All participants might currently be married, separated, divorced, or widowed.

4.3. Instrument

The instrument is a quantitative survey conducted using SurveyMonkey. Participants received a link via e-mail or social media message to prompt them to respond to the survey. The survey was translated into Arabic; however, the English questions and answer choices could be seen on (Appendix A). The data was therefore collected online using SurveyMonkey tools. The survey itself was divided into three sections. The first section identified the demographics of the respondents. It confirmed whether or not the respondents were married Saudi females living in the most populated cities in Saudi Arabia. The first section also identified the current age, marital status, age at first marriage, and the duration of the marriage of the participants. It also asked whether they had children, and if so, how many.

Educational attainment was measured by a self-created set of questions. These questions identified the highest level of education the participants completed before marriage, whether they continued their education after marriage or not. It also identified the participants' level of satisfaction towards their level of educational attainment; and whether or not the respondents thought that getting married and/or having children limited their educational prospects or reduced the likelihood of continued education.

Personal fulfillment was measured by assessing three main factors: marital satisfaction, career achievements, and personal satisfaction and well-being. To measure levels of marital satisfaction, the participants answered Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm, Scanlon, Crow, Green, & Buckler, 1983) questions that were adapted slightly to fit this study. The three questions in their adapted format were: "How satisfied are you with your husband as a spouse?"; "How satisfied are you with your marriage?"; and "How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband?". These questions involved a satisfaction rating from 1 to 7, with 7 being the highest. A total score of 21 would be the highest level of overall satisfaction. To measure career satisfaction and achievement, the participants answered some questions. These questions identified whether or not they were employed, the degree of which they were satisfied with their career, and their satisfaction towards their career achievements and growth. It also identified whether or not the participants thought that getting married and/or having children limited their career achievement prospects or reduced the likelihood of pursuing a career. To measure personal satisfaction and well-being, the participants answered questions about their emotional and mental health.

These questions were sourced from an emotional and mental health survey by the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. These questions indicated the degree of how much the participants believed that they were mentally and emotionally healthy.

4.4.Procedure

To gather the data for this study, the completed and translated survey was published on SurveyMonkey, and the link to the survey was sent to the 215 participants with a message giving instructions and making participants aware of the anonymity of the survey. This occurred in March and April of 2019, and since this was conducted using SurveyMonkey, all data was collected online.

5. Review of the Related Research

The purpose of the following review of literature is to summarize and analyze the existing literature and research that relate to the issue of early marriage in relation to educational attainments and personal satisfaction.

Early Marriage

Early marriage has been recognized as a critical problem especially in developing countries and deserves serious attention. Thus, many studies were conducted on this issue. Jensen, R., & Thornton, R. (2003) examined the patterns and trends in age at marriage in some developing countries and the conditions, status and well-being of early-married women. In order to examine these patterns, the authors used data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), which were representative surveys of females who were between 15 to 49 years. These surveys were conducted in several countries during the last decades and gathered data on some factors that might be affected by early marriage such as marital history, education, fertility and more. Jensen, R., & Thornton, R. found that the patterns and trends in the incidence of marriage before the age of 18 were very high in most of developing countries. They found that the highest rate of early marriage was in South Asia, where 70 to 75 percent of females were married by the age of 18. The second highest rate of early marriage was found in West Africa and sub-Saharan Africa with the percent of 50 to 60, followed by the Near East and North Africa, Latin America and South East Asia. Jensen, R., & Thornton, R. explored the issue of well-being and condition of women in early marriages focusing on four countries: Benin, Colombia, India, and Turkey.

Through their analysis, they found that females who married at early ages had numerous and sharp disadvantages in many dimensions in their lives such as education, status, autonomy, and physical and emotional health.

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) (2013) discussed some conceptual issues that underpinned research and action on child and forced marriage. In this research, early and forced marriage were identified as forms of culturally justified violence against women as well as a violation of human rights that is endemic in several countries. Also, early and child marriage can be considered a form of forced marriage because children are incapable of giving informed consent. Finally, the prevalence of forced and early marriage is based on the sociocultural and political context of a society. Women Living Under Muslim Laws (2013) concluded that the low levels of education and economic status, as well as the cultural and religious attitudes on honor and sexuality, were some of the main causes and risk factors involved in early and forced marriages. Therefore, the consequences were acute on the lives of young women such as perpetual low levels of education, lack of autonomy and decision-making power, and high risks of health problems, abuse, domestic violence and insecurity. In addition, the negative consequences of early and forced marriage did not affect women only, but also the society as a whole as it reinforced the perpetuation of gender oppression and inequality.

Hoda Rashad, Magued Osman, and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi (2005) explored the trends in marriage in the Arab world and found out that early marriage in recent decades had declined significantly in parts of the Middle East, especially in Kuwait, Libya, and the United Arab Emirates. In the early 1970s, about 40 percent of women between the ages of 15 to 19 were married in Kuwait and Libya. However, these figures had declined by the mid of 1990s to 5% and 1%, respectively. On the other hand, in some Arab countries, early marriage is still prevalent, most notably in Oman, Yemen, Palestine and Egypt. At the time of the study, about 17% of women ages 15 to 19 were married in Oman and Yemen, and about 10% of women ages 15 to 19 were married in Egypt. In Palestine, according to the 2004 Palestinian Demographic and Health Survey, around 14% of women ages 15 to 19 were married.

Al-Hakami, H., & Mclaughlin, K. (2016) examined marriage in the Islamic and Arab countries in general and in Saudi Arabia in particular. The authors of this article studied marriage and the constitution of familial relationships in Saudi Arabia within the context of culture, Sharia law and the religious interpretations. They discussed some concepts related to marriage, such as early marriage, forced marriage, child marriage, and arranged marriage, which are often interrelated.

