
A STUDY ASSESSING THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES OF MARRIED FEMALE STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY SETTINGS: A CASE AT THE MUSLIM UNIVERSITY OF MOROGORO

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ABSTRACT

There exists a significant discourse about the extent to which married women are encouraged to pursue higher education. However, it is noteworthy to observe that a significant number of married female students encounter numerous hurdles throughout their academic pursuits. This study aims to assess the perspectives of married female students enrolled at the Muslim University of Morogoro on their academic pursuits. It seeks to address three specific research inquiries, how do married female students perceive their educational experiences at the university? What are the challenges that they encounter? What are the potential consequences or ramifications of these challenges? The data collection process involved the utilization of a self-structured closed-ended questionnaire to gather information about students' comprehension of the actuality of marriage and its impact on their academic pursuits. The findings indicated that the pursuit of education among married women can be characterized by significant difficulties and obstacles, yet a portion of these women demonstrate resilience and can accomplish their academic goals. One of the primary difficulties encountered by married undergraduate students pertains to the effective management of various roles. This predicament can be attributed to the numerous responsibilities that these individuals bear. The findings also indicated that the convergence of professional, familial, and academic obligations contributes to stress among married undergraduate students, with this stress having the most significant

influence on them. Consequently, the study suggests that the provision of counseling services is necessary to assist female students in mitigating challenges and effectively managing their circumstances. Additionally, it is recommended that the institution develop a comprehensive intervention strategy and provide appropriate accommodations for married female students to mitigate the obstacles they encounter.

KEYWORDS

Marriage, Female students, higher learning institutions, Muslim University of Morogoro.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a basic institution in human existence, wherein the formal union of a man and a woman for life has transformed under societal advancements and the expansion of human civilization. Consequently, the marriage process has grown into a structured system that influences the shaping of society. According to Eskridge (2014), marriage has a crucial role in fulfilling the biological, social, sexual, and psychological needs of couples. In the Islamic faith, individuals, both men and women, experience personal growth and inner tranquility through the institution of marriage, which occurs at an appropriate juncture in their lives, resulting in a state of contentment for the married couple. Furthermore, per Islamic teachings, marriage is considered to be a significant and commendable undertaking in the lives of individuals, as it contributes to the establishment of personal identity and serves as a means of moral safeguarding (Tizro, 2013; Adebayo, 2006).

Higher education plays a huge role in community development. It accompanies the personal, social, economic and cultural aspects of people and offers people appropriate opportunities to enjoy a high quality of life. It helps to understand social norms, gives individuals self-confidence and respects non-discrimination based on gender, religion and social class, and for women, higher education generally contributes to improving their social status and status in life. In addition, higher education empowers women to become leaders in society, enables them to become role models for young girls, and contributes to their qualifications as decision-makers and influencers on political, social, economic and cultural development issues. It is well known that educated women have a greater sense of control over their lives and more power and control over resources within the family compared to uneducated women because they receive social recognition and educated women can generally perform better. Today, university education empowers women by helping them become leaders in society and empowering them to become role models for young girls. Educated women have greater opportunities to manage their lives and sometimes they can do other things for the benefit of their society. (Shaukat and William Pell, 2015).

During the college years, widely viewed as a time of self-exploration, global engagement, and personal autonomy, it is worth considering the experiences and circumstances of married individuals pursuing higher education. In the context of marriage, this is the same for both partners to make sacrifices to prioritize the well-being of the relationship and the spouse. These sacrifices can impact the level of individual autonomy. Similarly, students often face various sources of stress, such as E.g., ongoing assessments, academic pressure, striving for good grades, time constraints, ambiguous assignments, significant workloads, suboptimal learning environments, and managing relationships with family and friends (Lasode & Awotedu, 2014). The younger generation is increasingly asserting their autonomy and pursuing a lifestyle that suits their personal preferences. However, the proliferation of social media platforms and increased social interactions have led to a notable increase in romantic partnerships, which has had a significant impact on this population (KanakYadav & Rakhee, 2018). In this scenario, colleges serve as a social environment in which students from different cultural backgrounds are exposed to different philosophies, educational methods, and cultural customs. In addition, it should be noted that marriage is recognized as a legally permissible institution in this context.

