

Factors Influencing the Formation, Continuation, and Dissolution of Marital Relationships in Iran in 2022: A Qualitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study was to identify the factors influencing the formation, continuation, and dissolution of Iranian marriages in the year 2022.

Methods: This research utilized a qualitative method based on the Strauss and Corbin approach. A purposive selection of 10 experts, either faculty members or influential figures in decision-making centers for marriage and family affairs, were deeply interviewed. The data obtained from these experts provided a semi-structured questionnaire for interviews with 36 individuals, divided into three groups: formation, continuation, and dissolution of marriages. After each interview, data were coded and categorized according to the Strauss and Corbin method.

Findings: In total, 2950 primary codes, 462 secondary codes, 97 concepts, 27 subcategories, and 9 main categories were identified, including external couple factors affecting formation, continuation, and dissolution; internal couple factors affecting formation, continuation, and dissolution; and individual factors affecting formation, continuation, and dissolution.

Conclusion: The results indicated that the formation of marriage is influenced more by external couple factors than by any other factors. Although the continuation and dissolution of marriage are influenced by the nature of their formation, individual factors become important in these stages. It can be inferred that focusing on external couple factors before individual and internal couple factors in pre-marital counseling, and prioritizing individual factors in couple therapy and divorce counseling, may be more effective. It is recommended that the results of this study be used in planning, research, and therapeutic interventions in the field of marriage.

Keywords: Formation, Continuation, Dissolution, Marriage

1. Introduction

More than 90% of individuals marry at some point in their lives and developmental stages (Norouzi et al., 2022). However, the number of individuals who complete their developmental stages with a spouse is on a declining trend (Brown & Wright, 2017). The shift in the endpoint of couples' relationships from death to divorce has also been a concern for many researchers (Timothy-Springer & Johnson, 2018). Numerous studies have focused on marriage; some have examined one or more factors in one or more aspects of marriage, such as the qualitative study on identifying preventive components of family breakdown (Arami et al., 2023). Others have studied marriage in relation to another variable, such as developing a conceptual model of satisfying stable marriage in couples seeking adoption (Nezami et al., 2023). Another group of studies has attempted to present a model of a successful marriage, like the study presenting a successful marriage model: A qualitative research (Hashemi Golmehr et al., 2021), and some have focused on the effectiveness of therapeutic models or developing premarital or divorce counseling models. For example, the four-sided premarital counseling model "Aware" with a native and cultural perspective or comparing the effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment-based couple therapy with Cognitive-Behavioral couple therapy on marital conflict and cognitive flexibility in married women experiencing marital boredom (Rafiei Saviri et al., 2022).

A review of previous studies on marriage shows that limited research has been conducted in the form of an integrated study that considers all three aspects: formation, continuation, and dissolution of marriage. The studies conducted in this field have typically started their research only from a group of ordinary individuals in a part of the relationship, such as individuals seeking divorce or individuals seeking premarital counseling. While using experts to begin qualitative research can enhance data collection accuracy. These gaps in the research background on marriage were a concern that researchers addressed.

Based on ongoing research in the field of marriage, the quality and continuity of marriage play a significant role in individuals' physical and psychological health (Zineldin, 2019). Given the increased life expectancy and rising divorce rates (Carr et al., 2014), the importance of marriage and its impacts on individual mental health and social harms, and due to the influence of social, economic, cultural, and psychological developments on couples' relationships (Roos

et al., 2018), the study of marriage becomes significant. A look at the statistics published by the National Registry Office shows that between the years 2008 to 2018, the ratio of marriage breakdowns increased. While in 2008, one dissolution was registered for every eight marriages, in 2020, one dissolution occurred for every 1.3 marriages. During this period, the rate of dissolution increased rapidly by 32.58% (Ardali et al., 2021; Bahoosh et al., 2022). Previous studies typically examined each stage of marriage separately. The studies that have investigated these stages together either started from the target group or only used experts, which reduces the accuracy of data collection in research.

The aim of this study is to identify the factors influencing marriage from its formation to dissolution in an integrated manner. To achieve this, it strives to enhance data collection accuracy using the lived experiences of two groups: experts and individuals involved in the issue of marriage, ultimately aiming to expand prior knowledge and assist decision-makers, specialists, and therapists to act more effectively. This research attempts to comprehensively address the question of what factors currently affect marital relationships.