In this article, the authors pointed out two cases that had been widely publicized in social media concerning the issue of child marriage in Saudi Arabia. Al-Hakami, H., & McLaughlin, K. (2016) concluded that Saudi Arabia was one of the 74 countries that had not set a minimum legal age for marriage. There are some campaigns to set a legal minimum age for marriage, and the Saudi government, leaders and clerics will do so for such a need with the consideration of the context of Islamic religion, Sharia law, and Saudi culture.

Al-Mazrou, et al. (1995) used data from the Saudi National Child Health Survey during 1987 and 1988 in order to explore marital age, consanguinity, status and outcome of marriage of Saudi women. For the Saudi National Child Health Survey, there was a stratified multi-staged sample of 9,061 households that included 40% from 15 urban sites and 60% from 121 rural sites. That involved 59,199 households in rural and urban areas. A total of 8,482, or 99% of ever-married women, from 9,061 households were interviewed. The result of this data showed that only 0.2% of males and 0.4% of females were married before the age of 15 years and 1% of males and 15.4% of females were between the ages of 15 and 19 years. However, at the age group of 20 to 24 years, almost 23.7% of men and 58.2% of women were married. The rates of marriages of women who were between 15 and 19 years were significantly higher than that of men who were in the same age group. Yet in the age group of 30 and over, the rates of married men were significantly higher than that of women. Finally, in the age group of 60 and over, 33% of women compared to 91% of men were found to be married at that time. A larger number of women than men remained unmarried from the age of 50 years. The percent of single status was higher in men from the age of 15 to 29, while it was more in women from the age of 30 years. Al-Mazrou, et al. (1995) concluded that, "In Saudi Arabia over 20 years ago, nearly 90% of the under-20 females were married. Due to the recent social and economic improvements, the rate of under-20 marriages has fallen to 16%. In addition, ample opportunity for higher education of females and job opportunities for educated females in the country have affected the marriage age".

Early marriage in relation to education

Alexander, K. L., & Reilly, T. W. (1981) explored the effects of marriage timing on educational attainment for both men and women. The authors of this article found out that 27% of the men and 16% of the women reported two or more years of additional academic enrollment after marriage. They also found out that only 13% of the men and 29% of the women who obtained no additional schooling after marrying concluded their educations in the first year of their marriage. Alexander, K. L., & Reilly, T. W. concluded that early marriage is a detriment to educational attainments of women and has less impact on men.

In addition, they concluded that the extent and nature of family interferences upon educational progress are different between male and female, with the disruptions that follow from early marriage being sharper for women.

Elder and Rockwell (1976) investigated the consequences of early marriage on women's life patterns, and they found out that early marriage had numerous disadvantages. One of them is a restriction of formal education. Bayer, A. E. (1968), in a follow-up study of 8,567 students, found out that marriage and parenthood were strong predictors of dropping out of college. Marini, M. M. concluded that early marriage is a substantial factor limiting women's educational attainments. Age at first marriage has no critical effect on the educational attainments of men. However, it has a significant effect on the educational attainments of women. Also, the author through this study found that educational attainment has an important effect on the timing of marriage for both sexes with a stronger effect on women.

Lowe, G. D., & Witt, D. D. (1984) tested early marriage and age at first marriage for predicting educational attainments. The authors used multivariate statistics and national probability samples, and they found out that early marriage was the superior measure. They found, in general, that reduced educational attainment was a consequence of early marriage, and women were more susceptible to reduced education due to their greater tendency to marry early.

Lowe, George D., et al. (1989) examined the changes in the influence of early marriage on the educational attainment of men and women by using national survey data and an index of early marriage. The authors of this article suggested that the negative effects of early marriage have risen for both men and women. However, women were at a greater risk of reduced education. Lowe, George D., et al. suggested that the possible explanation of this difference is that women have a greater tendency to marry early.

Hoda Rashad, Magued Osman, and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi (2005) discussed marriage in the Arab world with other important aspects such as family, education, marriage policy issues, trends in marriage, and the economic burden of marriage. The findings of this research showed that the percentage of educated women in the Arab world had increased and women's level of education had become similar to or higher than that of their husbands. In some Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine, 20 to 30% of marriages at that time there showed an educational gap in favor of women. Also, women who had higher levels of education generally married later than women who had lower levels of education.

Amani Hamdan (2005) analyzed Saudi women's education since its beginnings in the 1960s. She highlighted the status of women in Saudi society in general and in education in particular and discussed the progress that has been achieved in women's education. This study concluded that it is practically difficult to discuss and understand women's education in Saudi Arabia outside the social and political context which have shaped women's status not only in education but also in the society in general. However, despite the complexity of the issue, the educational levels increased hurriedly, the number of women's educational institutions as well as the number of women students increased consistently, their illiteracy rate remarkably decreased, and they steadily did better on standardized school tests and earned higher grades than their male counterparts. But the study also pointed out that there was a high school dropout rate among young Saudi women and that could be attributed to the issue of early and forced marriage of young girls. Some young girls were forced to marry at a very young age. Parents and guardians could force their daughters to marry at any age because there was no law that determined the age at which girls could marry, and no law that prevented parents or guardians from having their girls married. Also, there was no law that makes education mandatory to high school, and no law that prohibits parents or guardians from taking girls out of school. This study suggested that this issue should be given more attention by researchers not only in the field of education research, but also in educational policy.

Al Kotob (1975) interviewed 519 female students and found out that 79 % of the participants strongly agreed that females should receive the same opportunities as males. 70 % asserted that Master's and Doctorate's degrees are helpful for the females in the Gulf region, and 80 percent suggested that university education should be co-educational. In the regards to marriage, almost 95% of the participants encouraged education before marriage. In terms of the available subjects for females, around 94 percent agreed that females should have opportunities to study in any field and should not be limited to some particular subjects. However, 66 % of the participants thought that a husband's education should be higher than his wife's.