Furthermore, university students face numerous challenges (Zusman, 2005). Factors that contribute to academic stress include various elements such as ongoing assessment, desire to achieve good grades, limited time availability, ambiguous assignment instructions, excessive academic demands, suboptimal learning environments, and interpersonal dynamics with family and friends (Adebayo, 2006). Due to many stressors, individuals may experience difficulties in academic performance, leading some to drop out of their education. In developing countries, it is common for a significant number of people to arrange marriage for their daughters during their educational careers. According to Bowen (2005) and McQuilan (2008), certain individuals are forced to enter marriage due to family circumstances, while others are self-stimulating. The study conducted by Lasode and Awotedu (2014) examined the difficulties faced by married women undergraduate students in Ogun State, Nigeria. The results of the study showed that attending school while married can be a demanding and arduous experience. The biggest obstacle for married undergraduates is managing multiple roles, with role transfer identified as a primary underlying factor. Furthermore, the mixing of work commitments, family responsibilities, and academic commitments causes stress among married undergraduate students, impacting their integration into the campus community and their academic performance

Married students face many challenges that can be very stressful, especially if they have children. Individuals must ensure that they have planned interesting activities for their home environment before engaging in academic pursuits. The stress of schoolwork leads to fatigue and affects the ability to concentrate during lectures. Additionally, individuals suffer from fatigue, stress, and lack of time, which affect their ability to complete homework. Additionally, they may experience discomfort and guilt when unable to meet societal expectations associated with traditional household duties (Smadi, 2020). In Tanzania, national legislation sets the minimum marriage age for girls at 15 years. Furthermore, as a party to several international treaties and conventions, Tanzania adheres to the age of consent of 18 years as set out in these agreements. The prevailing pattern suggests that individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 in Tanzania are allowed to pursue higher education while entering into marital unions. A notable proportion of undergraduate students at the Muslim University of Morogoro are in a marriage. Despite the prevailing perception that college years are typically associated with self-discovery, exploring the world, and developing independence, it is worth considering the unique experiences and challenges that married college students face. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the influence of psychosocial factors on the academic performance of married students enrolled in the Muslim University of Morogoro.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Married students' experiences in a university setting have been the subject of numerous studies. Certain scholars view marriage as an unbiased factor, while others see it as negatively affecting married students' academic performance. Married female students' challenges in the context of higher education were examined by Noori and Orfan (2021). Their attention was drawn to a case study carried out at Takhar University, which illuminates the different challenges married Afghan women students encounter while pursuing their education. Mature female students were disproportionately less proficient in their studies, had heavy workloads, and performed poorly academically. Compared to single people, the experience might differ.

The study carried out by Ngonyani (2020) investigated the causes of Tanzanian female students' academic underperformance. The findings demonstrated the variety of obstacles female students must overcome to succeed in their academic endeavours. G. C. compared to their male counterparts, with fewer opportunities, limited access to electricity, romantic relationships, and unfavourable attitudes from teachers. These factors hurt how well female students perform academically.

According to studies like Beard's (2018) in the US, only 7% of undergraduate students get married, indicating that undergraduate marriage is not the norm. Consequently, because of their concurrent roles with other marital roles, like learning, marital status

may have a negative effect on students' academic performance. Yet, given the vastly different circumstances in this study, the effects the researcher saw might not apply to this one. Due to the possibility of differences in marital roles that are contemporaneous with student roles in the study area where the review was conducted, the researcher investigated the impact of marital status on the academic performance of students in Morogoro Municipality.