2. Methods

2.1. Study design and Participant

In this study, the grounded theory method, a qualitative research approach, was employed for data collection. Among the available qualitative research methods, the Strauss and Corbin qualitative research method was utilized, and the stages of this research were conducted based on the recommendations of this qualitative research style. The population of this study included experts in the field of marriage and individuals on the verge of marriage, married, and divorced. Initially, a purposive sampling method was used to interview 10 experts (5 men and 5 women) until theoretical saturation was reached. The average professional experience of the interviewees in the field of couple relationships was 30.6 years. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain expert opinions derived from their lived experiences regarding legal, religious, and registered marriages in Iran. The first interview began with general questions about the first expert's lived experience regarding marriage. The content of the first interview was entered into the MAXQDA software, and after line-by-line analysis and open and axial coding, its content was used for the second interview along with initial questions. This process

continued until data saturation was reached with the final interview in this section.

Selected individuals were deeply interviewed using the data obtained from the experts. This process continued until data saturation was reached with the last interview.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Semi-Structured Interview

One of the common tools in qualitative research is the interview. In the first part of the study and to conduct the first interview, the research background on marriage from reference books and journal articles was studied, and the emphasized topics were extracted. Using the data obtained, a pilot interview was conducted to identify any shortcomings in the interview. After addressing the existing gaps, the first interview began. Experts were free to discuss topics of interest in three parts: formation, continuation, and dissolution. If necessary, findings from the research background were used to obtain expert opinions and complete the interview. In the second part, after analyzing the interviews of the experts, three semi-structured interviews were prepared and conducted for the stages of formation, continuation, and dissolution. Each interview provided the basis for the next interview.

2.3. Data Analysis

Content analysis of the interviews was conducted through a systematic and continuous process of data comparison. Initially, the content of the interviews was reviewed, and specific words or phrases were identified and their different meanings considered. Subsequently, the text was revisited, and words and phrases referring to the extracted meaning were followed up. For further analysis, from the first interview onwards, the technique of systematic comparison was used. After initial coding, similar and related codes were categorized under axial coding. Then, related secondary

codes were classified into concepts, and related concepts were categorized under initial categories, eventually forming subcategories and main categories. In cases where a primary code was placed in more than one secondary code, concept, or category, the context of the interview determined the placement of that code. To ensure the reliability and adequacy of the data, the codings were presented to one of the participants, two doctoral psychology students in their 8th and 9th terms, and two faculty members, and their opinions on the reliability and adequacy of the data were considered after discussion.

In this study, MAXQDA software version 20 was used for coding and categorizing the data.

3. Findings and Results

Calls for participation in this study were made on social media, and from among the applicants, until saturation was reached, 18 men and 18 women were selected in turn for the three groups of formation, continuation, and dissolution. In the formation group, 6 men with an average age of 27 years and 6 women with an average age of 22 years were interviewed. In the continuation group, 6 married women and 6 married men with an average relationship duration of 13.67 years were deeply interviewed. Among the participants, 5 belonged to the 1-10 years group, 4 to the 11-20 years group, and 3 to the 21-30 years group. In the dissolution group, 12 divorced men and women were interviewed. The average duration of the participants' marriages was 12.91 years, and the average time since their divorce was 2.5 years. On average, participants had 0.9 children.

In total, across the three stages of formation, continuation, and dissolution, 2950 primary codes, 462 secondary codes, and 97 concepts, 27 subcategories, and 9 main categories were obtained. Table 1 presents the main categories, subcategories, and concepts identified in this study.

Table 1

Main Categories, Subcategories, and Concepts of Marriage

Main Categories	Subcategories	Concepts
Extrinsic Factors Influencing Formation	Culture	Cultural indices, cultural customs, religion
	Family	Family indices, family impact, family system diversity, family obstruction, family facilitation
	Economic, Social, and Political Factors	Political factors, economic factors, media and virtual space, social infrastructure, social laws
Intrinsic Factors Influencing Formation	Inter-couple Attraction	Psychological attraction, sexual attraction