Early marriage and personal fulfillment

Groot, Wim; Van Den Brink, Henriëtte Maassen. (2002) studied the age and education differences in marriages and their effects on life satisfaction. The aim of this study was to explore if age and education differences between couples had an influence on their individual life satisfaction. The authors in this article attempted to interpret the findings of the study in terms of two hypotheses.

The first hypothesis was referred to the evolutionary or the financial support hypothesis. This hypothesis was that both males and females preferred a spouse who was young and had higher education; however, females had a proportional preference for an older husband who could financially support them. For this hypothesis, it was expected that when the couples had their preferred relationship, that this would increase their marital stability and life satisfaction. This theory led to an expectation of higher life satisfaction of partners with a positive age and education gap between them. The second hypothesis was about social equality. It said marital stability and satisfaction was higher among spouses who did not have a gap in age and education or who had only a small gap in age and education. This hypothesis emphasized the value of social equality in relation to marital success and its positive impact for individual satisfaction. Therefore, according to this hypothesis both males and females would have less satisfaction when the gap in age and education increased between spouses. Groot, Wim; Van Den Brink, Henriëtte Maassen. (2002) tested these two alternative hypotheses by analyzing the effects of age and education gaps between partners in a marriage on individual life satisfaction. They found out that, “A positive age gap between husbands and wives increases both male and female life satisfaction, while female life satisfaction increases if the education gap is smaller” (p.1).

Arshad, Mohsin, Mahmood (2014) explored the relationship of marital adjustment and life satisfaction among men and women in early and late marriages. The aim of this study was to examine the effects of age on marital adjustment among early and late marriages. In this study, the authors examined three main hypotheses. First, there is a significant relationship between marital adjustment and life satisfaction. Second, marital adjustment is higher in late marriages as compared to early marriages. Finally, life satisfaction is higher in late marriages as compared to early marriages. The study included a sample of 160 participants who were divided into two groups: early married men and women and late married men and women. The age of early married participants was 20 years or below, and the age of late married participants was 35 years or above. The duration of the marriage experience of the participants was 5 years or more. Arshad, Mohsin, Mahmood (2014) concluded that late marriages have higher levels of marital adjustment and life satisfaction and there is a positive correlation between marital adjustment and life satisfaction. The findings of this study indicated that there is significant difference between late marriages and early marriages on marital adjustment and life satisfaction.

Lee (1977) examined the relationships between age at marriage, marital role performance and marital satisfaction.

In this study, the authors' aim was to test hypotheses that were derived from a theory relating age at marriage to marital instability. The data in this study was collected from a sample of 788 married people, 389 men and 389 women. The participants were in their first marriage, had been married over a period of six years or less at the time of the study, and their ages were under 35 years at the time of their marriage. Lee, G. R. (1977), through analyzing the data, found that there was a small positive relationship between age at marriage and marital satisfaction. This was identified by three main intervening variables. First, women who married early were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and were more likely to have less marital satisfaction. Second, women who married early were more likely to have lower levels of satisfaction with their standard of living which was positively related to the marital satisfaction. Women who married young were more likely to experience lower levels of satisfaction in their marriage not because they had lower standards of living, but because they might have entered married life with high expectations for socioeconomic attainment which were relatively unrealistic. Finally, women who married early were more likely to have higher levels of marital tension compared to women who married later, and marital tension was negatively related to marital satisfaction. Thus, marital tension must be considered in understanding the effects of age at marriage and marital satisfaction.

Hoda Rashad, Magued Osman, and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi (2005) discussed women's status in the Arab societies and found that Arab women's status was mostly defined through their roles as mothers and wives. Therefore, women who failed to meet these social expectations and remained single did not have readily have an acceptable or comfortable status in the society especially those who had lower levels of education and fewer jobs opportunities, and were not able to be financially independent. However, the number of single Arab women is growing, and that forcing the societies to deal this increasing group of women in a more acceptable manner. Often, women who have successful careers are more likely to exceed the traditional stereotypes and have more chances for self- fulfillment outside the limited roles of mother and wife. Single women in the Arab societies are no longer viewed as failures, but either have made the decision to remain single, or have not find suitable partners for themselves.

Summary

Many of the studies that examined early marriage trends and patterns suggested that the prevalence of early marriage is greater in developing countries and more likely to occur among women due to factors such as cultural and religious norms, low levels of education and socioeconomic status. Also, the existing literature suggests that there are numerous and sharp

consequences of early marriage on women's lives in many dimensions including education, status, autonomy, and physical and emotional health. The studies related to the early marriage that were conducted in the Arab world or Middle East in terms of the prevalence on the past decades compared to the recent decades showed how early marriage had declined in some Arab countries, while in some other Arab region's early marriage prevalence was still high. However, there is a deficit of recent data and studies on the effects of age at marriage related specifically to the Saudi population. Further, there is also an acute lack of focused studies on the prevalence of early marriage among young Saudi women and how early marriage affects their lives.

In terms of the existing literature about early marriage in relation to education, there were that explored the effects of marriage timing, age at first marriage, and early marriage on the educational attainment for both men and women. Many of these studies suggested that early marriage had greater impacts on women's education compared to men. For instance, women obtained less additional schooling and academic enrollment after marrying. In contrast, other studies found out that educational attainment had an important influence on the timing of marriage for both sexes with a stronger effect on women. Moreover, some research indicated that women had more tendency to marry early, and that, consequently, this had a negative correlation to educational attainment.

Most of the studies that were conducted about women's education in Saudi Arabia focused on the importance of considering the social, political, cultural, and religious factors when examining Saudi women's education. Also, most of these studies discussed the progress that Saudi women have achieved in education despite all the obstacles.

