

Girls with Absolute Celibacy in Iran: Why-ness and their comparative adjustment in life with married counterparts

Maliheh Golfam,¹ Ebrahim Talaei,² Kazem Rasoulzadeh Tabatabaee³

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Abstract

Recent statistics showed that larger number of Iranian girls are being pushed to the state of absolute celibacy. This is in clear contrast with social, cultural and religious values in the country; therefore, it has made serious concerns for both policy makers and the public. The present study aimed to a) explore why do girls prefer to stay unmarried and what their perception and feeling is in regard to marriage and b) investigate the social adjustment of these girls as a significant facet of mental and social health. An open-ended questionnaire was used for the first aim and Bell Adjustment Inventory (Bell, 1962) was applied on 40 girls with absolute celibacy and 40 married. The two groups were matched in demographic features and the findings, which are all discussed in Iranian society along with its existed values, showed that remaining celibacy is an undesirable status occurred mainly due to not finding and the right person. The other contributing reasons leading to girls' celibacy are their imaginary and sort of perfectionistic attitude about their future partner, family's arrangements and interferences, financial limitations and physical attractions. The statistical results indicated that girls with absolute celibacy scored less in total adjustment score and two of the subscales of adjustment at home and social adjustment.

Keywords: adjustment, social health, girls with absolute celibacy, Iran, unmarried

¹ . Master of Science (M.S) in Women Studies, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Malihe.golfam@gmail.com.

² . Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran.

³ . Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran.

Introduction

Marriage as the basis of family formation, the rite of passage from youth to adulthood and as the most important event of an individual's life, has always been at the center of attention to the public and scientific research. Marriage is an important social institution supporting stable marital relations through providing a specific set of rights, privileges, obligations, responsibilities and expectations of new roles, which makes endurance of **the** family and social structure possible. Marriage with its realization mechanism and associated order is one of the most important social, cultural and biological phenomenon, which is both, affected by social developments and has impacts on it (Steibach, 2013; Mitchell, 1975; Read, 2004).

Family in Iran is historically and socially one of the most influential social conventions. Survival of the society **largely depends on** family and it can be stated that Iranian family is in fact the very Iranian society (Azadarmaki, 2007). In Paragraph No. 10 of Iranian Constitution, family is considered as the fundamental unit of the Islamic society indicating that all rules, regulations and plannings should aim to facilitate family formation, to support

family ties and to respect the holiness of the family.

In contrast to these social and legal supports for marriage in Iran, recent Iran is facing radical decline of number of marriages recorded in the legal offices (Abhari, 2013). In his report, Abhari (2013) noted that there is not a certified and very clear statistics on the number of girls with absolute celibacy; however, the existed data show that this should be around 40% of unmarried girls in the country (Abhari, 2013). Celibacy is defined here as staying unmarried until 38-40 years old. He clarified that there were 11 million single girls in the country and 4-6 million of them can be categorized as belonging to the group who are reluctant to marry (ibid). The marriage is usually delayed until the person achieves an appropriate social and financial position resulting in **an** increased number of girls with absolute celibacy (Statistical Centre of Iran, 2006). The survey from Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) shows that the average age of marriage for girls has severely increased from 18.4 to 23.4 years old during 1966 to 2011 while the same trend for boys during the same period was from 25 to 26.7 years old (Table1).

Table 1: Average age of marriage by gender and geographical place of living

| Year | Rural | | Urban | | Total | |
|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| 1966 | 17.9 | 24.4 | 19 | 25.6 | 18.4 | 25 |
| 1976 | 19.1 | 22.7 | 20.2 | 25.1 | 19.7 | 24.1 |
| 1986 | 19.6 | 22.8 | 20.2 | 24.4 | 19.9 | 23.8 |
| 1996 | 22.3 | 24.6 | 22.5 | 26.2 | 22.4 | 25.6 |
| 2006 | 23.4 | 25.5 | 23.3 | 26.5 | 23.3 | 26.2 |
| 2011 | | | | | 23.4 | 26.7 |

Source: 2006- 12 Statistical Centre of Iran

Iran is considered to be among countries that has young population. The 2011 Census showed that out of the whole country's population (75,149,669), the mean age of population is 29.86 (29.7 for male and 30.03 for female) (SCI, 2012). The same source shows a balanced number of boys and girls between the ages 15-29 with girls being a larger group (31.4% boys and 31.7% girls).