Individual Factors Influencing Formation	Factors	Awareness of Self and Other	Accuracy of cognition, marriage cognition, mutual understanding
		Compatibility	Differences, similarities
		Formation Style	Social presence, social participation
Extrinsic Factors Influencing Continuation	Factors	Individual Inhibitors	Education, age, avoidance of responsibility, individuality, inhibitory personality traits
		Individual Facilitators	Pressure of needs, individual readiness, personality factors
		Individual Goals	Low-level goals, high-level goals
Intrinsic Factors Influencing Continuation	Factors	Culture	Cultural customs, cultural coordination, religion, interaction with family
		Family	Family teachings, family support
		Economic and Social Factors	Government policies, economic factors, social support, social institutions
Individual Factors Influencing Continuation	Factors	Vertical Intrinsic Factors	Manner of relationship formation, balance of gains and losses in relationship
		Horizontal Intrinsic Factors	Sexual relationship, compatibility, childbearing, interactions between couples, common points, individual goals in marriage, prevention of monotony, couple skills
		Relationship Initiation Readiness	Self-knowledge, physical and psychological health, individual readiness
Extrinsic Factors Influencing Dissolution	Factors	Psychological Factors	Personality factors, constructive habits, respect, constructive personal traits, emotional issues, sense of satisfaction, satisfaction of needs
		Culture	Cultural differences, cultural misalignment, inappropriate social infrastructure
		Economic and Social Factors	Economic factors, social interactions, virtual space and media, religion
Intrinsic Factors Influencing Dissolution	Factors	Family	Negative family impact, inappropriate family interventions, lack of family support, destructive interaction between couple and family
		Interpersonal Factors	Lack of skill, childbearing, differences, interaction poverty, destructive behavior, role conflicts, sexual problems, lack of understanding
		Relational Factors	Change in couple's lifestyle, manner of formation
Individual Factors Influencing Dissolution	Factors	Covenant Breaking	Lack of trust, indifference to commitments
		Inability to Manage Relationship	Individualism, lack of knowledge about couple life
		Intrapersonal Changes	Change in fundamental values, sense of loss, indifference to other matters
		Psychobiological Abnormalities	Mental and personality disorders, severe physical disorders
		Behavioral and Cognitive Traits	Destructive attitudes towards marriage, behavioral traits, personality traits

3.1. Formation of Marriage

In this section, extrinsic factors, cultural indicators, cultural customs, religion, family indicators, family influence, family systems, cultural diversity, family obstacles, political factors, economic factors, media and social media, social facilitation, social laws, and family facilitation were considered. Intrinsic couple factors include psychological attractiveness, sexual attractiveness, similarity, social presence, social participation, knowledge of marriage, self and other awareness, differences, cognitive accuracy; individual factors such as need pressures, education, age, personality factors, avoidance of responsibility, individuality, inhibitive personality traits, low-level individual readiness goals, high-level goals were identified. The findings of this research showed that culture could significantly impact with expectations regarding the formation of marriage at certain ages; indices like patriarchy or matriarchy, collectivism or individualism, traditionalism

or modernity, encouragement of materialism, setting right and wrong cultural norms about marriage formation, diversity and variety, and intercultural mixing and acceptance in marriage. Additionally, individual and family religious beliefs and laws set by religions also play a role in this context.

On the other hand, management styles of authorities, domestic and foreign policies, economic issues such as housing, the power to provide marriage necessities, employment can also determine the formation of marriage. According to participants, the existence of social institutions like psychological service centers, social stability, common legal and customary rules, social media are other factors affecting marriage formation. According to participants, another influential factor in this research was the social and economic situation of the family, parenting styles, direct and indirect education, and family support during marriage formation which could have a positive or negative impact on their child's marriage.

Attention to the other, ethical traits, emotional understanding, intimacy and respect among couples, quality and disorders of sexual relationships, honesty, understanding of the goals and the phenomenon of marriage, family recognition, acceptance and understanding of gender and individual differences, similarity in needs, personality, political attitudes, and religious beliefs, experience in couple relationships before marriage, social participation and social references were other factors effective in forming a couple relationship from the participants' perspective.

Additionally, independence from the need for marriage to satisfy needs, irresponsibility, commitment avoidance, avoidance of marital restrictions, enhancement of individual authenticity, preference for individual freedom, lack of purpose, low resilience, low self-esteem, high education, low and high ages were among the obstacles to marriage that emerged from the participants' statements. Participants also identified instinct, pressure from psychological, emotional, sexual needs, skill acquisition, independence, having a job, appropriate education and age, personal and social maturity, marriage to reduce family pressure, escape from difficult conditions, emotional experience, speculating, childbearing, enjoyment of life, peace, family formation, and maturity as other effective and facilitating factors of marriage.