In terms of early marriage in relation to personal fulfillment, the studies focused on the differences of age and education between spouses and how that affected their marital and individual satisfaction. Regarding this, there were two main hypotheses in the literature. The first hypothesis was that both males and females preferred a spouse who was young and had higher education; however, females had a proportional preference for an older husband who could financially support them. The second hypothesis was about social equality. It said marital stability and satisfaction were higher among spouses who did not have a gap in age and education or who have only a small gap in age and education. Other studies focused on the marital adjustment and life satisfaction for both early and late marriages and suggested that late marriages had higher levels of marital adjustment and life satisfaction.

6. Results and Discussion of the Findings

Results

The first hypothesis of the study is that women who are married before college graduation will have a lower probability of completing college and graduate study was partially accepted. Moreover, the second hypothesis which is women who marry before college graduation will have less personal fulfillment was partially accepted as well.

Demographics

The total number of participants in this study was 215 Saudi women. 95.37% of those women were married, 2.31% were divorced, 0.93% were separated, and 1.39% were widowed. The largest age range group of the participants was between the ages of 18 and 28 years old representing 44.44% of the total participants, followed by the age range of 30 to 39 years old representing 35.19%. The age range of 40 to 49 was only 18.06%.; the smallest percentage was for the age range from 50 to 59 which had just 2.31% (see Chart 1).

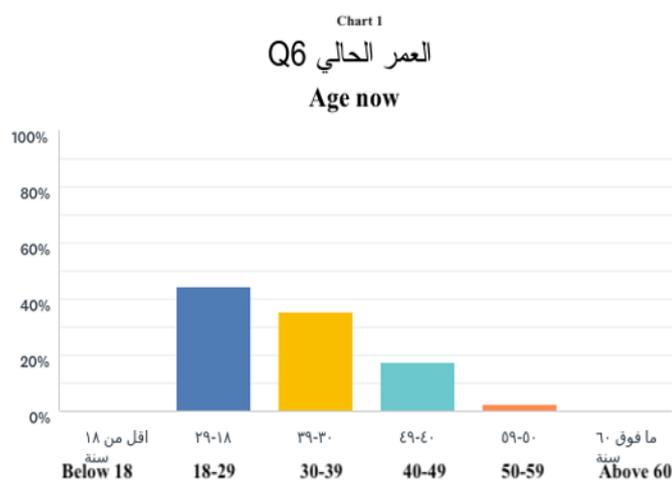


Figure 1: Age now

In terms of the age at first marriage, 18 to 29 years old had the largest percentage at 87.04%. This was followed by 7.91% for ages under 18, then 3.72% for the age range from 30 to 39. Only 0.93% married from ages 40 to 49. The majority of the participants have been/were married for less than five years which represents 34.88%. This was followed by 25.12% of women who have been/were married for five to ten years. However, the lowest percentage is 0.93% of women who have been/were married for more than 30 years (see Chart 2).

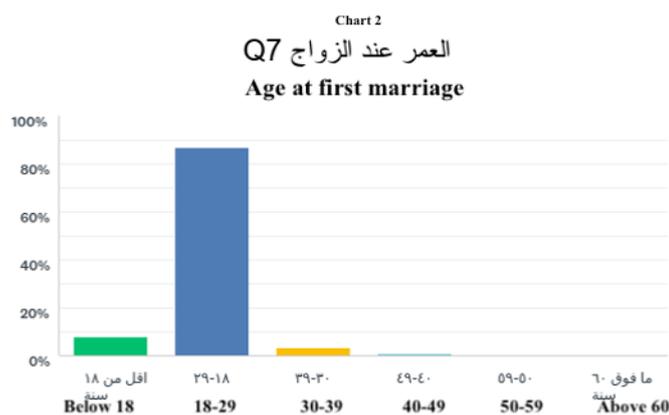


Figure 2: Age at first marriage

Out of all the participants, 80.47% had children, and only 19.53% of them had no children (see Chart 3).

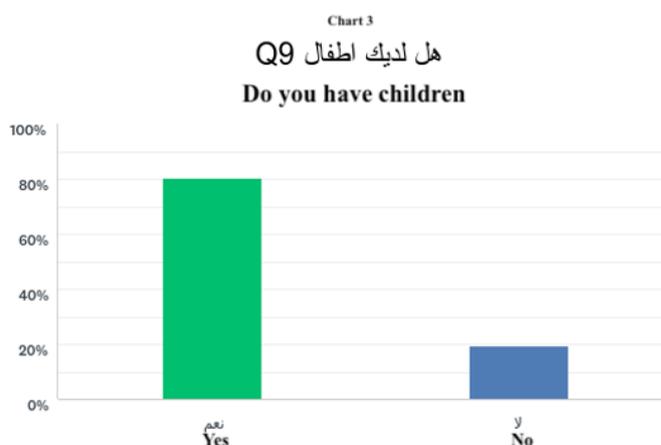


Figure 3: Do you have children

The majority of the participants had their first child when they were between the ages of 18 and 29, representing 87.28% of the total participants. This was followed by 6.94% of the participants who had their first child when they were between the ages of 30 and 39, and only 4.62% who had their first child when they were under the age of 18 years old (see Chart 4).