The desire to marry among boys has decreased due to a number of factors such as financial limitations, unemployment and planning to continue education and being reluctant to accept the responsibility of a family (Miri, Gholami, Sadr & Entesari, 1997; Kazemipour, 2004). The desire to marry has also reduced among girls, something **that** is against the social and cultural context of the country. Researchers have listed a number of reasons for that not having any desire to marry such as studies in higher education levels, inclination to remain independent through employment, not trusting boys as people who can accept and observe the responsibility towards family and loyalty to their partners (Kazemipour, 2004).

Girls with absolute celibacy can be divided into two groups:

- Those who choose to be unmarried as their life style.
- Those who have not chosen to stay unmarried but they are forced to accept it as the reality of life (Lewis, 1994).

The second type of absolute celibacy-known as unwanted celibacy- is much more common in Iranian culture where gender roles are not traditionally equal throughout marriage procedure and boys usually take the active and selector role (Pouretamad, Saadatmand, Khorramabadi & Baharnia, 2006). Therefore, their bachelorhood is different from those who choose to be

single themselves. Pouretamad **et.al** (2006) confirm that the relative number of girls belonging to the second category is much higher in Iran. Sociologists and psychologists usually assume that bachelorhood is a transient and temporary state for adults and do not consider that as a permanent life style (e.g. Johnson & Eklund, 1984). However, modern life has led to the creation of new issues which have put traditional family structures and relationship at risk. Some researchers have linked the new social issue with the growing number of bachelors. For instance, Stack (2000), Cutright and Fernquist (2005), Griffiths, Ladva, Brock & Backer (2008) report **single people committed the majority of suicides**. Furthermore, Shojaee (2005) showed that the growing number of unmarried girls and their parental carelessness about their special needs have shown to be related to getting into prostitution. Ashuri and Varvayee (2010) echoed the same results saying that the majority of street women in Tehran had not married at all.

One recurrent issue particularly in traditional societies such as Iran is the fact that girls with absolute celibacy are usually viewed negatively by people around them. 'Spinster' is a word usually used in western cultures for girls who have never married. Using such words in public carries some sort of stigma for those who have never been married because these words in fact have an implicit reference to a kind of drawback and shortage in persons (Gordon, 2003). In Iranian culture, with the same token, such words are used in public to address girls with absolute celibacy. Words such as PEER DOKHTAR (old girl), DOKHTAR TORSHIDEH (spinster), DAR KHANE MANDEH (still at parental home) imply a negative meaning **and impression**

among the public that, in fact, denotes a stigma to humiliate this group (Golfam, 2011). This is because they have been considered as people who have detoured from the norm of the society. Shapiro and Keyes (2008) also confirmed the abnormal status of this group stating that although it is somewhat acceptable for a man to choose to stay single, women who choose this path are often seen as less sexually attractive and more selfish. They also noted that single adults are seen as being selfish, irresponsible, impotent, frigid, hedonistic, immature, or a combination of these characteristics.

The above discussion shows that this group of society is now forming an important and growing category who require researchers and policy makers to pay proper attention. The present study aims to explore some of the reasons cause this phenomenon, the attitude and perception of this group towards marriage and investigate their social health by looking into their adjustment at different places such as home and workplace. 'Health' is used in the paper as defined by World Health Organization (WHO) as the state of well-being and full physical, mental and social welfare. It is not just the absence of disease and disabilities. Regarding the fact that social factors are essential factors in individuals' health, recently researchers (Larson, 1993, 1996; keyes, 1998; keyes and Shapiro, 2004; Zhang, Chen, McCubbin, McCubbin & Foley (2011) have made distinctions between collective and individual life and came to consider health as a social phenomenon. These researchers emphasized the fact that human being is a social entity in essence and their life is surrounded by society and is formed by social structure.