3.2. *Continuation of Marriage*

In this section, extrinsic factors include cultural customs, cultural alignment, religion, social supports, social institutions, interaction with the family, government policies, economic factors, family teachings, family supports; intrinsic couple factors such as childbearing, sexual relations, nature of relationship formation, compatibility, inter-couple interactions, common grounds, relationship cost-benefit balance, individual goals, prevention of monotony, couple skills; individual factors include self and other recognition, personality factors, constructive habits, satisfaction of needs, feeling of satisfaction, physical and mental health, individual readiness, respect, emotional issues, constructive personal traits were identified.

Constructive cultural traditions and values, acceptance and cultural adaptation, respect for each other's religious beliefs, spiritual readiness, government policies, match between economic expectations and capabilities, personal housing, employment with sufficient income, economic management power; presence of educational and social role models, supportive institutions for the couple relationship;

effect of extended families such as parenting styles, education and role modeling, transferring positive relationship experiences to children, mutual respect between the couple and families, constructive economic and cognitive family supports in critical marriage moments were factors that participants deemed necessary for the continuation of marriage.

Participants stated that the existence of childbearing and conscious parenting and having a common view in this regard, honesty in explaining oneself and making the right choice during the formation of marriage, appropriate sexual performance and attitude, and having necessary attention in this area, having compatibility and similarity in family culture, political issues and worldviews, creating diversity in the relationship and continuity in paying attention to important relationship elements such as love and support, having necessary skills for marriage such as problem-solving, effective communication, emotion regulation, social boundary-setting, sexual relations, appreciation, trust-building, and companionship in crisis situations could ensure the continuation of marriage.

Similarly, according to participants, the absence of addiction, absence of acute mental and physical disorders, having a correct attitude towards oneself, the other, and the couple relationship, economic, social, cultural, and educational maturity at the time of marriage formation, emotional stability, and openness to new experiences, presence of mature-like behaviors and gentleness, striving to meet spouse standards, avoiding selfishness, having self-confidence, independence from extended family, generosity, overlooking, loyalty, and commitment, internal locus of control, flexibility in conflicts, having high-level goals in marriage, perception of social and couple satisfaction, respecting each other's values, independent thinking, culture, and sexual relationship, emotional attention, and the amount of emotional attractions also had a similar effect on the continuation of marriage.

3.3. *Dissolution of Marriage*

In this section, extrinsic factors include cultural differences, cultural misalignment, inappropriate social facilitation, destructive inter-couple interaction, lack of family support, social media and media, economic factors, negative family influence, inappropriate family interventions, religion, social interactions; intrinsic couple factors such as lack of skills, childbearing, differences, interaction poverty, destructive behavior, role conflicts,

sexual problems, lack of understanding, change in couple's lifestyle, nature of relationship formation; individual factors include lack of trust, indifference to commitments, individualism, mental and personality disorders, severe physical disorders, lack of knowledge about couple life, change in fundamental values, destructive attitudes towards marriage, behavioral traits, personality characteristics were identified.

According to participants, differences in family culture, patriarchy or matriarchy, unfamiliarity with each spouse's culture, religious laws such as dowry, change in religious values, level of religious fanaticism; lack of social and cultural controls, incorrect role modeling in social media, inappropriate use of technology, lack of attractiveness in the relationship against the attractions of social media, the diversity present in social media, facilitation by social media in creating infidelity; role blending, increased interactions between genders outside of marriage, hanging out with friends; incorrect social role modeling, inefficient laws, gender discrimination, existence of conflict between social and family teachings, incorrect counseling, social comparisons, inefficient social, economic, and cultural government policies, lack of economic welfare, loss or absence of job; lack of family compatibility, incorrect interaction with members of the extended family, birth order, lack of mutual acceptance between individual and families, inability to balance between own family and spouse, difference in economic, social, and cultural status of two families, transfer of negative family experiences, incorrect family supports, family dependency on the child, inappropriate family expectations, lack of economic, psychological, and cognitive support by family were effective in the dissolution of the couple relationship.