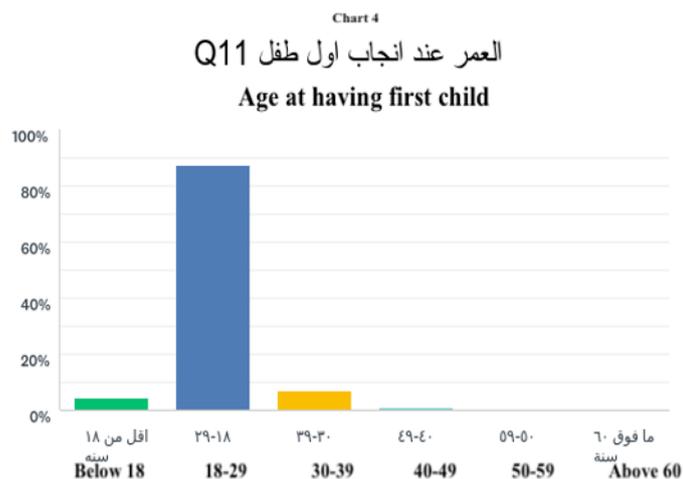


Figure 4: Age at having first child

Educational Attainment

The highest level of education that the majority of the participants completed before marriage was a bachelor’s degree. 54.88% did this. They were followed by 36.74% of the participants who completed only high school before marriage (see Chart 5).

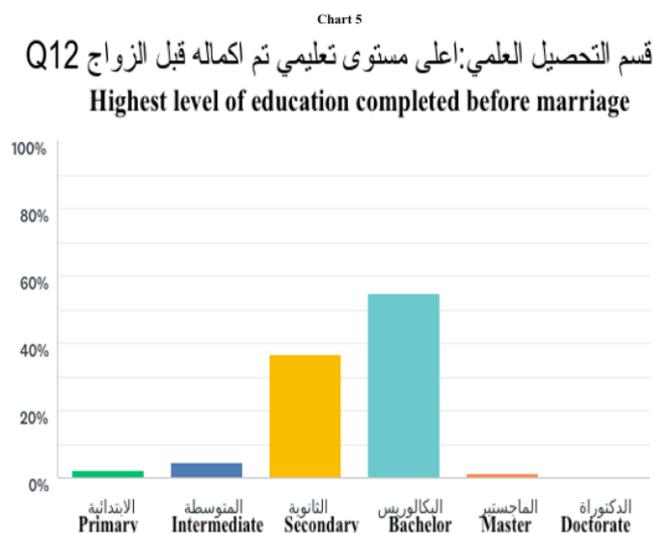


Figure 5: Highest level of education completed before marriage

53.95% of the participants continued their education after marriage, and 46.05% did not (see Chart 6).

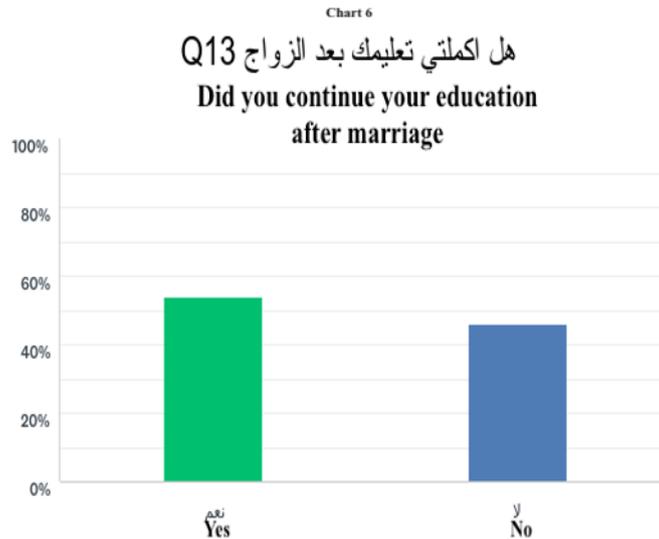


Figure 6: Do you continue your education after marriage

For those who completed their education after marriage, 84.48% completed their Bachelor’s degree, 10.34% completed their Master’s degree, and 5.17% completed their high school (see Chart 7).

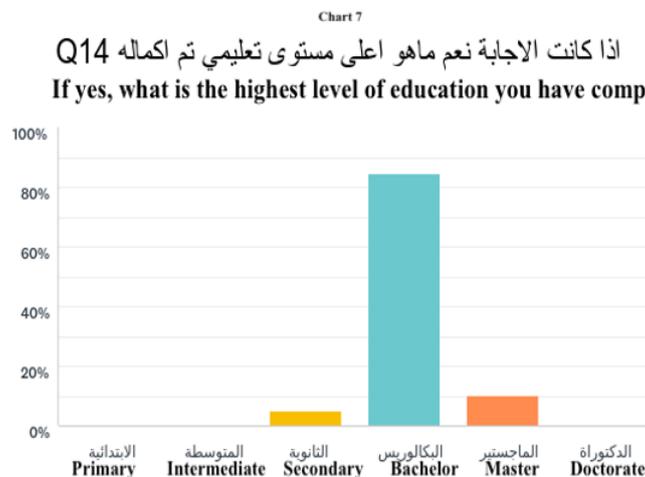


Figure 7: highest level of education

The participants who are currently continuing their education are only 18.60%. (see Chart 8)

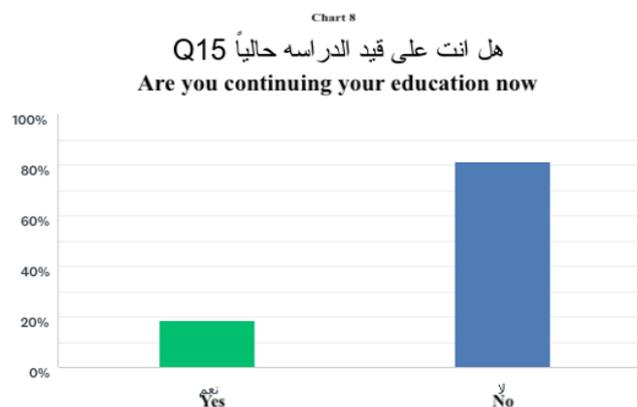


Figure 8: are you continuing your education now

The largest percentage of these participants was for those who are currently continuing their bachelor's degree at 72.50%, and those who are currently continuing their master's degree at 22.25%. The participants who are currently continuing their secondary and high school both have equal percentages at 2.50 % (see Chart 9).