Therefore, social health of people in

general and vulnerable ones in particular, requires an important attention in a given society if people's happiness and development are part of the country's agenda. Girls with absolute celibacy form one important and vulnerable group in Iran as their number is also increasing sharply (SCI, 2006). **The number of girls with absolute celibacy and the ones belong vulnerable group in Iran are increasingly raised.**

Keyes and Shapiro (2004) express that a person's mental health, life quality and performances cannot be explained without **considering the social factors**. Larson (1993) believes that social health is composed of two aspects: social adjustment and social support **and the main focus of this study is scrutinizing social adjustment of Iranian girls who prefer and/or choose to stay unmarried in Iranian context**. It is done through a comparative analysis of different aspects of adjustments between married women and their counterpart unmarried ones. In the present study, only one aspect of WHO's definition of "health" is addressed (i.e.) social. Therefore, we refer to health of these people; we only refer to the social adjustment aspect of health only. Other aspects require separate studies.

In addition, authors set to explore the possible reasons behind celibacy in Iran as an important issue of the society.

One can confirm that the subject of this paper is a very sensitive one; hence, access to research informants, getting into valid data and reporting of the findings followed ethical guidelines of social research. There were also severe limitations and obstacles in this study to access the informants, to build trust and to be able to gain their informed consent to report the findings, so rich data- through multi-visits and multiple

interviews- were not possible to collect. However, there were ample data to get into theoretical saturation and explore patterns and themes expressed by the informants.

Literature Review

It is evidence from the literature that the number of older single women is increasing in many countries, especially among urban **countries and the** highly educated and economically independent women (Koropecj-Cox and Call, 2007; Tanturri and Mencarini, 2008; Ibrahim and Hassan, 2009). According to Giddens (2006) socio-economic transformation and individualism embedded in modernism are linked to increasing postponement or outright rejection of marriage by women and men in many countries. Becoming empowered fuelled by individualism and education are known to raise women's expectations and requirements for a desired partner (Giddens, 2006; Tanturri & Mencarini, 2008).

Singlehood is particularly high for well educated women. For example, Thailand in 2000, the proportion of women still single at ages 35-39 was 7 percent for those **who have** primary education or less, 14 percent for those **with** lower secondary education and 23percent for those with tertiary education (W. Jones, 2010).

Another related factor that has been found to have influence on celibacy is physical and sexual **attraction**. Hakim (2010) argues that in modern marriage market, men are also assessed by their physical **attraction** although the standards are higher for women.

Only few studies (Ibrahim and Hassan, 2009; El-Halawany, 2009) examined the causes of singlehood from the perspective of single women in developing societies where elements of modernity exist

alongside traditional patriarchal structures and strong marriages and family ideology. W. Jones (2010) argues that social norms and community and family structures have not yet adapted fully to the much higher proportions remaining single into their 30s and 40s.

Methodology

Sampling

The study was carried out in summer 2011 and the sample included 40 girls with absolute celibacy between 35-45 years old selected via purposeful sampling. Researchers referred to assessable organizations such as schools, hospitals and government offices and asked for people who meet the intended criteria. A control group including employed married women within the same age range was also selected. The two groups were matched based on their age, employment status and qualifications. Statistical tests (T-test and χ^2) also confirmed that there were no significant differences between the two groups (see Table 1 and 2). The age range 35-45 was selected because age 40 is generally noted as the cut-off point between high and low chances of marriage in Iranian context although one can definitely say that it is not very determinant (Kazemipour, 2004; Sarokhani, 1991).

