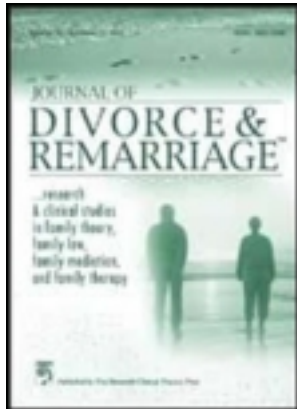


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### Temporary Marriage: Attitude and Tendency in Iran

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## Temporary Marriage: Attitude and Tendency in Iran

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*This study introduces temporary marriage (Siqa) and evaluates and investigates peoples' attitudes and tendencies toward it. Participants were 395 residents of Tebran. An attitude questionnaire was used to collect data. Descriptive results of the study showed that there was at least one case of temporary marriage in the families or relatives of the study population. Participants considered the following as the most important obstacles to temporary marriage in Iran: culture, family objections, logical objections, and permanent wife's objection. The comparison between the different groups showed that men, single people, employed people, and people with a history of temporary marriage in their family have a tendency toward temporary marriage. Although 25% of the study population was inclined to temporary marriage, its prevalence in society is about 9%. The main reason for its underdevelopment is the societal obstacles, especially culture and family.*

**KEYWORDS** *attitude, Iran, marriage, temporary marriage, tendency*

Family plays an important role in Islamic societies, and marriage is the core of it (Dhami & Sheikh, 2000). Permanent marriage as the foundation of family and the most important event in a person's life has always been recognized by the public and researchers. Marriage, along with all its preparatory and preliminary ceremonies, is one of the most important social, cultural,

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and biological phenomena in every society. Marriage and divorce patterns are under the influence of structural and cultural changes: The transition from traditional society to a modern one has been dramatically modified (Hirschman & Teerawichitchainan, 2003; Nock, 2005). As a result, sociology and psychology scholars research family transition, marriage transition, and second demographic transition.

Getting married is difficult and there is a large gap between sexual maturity and socioeconomic maturity of the young, so their welfare and sexual health is endangered. That is why temporary marriage has been proposed as a solution in Iran (Dwight, 1936). In the Shi'a of Islam, *Siqa* is a union between an unmarried Muslim woman and a married or unmarried Muslim man, which is contracted for a fixed time period in return for a set amount of money (Inhorn, 2006). In the past, middle-aged and older women who were divorced or widowed often engaged in *Siqa* marriages for financial support. In Iran, following the loss of life among men during the devastating, 8-year Iran–Iraq war, *Siqa* became a means to protect the large numbers of single or widowed women who had no other source of income. For Shi'ite men, temporary marriage can be contracted while traveling, or as a way of achieving marital variety and sexual pleasure (Haeri, 1989). Temporary marriage is a way to avoid sin and corruption, satisfy sexual desire, and is a preliminary step for marriage and spiritual and mental peace when the conditions for marriage are not available. Considering all these reasons, the government and policymakers granted licenses to some offices to register temporary marriages, advertised it, and launched websites to persuade young people to get married temporarily.

Although temporary marriage in Iran is both legal and religiously acceptable, it is not very common. Therefore, this article is intended to evaluate people's attitude and tendency toward this kind of marriage.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This descriptive study is intended to study attitudes and tendency toward temporary marriage among residents of Tehran, the capital of Iran. A random cluster sampling was performed and 400 people from different parts of Tehran (north, central, south, and the suburbs) were selected. To collect the data, a questionnaire with 30 items for measuring attitude was prepared. The items were divided into six aspects related to temporary marriage: familial effects, social effects, cultural effects, international effects, suitable manner of sexual satisfaction, and religious aspects. In addition, demographic data, status of temporary marriage among family and relatives, history of temporary marriage among family and relatives, restrictions of temporary marriage, tendency toward temporary marriage, and familiarity with the rules of temporary marriage were evaluated. Each main aspect of

the questionnaire included five attitude articles. The rate of internal correlation was measured using Cronbach's alpha, with a result of .932. Some sample articles of the questionnaire are as follows:

- Cultural effects of temporary marriage: Temporary marriage is an example of developing the culture of the society.
- Familial effects of temporary marriage: Temporary marriage can pave the way for permanent marriage.
- Social effects of temporary marriage: Temporary marriage can decrease rape.
- A suitable manner to satisfy sexual desire: Temporary marriage is a way to prevent sexual perversion of the young or temporary marriage is a legal and religious way for sexual freedom.
- International effects of temporary marriage: Promotion of temporary marriage can become a global phenomenon or promotion of temporary marriage can devalue the status of Iran in the world.