Figure 9: level of education working on

60.93% of the participants had a certificate or a degree that they would like to pursue in the future, but they did not start yet. 94.24% of these participants believed that they would have the opportunity to pursue that certificate or a degree while 5.76% believed that they would not have the opportunity to pursue it. In terms of the participants' satisfaction with their level of educational attainment, 46.98% were very satisfied, 38.14% were satisfied, 12.09% were unsatisfied, and 2.79% were extremely unsatisfied. 17.67% of the participants believed that having children caused them to change or delay their education path. 11.63% believed that having children made them limit or restrict aspects of their education path, and 1.40% believed that having children made them discontinue their education. 30.70% believed that getting married limited their educational prospects or reduced the likelihood of continuing their education.

Personal fulfillment

According to the findings, women who were married before graduating from college would have a lower probability of completing college and graduate study afterwards. 43.72% of participants did not complete college before marriage. The findings supported the hypothesis to some degree in that 46.05% of these women--a significant amount--though not the majority, did not complete their education after marriage.

A- Marital satisfaction

In the personal fulfillment section of the survey, participants first rated their levels of overall marital satisfaction. More than half of the women rated that they were ‘very’ (26.5%) or ‘extremely’ (25.12%) satisfied with their marriages. Only 2.79% were very dissatisfied, and only 5.12% were extremely dissatisfied. The remainder of participants had either somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or mixed feelings (see Chart 10).

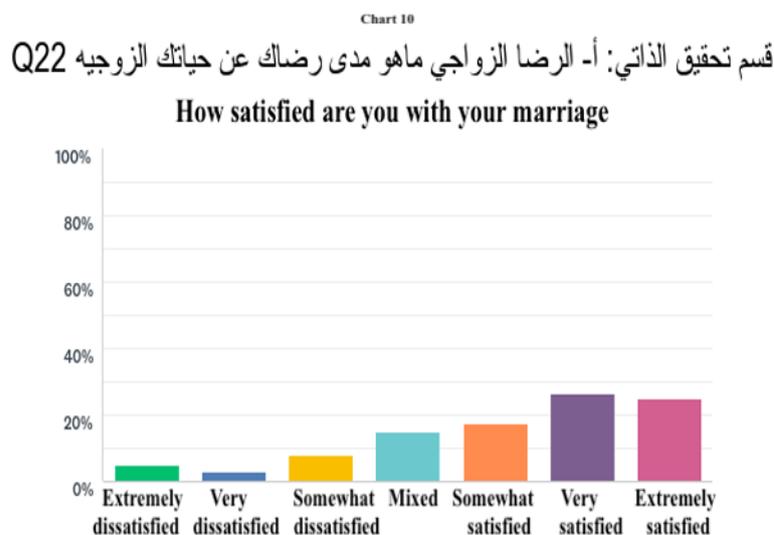


Figure 10: marriage satisfaction

Then the participants rated their levels of satisfaction of their husband as a spouse. The responses for this question were similar to the first question. More than half of the women rated that they were ‘very’ (24.19%) or ‘extremely’ (30.23%) satisfied with their husband as a spouse. Only 1.86% were very dissatisfied, and only 5.12% were extremely dissatisfied. The remainder of participants had either somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or mixed feelings. Finally, the participants rated their levels of satisfaction in terms of their relationships with their husbands. In this question the response percentages were also similar to the first two questions with slight differences. More than half of the women rated that they were ‘very’ (25.58%) or ‘extremely’ (27.91%) satisfied with their relationship with their husbands. Only 1.86% were very dissatisfied, and only 6.052% were extremely dissatisfied. The remainder of participants had either somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or mixed feelings.

B- Career satisfaction and achievements

36.74% of the total participants are currently employed, and 63.26 are currently unemployed. For those who are currently employed, 44.30% of them are very satisfied with their career, 49.37% are satisfied, 5.06 are unsatisfied, and 1.27% are extremely unsatisfied. In terms of the satisfaction towards their career achievements and growth, 31.65% are very satisfied, 54.43% are satisfied, 10.13% are unsatisfied and 3.80 are extremely unsatisfied.

31.63% of the total participants believe that getting married limited their career achievement prospects or reduced the likelihood of pursuing a career (see Chart 11).

Chart 11
 هل تعتقد أن الزواج سبباً في الحد من طموحاتك أو إنجازاتك الوظيفية أو الحد من إمكانية حصولك على وظيفة Q28
 Do you think getting married limited your career achievements prospects or reduced the likelihood of pursuing a career

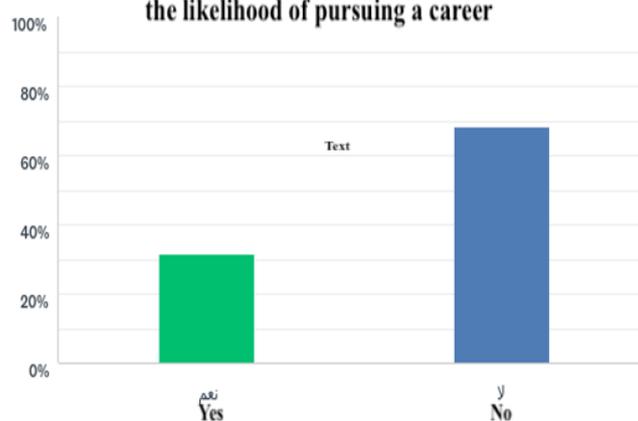


Figure 11: Career satisfaction

36.31% of the participants who have children believe that having children limited their career achievement prospects or reduced the likelihood of pursuing a career (see Chart 12). 77.67% of the total participants have a career goal that they would like to pursue in the future that they have not started yet. 91.62 of them believe that they will have the opportunity to pursue goal.