Instruments

A questionnaire was designed in which 6 open ended questions asked about the participants' views and perception of marriage, why they have **stayed** unmarried so far, the right age for marriage and their current inclination to marry. The researchers' primary choice was to administer that in a face to face interview but participants opted for a written reply. The data collected from these open ended

questionnaires were all qualitative data so relevant analytical procedures were followed to gain the insight and themes from the data. The informants provided short answers, as expected, so the analysis was possible to be carried out without any computerized software for qualitative analysis. The data from all 40 respondents were first coded openly, then through constant comparison of the codes and informed by the theoretical foundations of the study, the codes were amalgamated and axial codes were produced.

For the second research focus, Bell Adjustment Inventory (for adults) (Bell, 1962) was used in order to evaluate social adjustment of the participants. This instrument includes 160 items, which measure 5 aspects of adjustment: adjustment at home, health adjustment, social adjustment, emotional adjustment, occupational adjustment (educational). Total obtained score can be used to demonstrate the overall adjustment level of a person. FathiAshtiani and Dastani (2010), after translating this measure into Persian, administered that on 200 participants who were selected randomly in Iran. The reliability of the translated measure (based on the shorter version of the scale) was

shown to be confirmed (Cronbach Alpha=0.89). The present study **also** confirmed similar reliability figure using all 160 items of the inventory.

Bell adjustment inventory has shown high validity in the diagnosis of normal groups from the neurotic ones and it has also shown a high correlation with the Eysenck's personality test (Bell, 1962).

Implementation of the research

Ethical statements were prepared according to the guideline proposed by American Psychology Association and the approval was gained from the relevant internal ethics committees. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic and also the number of items in Bell inventory (160 items), the researcher had to predominantly establish a good rapport with participants and motivate them to take part in the study by proving some incentives. Then the instruments including the open-ended questionnaire, demographic items and Bell inventory were handed to the participants to be completed in their suitable time.

Findings

Tables 2 & 3 demonstrate some demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 2: Marital status and age

| Highest qualification | Unmarried | | Married | | Total | |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|-------|-----------|
| | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency |
| Secondary school certificate | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| College degree | 2.5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1.25 | 1 |
| Undergraduate | 75 | 30 | 75 | 30 | 75 | 6 |
| Masters | 15 | 6 | 17.5 | 7 | 16.25 | 13 |
| Doctorate | 2.5 | 1 | 2.5 | 1 | 2.5 | 2 |

Table 3: Marital status and educational level

| Index | Unmarried | | Married | | Total | |
|-------|-----------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|
| | Average | Standard deviation | Average | Standard deviation | average | Standard deviation |
| Age | 37/55 | 1/98 | 38/15 | 2/25 | 37/8 | 1/96 |

Understanding the phenomenon of celibacy in Iran

The data of the present study show that the majority (33 out of 40) of participants **were** forced to **stay** unmarried rather choosing to be so. This finding confirms what Dykstra (2004) stated about the nature of celibacy (womanhood) and reiterates the social, cultural and religious features of the context. 33 out of 40 participants expressed their current willingness to marry if it comes up. This can be supported by biological, psychological and sociological, religious and cultural explanations in the Iranian context. For instance Verse no. 21 Surah Rum of the Holy Quran states that "And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for people who give thought about it."

Moreover, several sayings from religious leaders encourage Moslems to marry such as the famous one from Prophet Muhammad: [Marriage is my way, my sunnah and whosoever turns away from my sunnah is not of me].

It should be noted here that, based on the Islamic rules of the country, man-women relationship in Iran beyond the conventional family formation and legal marriage is illegal and against the religion. So any

interpretation of these findings should be contextualized in Iranian social, cultural and particularly religious teachings.