Each question had five response choices based on a Likert scale: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*.

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software. Qualitative data were analyzed using chi-square and are presented as numbers and percentages in the text. Independent-samples *t*-tests and analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used to analyze quantitative data. All quantitative data have been expressed as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation. A *p* value less than or equal to .05 was considered statistically significant.

## RESULTS

Five questionnaires were omitted because they were tainted and 395 questionnaires were analyzed. Demographic data showed that out of 395 studied people, 50.4% were male and 51.9% were married. As for education, 80% had a high school diploma or bachelor's degree and 33.7% were students. By profession, 28.1% were government employees, 17.2% were self-employed, and 15.7% were housewives. As for the geographical distribution, 21% lived in the north of Tehran, 47.3% in the south, 29.4% in the central city, and 2.3% in the suburbs. Economically, 62.5% were average, 25.6% were well off, and 12% were poor (Table 1).

Descriptive results of the status of temporary marriage among the study population showed that 3.8% had a temporary marriage in their family and 9.1% had a temporary marriage among their relatives. About 25% of the study population was ready for temporary marriage, whereas about 50% were not aware of its rules and only 15% said they were well aware of the rules. The most important obstacles to promoting temporary marriage were

**TABLE 1** Demographic Data of the Study Population

Variable	Prevalence	Percentage
Sex		
Female	195	49.4
Male	200	50.4
Marital status		
Single	205	51.9
Married	190	48.1
Education		
High school dropout	50	12.7
High school diploma	148	37.5
Associate diploma and bachelor's degree	169	42.8
Master's degree	22	5.6
Unspecified	6	1.5
Occupation		
Student	133	33.7
Housewife	62	15.7
Government employee	111	28.1
Self-employed	68	17.2
Unspecified	21	5.3
Place of residence		
North of Tehran	83	21
South of Tehran	186	47.3
Center of Tehran	116	29.4
Suburbs of Tehran	9	2.3
Economic status		
Poor	46	12
Average	247	62.5
Well off	61	25.6

considered culture of the society (33.4%), family objection (18.5%), logical opposition (16.5%), and spousal objection (13.7%; see Table 2).

Out of 30 attitudinal statements, the highest scores belonged to items such as "Temporary marriage is a way to hide secret and illegal relationships among the young" (3.29), "Temporary marriage is legal, Islamic, and permissible" (3.13), "Temporary marriage reduces women's insecurity and rape" (3.08), "Temporary marriage prevents the young from sexual perversion" (2.99), "Temporary marriage prevents sexual corruption" (2.98), "Temporary marriage can pave the way for permanent marriage" (2.96), "Temporary marriage is a popular way to satisfy sexual instinct" (2.90), and "Temporary marriage is a suitable model for marriage" (2.74; see Table 3).

Tendency toward temporary marriage was significantly higher among men than women ( $p \leq .01$ ), the single than the married ( $p \leq .01$ ), employed compared with students or housewives, those living in south of Tehran compared with those living in other parts of Tehran, and those with a history of temporary marriage in their family and relative compared with those without such a history ( $p \leq .05$ ). On the other hand, the economic status of people did not affect their attitude and tendency toward temporary marriage

**TABLE 2** Descriptive Data About Temporary Marriage in the Study Population

Variable	Area	Prevalence	Percentage
History of temporary marriage in family	Positive	15	3.8
	Negative	380	96.2
History of temporary marriage in relatives	Positive	35	9.1
	Negative	359	90.9
Most important obstacle against promoting temporary marriage	Society and culture	132	33.4
	Spouse objection	54	13.7
	Family objection	73	18.5
	Lack of supportive rules	41	10.4
	Religion objection	16	4.1
	Logical objection	65	16.5
	Others	14	3.5
Ready for temporary marriage	Positive	99	25
	Negative	296	75
Awareness about rules of temporary marriage	None	92	23.3
	Little	110	27.8
	Average	134	33.9
	Much	50	12.7
	Very much	9	2.3