Chart 12
 هل تعتقد أن إنجاب الأطفال سبباً في الحد من طموحاتك أو إنجازاتك الوظيفية أو الحد من إمكانية حصولك على وظيفة Q29
 Do you think having children limited your career achievements prospects or reduced the likelihood of pursuing a career?

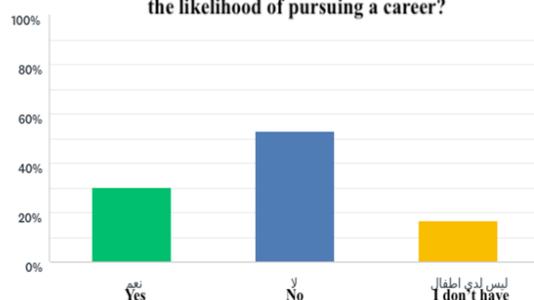


Figure 12: Answers of question 29

C- Personal satisfaction and well-being

Participants rated their personal satisfaction and well-being by choosing one of six options for 11 statements. These options were: never, seldom, sometimes, often, frequently and regularly. The most significant percentages are summarized here.

27.91% answered that they were regularly mentally healthy, and only 2.29% were never mentally healthy. 31.16% answered that they were frequently emotionally healthy, and the percentages of the options 'never' and 'seldom' were both equal at 4.65%. 29.77% answered that they sometimes set goals and follow through with them while only 2.33% answered that they 'never' do and 12.09% answered with seldom. 31.63% of participants answered that they were filled with inner peace/tranquility 'regularly' while 6.51% answered with "never" and 7.44% answered with seldom. 30.23% of the participants answered that they 'sometimes' engage in hobbies/artistic pursuits, 24.19% answered with 'seldom', and only 5.58% answered 'never'. 43.42% answered that they 'sometimes' use their talents/skills, 17.67% answered with 'seldom', and only 6.05% answered that they were 'never' use their talents/skills. 28.37% answered that they sometimes keep their mind active and stimulated; only 3.26% answered that they 'never' keep their mind active and stimulated. 26.98% answered that they 'sometimes' embrace change and try new activities/experiences, and 26.51% answered that they 'regularly' embrace change and try new activities/experiences. Only 3.26% answered with 'never', and 10.23% answered with 'seldom'. 35.35% answered that they 'regularly' have high self-esteem/feel happy with myself, only 2.33% answered with 'never', and 4.19% answered with 'seldom'. 37.67% answered that they were sometimes free of stress, 12.56% answered with 'never', 11.16% answered with 'seldom', and only 6.98% answered with 'regularly'. 29.77% of the participants answered that they 'sometimes' engage in meditation, contemplation, counseling, journaling, or other activities that help them to explore their thoughts and feelings while 20.93% answered with 'seldom', 14.88% answered with 'never', and only 9.77% answered with 'regularly'.

Discussion of the Findings

The hypothesis stated that women who were married before graduating from college would have a lower probability of completing college and graduate study afterwards. 43.72% of participants did not complete college before marriage. The findings support the hypothesis to some degree in that 46.05% of these women a significant amount--though not the majority, did not complete their education after marriage.

Furthermore, there were significant, though not the majority, percentage results in other areas concerning education attainment. First, 31.31% -- a substantial amount--of these women believed that getting married limited their educational prospects or reduced the likelihood of continuing their education. Second, 15.66% of the women who were married before graduating from college and had children believed that having children caused them to change or delay their education path. Also, 16.87% of these women believed that having children caused them to limit or restrict aspects of their education path. However, only a small amount of these women, 3.61%, believed that having children caused them to discontinue their education. Currently the majority of these women 96.97% are not continuing their education. Nevertheless, a substantial amount of them, 53.54%, have a certificate or degree they would like to pursue in the future that they haven't started yet.

The second hypothesis of this study stated that women who were married before graduating from college would have less personal fulfillment. To measure personal fulfillment, the survey examined three main areas of the participants' lives: marital satisfaction, career satisfaction, and personal satisfaction concerning their achievements and well-being.

First, in regard to marital satisfaction, the findings suggested that there was some correlation between getting married before college graduation and low marital satisfaction. 28.72% of the women who were married before college were to some degree unsatisfied with their marriage.

However, in terms of career satisfaction and achievements, the majority, 79.79% of the women who were married before graduating from college are currently not employed. 26.60% of these women believed that getting married limited their career achievement prospects or reduced the likelihood of pursuing a career. 24.47% of them who have children believed that having children limited their career achievements prospects or reduced the likelihood of pursuing a career. In spite of that, 81.91% of the women who were married before graduating from college have a career goal that they would like to pursue in the future, and 96.10% believe that they have the opportunity to pursue it. Finally, regarding the personal satisfaction and well-being, the survey examined the participants' mental and emotional health from a number of different perspectives. The findings showed very interesting and unexpected results in that ultimately that there is no significant difference between the women who were married before college graduation and the women who were married after. However, the women who were married before college graduation, answered with slightly higher percentages about having better mental and emotional health in most of the survey questions compared to the women who were married after college graduation.

Summary

This study examined and investigated the effects of marriage before college graduation on the educational attainments and personal fulfillment of Saudi women. The focus of this study was on the women's age at marriage and its consequences on their life events, including educational attainments, vocational opportunities, marital satisfaction, and personal fulfillment. The process of investigating and understanding the relationship between the women's age at marriage and its correlation with education and personal satisfaction in this study was facilitated through testing two hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that women who are married before college graduation will have a lower probability of completing college and graduate study. Second, women who marry before college graduation will have less personal fulfillment. To gather the data for this study, the completed and translated survey was published online using SurveyMonkey. Survey responses were gathered from participants asynchronously and anonymously in March and April of 2019.