The desire to marry at current stage of life, however, has been rejected by 5 Participants. They noted the following reasons for this:

- Women's rights have not been observed by men in terms of emotional, social and economic rights. The present rules and regulations about women do not support the vulnerable side and gives the preference to men.
- Boys' lack of autonomy and too much dependence on their family which have led to interferences into their son's personal life and decisions.
- Boys, these days, are not **reliably** responsible partners as the early divorces in the country are rapidly increasing.
- No interest in and no need to marry
- Being too perfectionist and picky in making a choice

It seems that even among these girls who express lack of desire to marry, intentional celibacy in which they themselves chose to **stay** unmarried, is very rare. Only one person stated that she is not interested in marriage and she feels no need to marry because she has all what she needs. Other reasons stated above can imply that there has been an invisible willingness to form a family by marriage but negative

experiences have led them not to think about it.

Participants were asked why they had remained unmarried so far. The reasons stated by them can be grouped into the following classes:

Personal factors

a) The majority (42%) referred to being too perfectionist and picky to accept the offers when they were younger. They now look back to the past and their decisions with regret.

b) Meddle by parents and near relatives

c) A small group (8%) noted that they experienced part of the preliminary marriage rituals but extensive interference of the boys' families, prearrangements by families of both partners, and boys being too obedient towards their families and lacking the self-confidence to decide about their own life broke up the developing relationship. This led to forming negative experiences and deterred them from taking new opportunities.

Family background factors

A minor group (10%) had domestic obstacles namely having older sister who is not married yet, parents of the girls being too strict with the required ethical, behavioral, social and economic criteria for their son-in-law, mismatch between the values of girls' family and those of boys, death of the father and taking responsibility of younger members of family through earning and caring for them.

Education and State-related factors

The rest referred to financial limitations as girls' family should provide the home supplies and equipment, referred to as 'dowry'; being preoccupied with education for higher degrees, not being successful to

attract boys as being too tall for instance, occurrence of 8 years of Iraq-Iran war during her youth and boys being sent to war, and finally lack of social opportunities for girls to socialize with partners from the opposite sex.

It can be inferred, then, that the current growing number of girls with absolute celibacy originates primarily with having very few number of chances that a boy proposes. This requires a separate study on boys to uncover the reasons, although other studies have mentioned financial pressure as the main cause (Abhari, 2013). In any case, girls stay in the state of celibacy against their desire; their chances are limited and the risks are high at both sides: If they choose to marry with someone who does not match with their standards, the marriage might end up having a divorce, and if they decide not to marry, their next proposal might seem far away in terms of time.

The second part of the study, using inferential statistical analysis, showed that there was a significant difference between the adjustment of married and unmarried women in the subscale of adjustment at home ($t=2.86$, $p<0.05$) and social adjustment ($t=0.36$, $p<0.01$). In terms of the overall adjustment, too, the unmarried group scored a higher mark ($M=58.4$, $SD=20.18$) than the married group ($M=47.3$, $SD=19.47$). T-test showed that the difference between the two groups was statistically significant too ($t=2.51$, $P<0.01$). In Bell Adjustment Inventory, lower score shows better adjustment.

Table 4 summarizes the findings of the analysis carried out on the differences between the two groups in terms of all 5 aspects of the Bell inventory and the overall adjustment score. Consider that the two groups were matched according to their

employment, age and education.

Table 4: Comparison of the two groups on all aspects of Bell Inventory (T-Test)

| Subscale | Groups | Mean | SD | t | Significance (p-value) |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|------|------------------------|
| Adjustment At home | Unmarried | 10.8 | 6.77 | 2.86 | 0.005 |
| | married | 7.17 | 4.24 | | |
| Health Adjustment | unmarried | 8.32 | 4.61 | 0.36 | 0.715 |
| | Married | 7.95 | 4.54 | | |
| Social adjustment | unmarried | 13.52 | 6.68 | 0.36 | 0.018 |
| | married | 10.07 | 6.04 | | |
| Emotional adjustment | unmarried | 12.4 | 6.34 | 1.61 | 0.111 |
| | married | 10.15 | 6.12 | | |
| Occupational adjustment | unmarried | 13.4 | 5.27 | 1.04 | 0.299 |
| | married | 11.95 | 7 | | |
| Overall adjustment | unmarried | 58.4 | 20.18 | 2.51 | 0.014 |
| | married | 47.3 | 19.47 | | |