**TABLE 3** Mean Scores and Ranking of People's Attitude Toward Temporary Marriage

Rank	Statement	Mean score
1	Temporary marriage is a way to hide secret and illegal relationships among the young	3.29
2	Temporary marriage is legal, Islamic, and permissible	3.13
3	Temporary marriage reduces women's insecurity and rape	3.08
4	Temporary marriage prevents the young from sexual perversion	2.99
5	Temporary marriage prevents sexual corruption	2.98
6	Temporary marriage can pave the way for permanent marriage	2.96
7	Temporary marriage is a popular way to satisfy sexual instinct	2.90
8	Temporary marriage is a suitable model for marriage	2.74

( $p \leq .05$ ; see Table 4). Studying the ranking of six aspects of attitude toward temporary marriage showed that religious aspects had the highest score (2.90), and then in decreasing order were preventing from social harm (2.67), and a suitable way to satisfy sexual desire (2.62). There were significant differences ( $p \leq .01$ ) between all aspects except for the prevention and the suitable satisfaction of sexual desires (Table 5).

Except for the second and the third rank, the difference was significant for other factors ( $p \leq .01$ ).

## DISCUSSION

With the changes in the model of marriage, many changes occur in the base and nature of marriage. There are several differences between the

**TABLE 4** Comparison of People's Attitude Toward Temporary Marriage for Demographic Variables

Variable	Groups	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F/t</i>	<i>p</i>	Difference
Sex	Female	2.28	0.50	—	.0001	2 > 1
	Male	2.87	0.58	10.72		
Marital status	Single	2.67	0.64	2.99	.003	1 > 2
	Married	2.48	0.58			
Education	High school dropout	2.50	0.64	0.43	.73	—
	High school diploma	2.57	0.58			
	Associate diploma and bachelor's degree	2.58	0.65			
	Master's degree and higher	2.68	0.58			
Occupation	Student	2.56	0.65	10.07	.0001	1, 2, 3 > 2
	Housewife	2.22	0.45			4 > 1
	Government employee	2.65	0.61			
	Self-employed	2.76	0.55			
Place of residence	North of Tehran	2.49	0.61	4.04	.008	2 > 1, 3, 4
	South of Tehran	2.67	0.64			
	Center of Tehran	2.48	0.57			
	The suburbs	2.17	0.54			
Economic status	Poor	2.64	0.64	1.43	.24	—
	Average	2.61	0.62			
	Well off	2.49	0.61			
	Positive	2.89	0.43	1.92	.05	1 > 2
History of temporary marriage in family	Negative	2.56	0.62			
	Positive	2.64	0.69	2.01	.04	1 > 2
History of temporary marriage in relatives	Negative	2.38	0.68			
	Positive	3.37	0.47	11.07	0.0001	1 > 2
Tendency to temporary marriage	Negative	2.48	0.53			

**TABLE 5** Ranking Minor Scales of Attitude Toward Temporary Marriage

Rank	Factor	<i>M</i>
1	Religious aspects of temporary marriage	2.90
2	Preventing from social harm	2.67
3	Suitable way to satisfy sexual desire	2.62
4	Positive international effects	2.56
5	Positive cultural effects	2.41
6	Positive familial effects	2.32

institutional model and the relational/companionate model. Marriage as an institution has the following qualities: less freedom in choosing a spouse, affectability of marriage from severe social and family regulations, emphasis on the economic aspect of marriage such as possession and gender sharing of work, the importance of the public aspect of marriage, marriage as a collection of social relations and networks, relative inequality in marriage and patriarchy, less emphasis on mutual sexual desire, and the importance of sexual relation for reproduction and pregnancy. On the other hand, in the relational model of marriage, the following qualities are seen: more freedom in choosing a spouse, relative separation from severe social and family rules, emphasis on emotional and interpersonal aspects, the importance of the private aspect of marriage, marriage as the beginning of adulthood, relative equality in marriage, positive emphasis on mutual sexual desires, and the importance of sexual issues as a symbol of marital issues (Reynolds & Mansfield, 1999).

McDonald (2006) believed in reflexive modernization, where modernization has brought more freedom and independence for individuals but has made them more insecure of the future. Therefore, people will not get married until they have a permanent job and can take the responsibility of a family.

Dixon (1971) emphasized social structure and its changes when it comes to marriage and its models. He mentioned three key variables that impact marriage: availability, that is, the availability of a future spouse based on the gender balance for people at marriage age and models for choosing a spouse; possibility, that is, the possibility of marriage based on the economical and social conditions; and desire, that is, the desirability of marriage based on social norms and pressures and individual motives.