When Kamal Eldin, Hamed, and Abdul Rehman (2014) looked at how marriage affected students' academic performance at a Saudi university, they concluded that it mostly depends on the individuals in the marriage. They are socially and emotionally supported by marriage. The study seems to define marriage exclusively for female medical students, though. In line with Kamal et al. (2014) state that despite being aware that marriage, pregnancy, and having children put additional pressure on their academic performance, most Saudi families allow their medical students to get married while still in school. However according to most married female students, a marriage's impact on academic achievement primarily depends on the individuals involved. A few married female students reported improved academic performance because of their marriage.

Furthermore, a study on the "Impact of Marriage on Academic Performance of Male Undergraduate Students at King Faisal University" was carried out in Saudi Arabia by Darwish, Alkhars, and Alkhars (2021). A cross-sectional study involving 208 participants concluded that marital status has no bearing on academic achievement. The birth of children and low monthly income are factors that lead to a decline in academic performance. A very satisfying family life and a helpful wife are the things that lead to improved academic performance. This indicates that being married has no bearing on one's academic achievement, nor does it guarantee a stable life after marriage in terms of a monthly salary and a family with children, as it is considered that children require adequate time to meet their needs.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the educational experiences of married female students.
2. To inquire about the study aimed to address the research issues outlined below.
3. To know the perspective of married female students towards their academic pursuits at the Muslim University of Morogoro.
4. To find out the problems encountered by married female students.
5. To see the impacts of these challenges?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the problems encountered by married female students?
 2. What are the impacts of the obstacles they encounter?
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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative strategy was employed in conducting a descriptive study, utilizing a targeted sample technique. This study includes a sample size of 164 undergraduate students pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education at the Muslim University campus. The data was obtained through the utilization of a self-constructed survey instrument comprising closed-ended questions about students' comprehension of the actuality of matrimony and its impact on their academic pursuits. The data that was gathered was subjected to analysis based on the frequency and simple percentage distribution of the replies provided by the participants involved.

DATA ANALYSIS AND Discussion

The objective of this study was to investigate the perspectives of college students toward the institution of marriage. Based on the responses provided by the informants, it has been shown that there is a consensus favoring marriage throughout the study. Conversely, some respondents have a contrasting viewpoint, asserting that they distinctly consider marriage and believe it to be more advantageous to pursue it after completing their studies. Moreover, a minority of individuals lack a distinct perspective, as they find all viewpoints equally acceptable. Based on the responses provided, it can be inferred that the participants possessed a comprehensive understanding of the issue of marriage. The following table presents a range of responses provided by the participants.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents' attitudes towards marriage

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
Marriage should be after the study	20	12.2%
Married should be in the study	125	76.2%
Nothing	19	11.6%

Table 1 presents the findings according to the perception of female students who are married. A numerical value of 125 represents around 76.2% of individuals who possess the ability to confront and accept reality and have not made any assertions of being married while pursuing their educational endeavors. These individuals demonstrate a willingness to adjust and confront challenges that may arise. One of the respondents provides the following response:

I find the experience of pursuing academic studies while being married to be personally fulfilling. I believe that this stage of my life is conducive to marriage, and I am prepared to confront the various problems that may arise, both within and outside of the academic realm.

This is an excerpt from a respondent's response that reflects their sentiments toward the comprehensive experience of managing dual duties. Of the respondents, a

significant portion of them also provide their perspectives on their understanding of marriage. Out of the total number of respondents, 20 individuals, constituting 12.2% of the entire sample, reported being married. These respondents expressed the view that college is a challenging period, and if given the opportunity, they would recommend unmarried individuals consider getting married after completing their college education. This is because students often face numerous challenges in their academic pursuits. However, a total of 11.6% of participants did not respond to either of the available options.

The second research inquiry examined the difficulties encountered by female students who are married while pursuing their degrees. The findings of the study revealed that participants had a range of difficulties, such as encountering negative attitudes and perceptions towards their partners, having limited personal leisure time, facing issues in establishing connections with fellow students on campus, effectively juggling numerous tasks simultaneously, and various other challenges. Table 2 presents the relevant data. The following provides a summary of the respondents' data, highlighting their diverse perspectives on the problems encountered by married female students in higher education.