Discussion and conclusion

The present study designed for investigating why some girls (chose to) stay unmarried in Iran and to explore the adjustment of girls with absolute celibacy and compare that with married women with the same characteristics. The data showed that the state of celibacy in Iran is an unwanted state and is mainly because of limited chances those girls have. This makes the choice very risky. Girls staying unmarried are atypical in Iran and social scientists, policy makers and religious leaders are strongly warning about that. They see celibacy as the first starting chain for family corruptions, unjustified

relationships beyond family framework and devaluing religious and social ethics. However, the present study shows that celibacy itself is an effect rather than a cause, it is the effect of a more complicated social phenomenon, and it is not something that girls- or majority of girls in Iran- select, it is caused rather than being a cause. All forty participants replied positively to the question they were asked if they would like to marry now. Therefore, one implication of the study is that the traditional gender roles in Iranian marriage rituals must be taken into account and social scientists require to study why boys are less inclined to marry, which, in turn, has led to a sharp

increase in the number of girls with absolute celibacy. Apart from financial limitations, there seems to be other social explanation, which in great part has been under-researched due to the sensitive nature of the issue. It can be speculated that traditional Iranian family formation is undergoing a revolutionized change which originates mainly from Western life style. This requires closer and independent scrutiny on its own.

Considering the results from the second part, the present study showed the level of adjustment of girls with absolute celibacy in Iran **that** is lower than married women in three important aspects of overall, social and home adjustment. This is not a particularity of Iranian society as Martin's findings (1955) are also in line with **this**. She found that overall adjustment and self-efficacy was lower among women who never married in the USA. However, Baker (1968) did not find any differences between the two groups in her study on social and personal adjustment of married and women who never married. Also, in Bernard's study (1972), in which the level of professional and educational success, physical and psychological anxiety were considered, he reported a better adjustment in women who never married. Shapiro and Keyes (2008), on the other side, showed that married people do not enjoy special social health in comparison with unmarried people.

In explaining these contradictions in findings, one should consider the nature of celibacy, which is very culture-bound, and cross-national comparisons are not always consistent. This is particularly the case if measurement and translation invariance of research instruments are also taken into account. As shown by the qualitative data of the present study, most cases of celibacies

in Iran are involuntary while this might not be true for another country. Psychologically speaking, adjustment is a process in which the person deals with their desires and challenges of life and finally they either overcome these challenges or are beaten by them (Biler, 1974). From a socio-psychological perspective, adjustment does not exist abstractly on its own. Thus, without considering social and psychological aspects, it is difficult to determine the boundaries of these concepts for human (Rostami, 2002).

Girls with absolute celibacy have created a different –somehow bizarre life style in Iranian culture. This is due to the fact that the tradition and the convention of the Iranian culture promote marriage; hence, the state of celibacy affects different aspects of their lives such as adjustment and social health. Other social scientists, too, refer to youth as one of the socio- psychological growth stages whose most important event is marriage (Pouretamad, 2004). The major crisis and danger in this critical period of life, is said to be depression but staying away from personal and social relationships lead to deterring closeness, friendliness and social interactions. Lack of ability and chance to have close and comfortable relationship with others increases the feeling of solidarity and aloofness (Shamloo, 2003). Pouretamad (2004), too, considered the consequences of involuntary celibacies in Iran and showed behavioral disorders as the major socio- psychological consequence of involuntary celibacies. This confirms that, within the Iranian society, parity plays an important **role** in people's adjustment. Parity is a norm which is congruent with human's nature and opposing this norm, is disobedience to scientific rules of universe (Hoseinizadeh, 2007). Motahary, a religious leader in Iran,

sees marriage as the first stage of leaving oneself and improving human personality (Motahary, 1983) since in the shade of marriage, the person leaves his/her ego and makes relation with others and it provides a basis for developing and flourishing his/her talents.