Despite the importance of a modern approach in defining changes in marriage and family, many studies, especially in Asian societies, show that modernization and its related structural changes are not enough to understand and define the process of marriage, and the role of values and culture should be considered. Theories with cultural value approaches emphasize cultural and value changes and the creative nature of changes. For example, Lesthaeghe (1983) highlighted changes in meaning systems and the increase in secular individualism in Western Europe, and Thornton (2001)



and Thornton, Binstock, and Ghimire (2004) highlighted developmental idealism.

Iranian families have historically been more religious and have been organized with regard to religious interpretations from Islam practitioners. In such families, marriage and reproduction are of significant value. Throughout the past decades and even before that, families had undergone major changes. Rising divorce rates, reduction in marriage rates, freedoms given to women and their increased participation in social and political fields, changes in attitudes on gender issues, increasing focus on love and emotions as being a primary criterion in selecting a spouse along with support from the family, and changes that have occurred among the new generation are some of the main examples. On the other hand, the simultaneous presence of these generations, in a single family, has prepared the grounds for integration within a family and its simpler relationships with the social environment. However, Iranian families encounter major challenges related to women, children from the new generation, and modernization, stemming from changes introduced through public media and education (Azadarmaki & Bahar, 2002).

Although 25% of the study population were inclined toward temporary marriage, its prevalence in the same population was about 9%. The reason for this discrepancy is the social obstacles, the most important of which are cultural and familial ones.

Temporary marriage can reduce sexual insecurity, rape, illegal relations, and social harms such as corruption. Furthermore, it can pave the way for permanent marriage, it helps people who cannot get married permanently, and most important, it is approved of by religious authorities. However, this kind of marriage is not developed much and is usually hidden. Some 70% of people considered cultural and familial concerns as the most common obstacles.

Men have more tendency toward and a better attitude toward temporary marriage than do women. It can be said that temporary marriage benefits men more than women in that they can satisfy their varied sexual desire, or can satisfy them if they are hypersexual and their wives cannot satisfy their needs or they are away from their wives (e.g., on business trips), and so forth. They can therefore prevent sexual perversion and satisfy their sexual needs in a religious and legal way. Of course, women benefit from temporary marriage, too. Although temporary marriage is not permissible or is very hard for girls, temporary marriage is a perfect opportunity for widows, divorcees, and other women who cannot get married permanently for any reason, such as old age, to meet their needs.

Another finding of this study was that unmarried people were more inclined to support temporary marriage. First, married women, who are not allowed to get married temporarily, made up a quarter of the study population. In addition, women have a less positive attitude toward temporary

marriage. Second, married men not only have less need for temporary marriage but also face serious problems if they want to do so. Temporary marriage can be a serious threat to their permanent marriage. Third, the marriage age is increasing in the society. At present, most young people cannot get married before the age of 25; they are either studying, or have financial or employment problems. Meanwhile, they reach sexual maturity when they are about 15 years old. Tolerating at least 10 years of sexual deprivation is hard and having sexual relations outside of marriage has its own legal, religious, and familial problems. Therefore, temporary marriage can be a wise way to satisfy their sexual needs until they are able to get married permanently. Furthermore, choosing a spouse in these complicated and variable situations is difficult. Temporary marriage can be a legal and religious way for a couple to see whether they can live together or not. If they find each other suitable during temporary marriage, they can make it permanent. This is actually a good way to reduce divorce, especially in the first years of marriage, which has become more common in recent years.

The results of this study support these reasons. For example, people who lived in the south of Tehran, who are mostly among poor or middle-class families, had a better attitude toward temporary marriage. Of course, another reason can be that people in north of Tehran are better off and do not care much about the same religious and legal values, so they satisfy their sexual needs in nonreligious and illegal ways.

A final point is that Iranians are religious and they approve of temporary marriage because it is religious. Maybe if there was another kind of marriage without religious approval, they would not attend to it. For example, sexual freedom, which is very common in other countries, is very limited in Iran. Of course, there are legal restrictions in this regard. Other aspects of attitude toward temporary marriage that have the highest scores are as follows: it prevents from social harms, it is a suitable way to satisfy sexual needs, and it can be a good model for other societies.

All in all, we believe that if temporary marriage is not abused, it does answer the purpose for members of the society who are not able to marry or those men who are away from their wives. However, it should be cultivated among the people in such a way that it does not have destructive effects on family and society.

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