Table 2: Presents the distribution of responders according to the obstacles they encountered.

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
Negative attitudes from their partners	17	10.3%
Minimum individual free time	49	29.9%
In the ability to relate easily with others on campus	29	17.7%
Managing multiple roles at a time	47	28.7%
Insufficient support from family for childcare	16	9.8%
Poor academic performance	06	3.6%

Table 2 illustrates those 49 respondents, accounting for 29.9% of the total, agreed with the notion that they face significant challenges in allocating sufficient individual time due to the difficulty of completing certain tasks, such as homework. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Aronson (2004), which highlights the considerable obstacle faced by students with family responsibilities in finding uninterrupted time to dedicate to homework. Moreover, these students frequently encounter the additional hurdle of lacking a tranquil and private environment in which to engage in their academic tasks. Furthermore, female students face the issue of juggling multiple tasks simultaneously, as evidenced by 28.7% of female students, which corresponds to a total of 47 participants. This assertion is further corroborated by Terrell's (1990) research since it posits that managing numerous tasks is a

significant stressor for female students. Furthermore, a total of 29 individuals, accounting for 17.7% of the sample, have reported experiencing interpersonal difficulties within the campus community. Interestingly, this group is the smallest proportion, with only 3.6% of respondents indicating challenges related to academic underachievement.

Research question three focuses on the examination of the impact of obstacles on the respondents and their coping mechanisms in response to these difficulties. The findings indicate that effective strategies encompass proficient time management and introspective practice. This phenomenon occurs because all participants are confronted with a restricted amount of time. The individuals in question have various repercussions, such as weariness, feelings of inferiority, and limited availability for familial and childcare responsibilities, among other consequences. Furthermore, stress is one of the factors that impede their progress. Simultaneously engaging in employment and academic pursuits presents formidable challenges that necessitate a substantial time commitment from students. The excessive academic workload and career-related challenges might induce stress among students, so impeding their ability to simultaneously pursue their studies and fulfill other obligations. The degree of stress experienced by students varies depending on their obligations (Irfan & Azmi, 2014).

Table 3: *Presents the distribution of respondents about the consequences experienced as a result of the problems they encountered.*

Attributes	Frequent	Percentage
Feeling inferior to other students	25	15.2%
Fatigue	54	32.9%
Severe stress	51	31%
Feeling guilty about not having adequate time for the children	34	20.7%

According to the data presented in Table 3, it can be observed that a majority of respondents, namely 105 individuals accounting for 63.9% of the total, agreed with the notion that the simultaneous engagement in job, family, and school responsibilities results in the phenomenon of role contagion. This assertion is corroborated by Egan's (2004) research, which suggests that managing work, family, and school responsibilities can be exceedingly intricate and challenging. According to Egan (2004), individuals have been unable to adequately fulfil these criteria due to a lack of strength and energy, leading to the experience of stress and other related issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings suggest that the pursuit of education among married women can be arduous and demanding, albeit with a subset of individuals successfully navigating and accomplishing their academic goals. One of the primary difficulties encountered by married female college students is the effective management of several roles. This predicament can be attributed to women's numerous duties, both within their households, such as familial caregiving, and in their engagement with various social activities, including ceremonies and other related events. Moreover, the research findings indicate that the convergence of occupational obligations, familial responsibilities, and educational engagements engenders stress among married undergraduate students, hence exerting a significant influence on their overall well-being and manifesting in their scholastic achievements. The study posits that providing counseling services is necessary to assist female students in mitigating challenges and facilitating their acceptance of their circumstances. Additionally, it is recommended that the institution develop a well-designed intervention and provide specific accommodations for married female students. This approach aims to mitigate the effects of the various difficulties encountered by this particular group of students. When considering the education of married students, university authorities should consider certain norms or standards that provide support. Certain countries and colleges allow their students the opportunity to enter into matrimony while simultaneously engaging in their routine academic pursuits. In addition, individuals must receive comprehensive instruction in a diverse range of life skills and study abilities.

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