Conclusions

According to the findings of the study, marriage before college graduation does limit educational attainment to some extent. The survey results suggest that a significant percentage of the total participants did not complete their education after marriage, and the majority of women who were married before college graduation are currently not continuing their education.

A substantial percentage of the total participants believe that getting married limited their educational prospects or reduced the likelihood of continuing their education. Also, a considerable percentage the participants who have children--the majority-- believe that having children either caused them to change, delay their education path, or caused them to limit or restrict aspects of their education path. However, despite this, more than half of the participants have a certificate or degree they would like to pursue in the future that they have not started yet, and they believe that they have the opportunity to pursue it. Moreover, according to the findings of the study in regard to the personal fulfilment, marriage before college graduation does impact the personal fulfillment in some areas of the participants' lives, yet not for other areas of their lives. Career satisfaction and achievements are the most impacted areas as the survey results suggest that the majority of the women who were married before college graduation currently are unemployed.

Also, survey results suggest that a significant percentage of the total participants believe that getting married limited their career achievement prospects or reduced the likelihood of pursuing a career. In addition, a large percentage of the total participants who have children--the majority--believe that having children limited their career achievement prospects or reduced the likelihood of pursuing a career. In spite of that though, the majority of the total participants have a career goal that they would like to pursue in the future, and most of them believe that they have the opportunity to pursue it.

The survey results also suggest that there is some correlation between getting married before college graduation and low marital satisfaction. However, the percentages of those having an unsatisfied marital life do not show a significant enough difference between the women who were married before college graduation and the women who were married after.

However, the study findings suggest that there is no significant difference between the women who were married before college graduation and the women who were married after regarding their mental and emotional health.

Limitations

Although this research included the responses of 215 participants, there are some limitations to it regarding the methodology. Due to conducting the survey online through SurveyMonkey and reaching out to participants via social media and text message links, the survey mainly drew participants who were younger, and typically more educated, users of social media. Thus, older women or women who were less interested in participating due to lower education or infrequent use of social media were less likely to choose to take this online survey. Also, although the number of participants was more than expected, the sample size is still small--especially since most participants were likely to be more educated women to begin with. Therefore, not a great enough diversity of ages was captured to perhaps make stronger conclusions regarding the hypothesis. Additionally, the allotted time for conducting the research was limited as well. There was not time set aside to try to reach out to older women and women with less education.

Recommendations

Based on the limitations and conclusions of the research findings, the study recommends that more research on the issue of marriage before college graduation is needed to more clearly identify and confirm its various effects on young Saudi women.

Future research needs to examine a greater number of participants, access a greater variety of ages of women, and reach out to women who received no or very limited education.

Further research should also explore Saudi society's public awareness of, attitudes towards, beliefs about and expectations of marriage before completing college education. The results of such research could be made publicly available to be used and reviewed by leaders, educators, counselors, parents, and young women themselves. This would help to address and clarify the consequences of marriage before college graduation in order to help Saudi society increase their awareness of such consequences and recognize the benefits of delaying marriage and changing attitudes towards later marriages for the sake of the education and fulfillment of young Saudi women.

Since not much focused study on this topic had been done before concerning women in Saudi Arabia, this study is a helpful beginning. With the data, analysis, suggestions, and conclusions provided here, the effects of marriage before college graduation on Saudi women can begin to be more deeply examined to help all Saudi society members to reconsider marriage before the completion of college and make some changes to ensure even brighter futures for young Saudi women.

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آثار الزواج قبل التخرج من المرحلة الجامعية، في التحصيل التعليمي، والرضا الذاتي،

لدى المرأة السعودية

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ملخص

يستكشف هذا البحث آثار الزواج قبل التخرج من المرحلة الجامعية، في التحصيل العلمي وتحقيق الذات للمرأة السعودية. والغرض من هذه الدراسة هو جمع البيانات من النساء المتزوجات قبل إكمال الدراسة الجامعية، ومن النساء اللاتي تزوجن بعد الانتهاء من المرحلة الجامعية، وتحليلها؛ من أجل قياس مدى تأثير الزواج في حياتهن بطرق مختلفة. وتم جمع البيانات من خلال مسح 215 سيدة سعودية. ووفقًا لنتائج الدراسة، فإن الزواج قبل التخرج من المرحلة الجامعية، يحد من التحصيل العلمي إلى حد ما. وتشير نتائج المسح إلى أن نسبة كبيرة من إجمالي المشاركين، لم يكملوا تعليمهم بعد الزواج. وتعتقد نسبة كبيرة من إجمالي المشاركين أن الزواج حد من آفاقهم التعليمية أو قلل من احتمالية مواصلة تعليمهم، علاوة على ذلك، ووفقًا لنتائج الدراسة فيما يتعلق بالإنجاز الشخصي، فإن الزواج قبل التخرج من المرحلة الجامعية، يؤثر في الإشباع الشخصي، في بعض مجالات حياة المشاركين، ولكن ليس في مجالات أخرى من حياتهم. ويعد الرضا والإنجازات المهنية من أكثر المجالات تأثرًا، وتشير نتائج المسح إلى أن غالبية النساء اللاتي تزوجن قبل التخرج من المرحلة الجامعية عاطلات عن العمل حاليًا، وتشير نتائج الاستطلاع - أيضًا - إلى أن نسبة كبيرة من إجمالي المشاركين يعتقدون أن الزواج يحد من آفاق إنجازاتهم المهنية، أو يقلل من احتمالية ممارستهم المهنية.

الكلمات الدالة: الزواج، المرحلة الجامعية، التحصيل العلمي، الرضا الذاتي.