The research implication of the present study is to design more nationally representative studies in the country to be able to address the issue properly. This is especially important as nearly half of the unmarried girls in the country are moving toward the state of celibacy. The current study showed that this large group of people suffers from lower social wellbeing and this has adverse effects for both the girls and their families. Policies are required to address this crucial issue from more preventive rather than treatment aspect. Further studies are needed to both explore the causes of the issue from the boys' perspectives and to investigate the other aspects of social health and wellbeing of the target group.

The **current** study, as any social research, faced some limitations: Firstly, only employed women were considered for the study, so any generalizations to the whole population should be done with due care. Secondly, unmarried women's health as defined by WHO has various aspects and this study only investigated the social adjustment as one limited aspect of health. Further studies are required to address other aspects too. Finally, the definition of absolute celibacy (aged between 38-40) in this study is an arbitrary one, so the findings of the study should be reinterpreted **in case** a different age range is considered for this phenomenon.

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دختران با مجرد قطعی در ایران: چرایی و مقایسه سازگاری‌شان در زندگی با هم‌تایان متاهل

ملیحه گلفام^۱، ابراهیم طلایی^۲، کاظم رسول زاده طباطبایی^۳

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آمار اخیر نشان می‌دهد تعداد دخترانی که در وضعیت مجرد قطعی هستند رو به افزایش است. این پدیده، در تضاد مستقیم با ارزش‌های اجتماعی، فرهنگی و دینی ایران قرار دارد بنابراین موجب ایجاد نگرانی‌های جدی هم برای خانواده‌ها و هم برای سیاستگذاران شده است. مطالعه پیش رو با این دو هدف طراحی و اجرا گردید: الف) واکاوی چرایی مجرد قطعی از منظر دخترانی که در این وضعیت قرار دارند، درک و احساس آنها نسبت به ازدواج ب) بررسی سازگاری اجتماعی این گروه از دختران بعنوان جنبه‌ی مهمی از سلامت اجتماعی و روان انسان. برای نیل به هدف اول بخاطر حساسیت موضوع و همچنین سختی دست یافتن و موافقت آنها از پرسشنامه باز پاسخ استفاده شد که شرکت کنندگان آزادانه و محرمانه به سوالات آن پاسخ دادند. برای هدف دوم تحقیق از پرسشنامه سازگاری بل (بل، ۱۹۶۲) استفاده شد که طی آن ۴۰ دختر با تعریف "تجرد قطعی" و ۴۰ دختر متاهل به آنها پاسخ دادند. این دو گروه از منظر برخی ویژگی‌های جمعیت شناختی با هم هم‌تا شدند تا تاثیر متغیرهای مزاحم تا حدی کنترل گردد. یافته‌های تحقیق نشان داد که مجرد باقی ماندن انتخاب دختران نبود بلکه جبری بود که بواسطه نیافتن فرد مناسب برای آنان رقم خورده بود. برخی عوامل تاثیر گذار برای وقوع این شرایط عبارت بودند از: نگاه کمال طلبانه دختران نسبت به همسر آینده، دخالت‌های والدین، شرایط اقتصادی و جذابیت ظاهری. تحلیل‌های آماری بخش دوم نیز نشان داد بطور کلی دختران با مجرد قطعی، نسبت به دختران متاهل، میانگین نمره پایین تری در معیار کلی سازگاری در دو زیر بخش آن (سازگاری در خانه و سازگاری اجتماعی) بدست آوردند.

۱. کارشناس ارشد مطالعات زنان، دانشگاه تربیت مدرس.

۲. استادیار گروه تعلیم و تربیت، دانشگاه تربیت مدرس.

۳. دانشیار گروه روانشناسی، دانشگاه تربیت مدرس.