Similarly, lack of parenting management skills, lack of foresight, lack of self-awareness skills, effective communication, relationship management, problem-solving, conflict management, stress management, economic management, emotional behavior, emotional regulation, attitude management; inability to fulfill gender roles, management of social and couple roles; abnormal sexual expectations, dysfunction in sexual performance; increase in differences after the birth of a child, lack of understanding in child upbringing, childbearing despite problems in the relationship, lack of understanding in childbearing; difference in political orientation, individual values, difference in leisure activities, lack of intellectual compatibility; loss of intimacy, low verbal interaction; disclosure of couple secrets, aggressive behavior, frequent

tension-creating, controlling, disregarding each other, lack of appreciation of the other, extremes in sacrificing, not prioritizing spouse, mismatch of expectations and capabilities, efforts to change the other, reciprocal retaliation in infidelity, destruction of each other; lack of understanding each other and basic life principles, monotony in the relationship, change in communication style, wrong goals in marriage formation such as physical attractions, speculation, satisfying sexual needs, escaping from parental home or difficult conditions, purely logical or purely emotional relationship formation, rapid formation, ignoring warning factors during marriage formation were other findings of this research from the participants' perspective on factors leading to the dissolution of marriage.

Other findings of this research in the area of the dissolution of the couple relationship included: lack of honesty, doubt and suspicion, infidelity, irresponsibility, excessive desire for freedom, insistence on preserving bachelor habits, selfishness, prioritizing temporary individual benefits over marriage benefits; lack of knowledge about each other, lack of knowledge about couple relationship, disbelief in the effectiveness of psychological counseling, indifference to desires, psychological issues, needs, sensitivities of each other; feelings of lack of growth, satisfaction of needs, peace, security, and negative evaluation about marriage and the other party, failure to meet marriage goals, loss of initial motivation for marriage, loss of attractions between the couple, loss of positive initial relationship characteristics, change in the value of respect, inclination to low-level needs, reassessment of values; emotional inefficiency, childhood disorders, lack of personal, social, and psychological maturity, aggression, personal instability, depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive thoughts and actions, personality and physical disorders; negativity, materialism, foul language, stubbornness, lack of patience and tolerance, addiction, inappropriate behaviors, excessive pleasure-seeking, and variety-seeking. These factors were also predicted by participants as predictors of marriage dissolution.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Given the emphasis of the data on extrinsic factors in the formation of marriage, it can be concluded that in the society of Iranian couples, the formation of marriage is primarily influenced by extrinsic factors; culture as an extrinsic factor has the power to define the phenomenon of marriage

(Nersessians et al., 2018). Culture determines behavior, thought, and social relationships within a group over time, yet it is a dynamic phenomenon that is constantly changing. The modernism prevailing in Iranian culture currently impacts marriage (Mohebbi & Salehizadeh, 2019). It seems that any decision-making regarding marriage and policymaking in this area needs to consider the changes occurring in the culture of the society (Kazemipour 2021).

According to the findings of this research, the family plays an important role in the marriage of its children. The role of the family in the marriage of its children can be positive or negative. For example, lack of emotional connection with the daughter, interference in decision-making, and inappropriate behavior towards suitors can have a negative effect (Akbari Ghamsari & Mehdizadeh Moghadam 2020). On the other hand, the family can determine children's attitudes towards marriage (Abbasi & Hoseyni 2019). An individual spends the golden period of growth within the family; therefore, an individual's marriage may be influenced by the functions of the original family in emotional maturity (Bahmani Makvandzadeh et al., 2022), unpleasant childhood experiences, depression and parental communication patterns, and interventions (Kiani Chalmardi et al., 2022), family supports (Zarean, 2018). Cultural, social, and economic factors of the original family also determine the marriage of children (Kiyani et al., 2021).

The social and economic status was another extrinsic factor effective in marriage according to participants. Adequate economic status (Kalate Sadati & Jiriaei, 2022), having social support (Taheri et al., 2019) can facilitate marriage. Currently, a significant portion of social relationships is formed or influenced by virtual space. Virtual space can determine attitudes toward marriage (Abbasi Shovazi & Delavar, 2019). For example, virtual space is currently directing people's taste from permanent marriage towards white marriage (Alipour et al., 2020) and furthermore, replacing traditional matchmaking with virtual space matchmaking is occurring (Hassani et al., 2020). In today's Iranian society, individuals do not feel the need for marriage to satisfy their needs (Akbari Ghamsari & Mehdizadeh Moghadam 2020). Another factor that has negatively affected marriage is the weakening of the concept of family in society (Ebrahimi, 2019). Proper understanding of boys and girls from each other (Shahideh & Bahadur., 2020) and also (Salehi Mobarakeh et al., 2022), gaining self-awareness and setting aside unrealistic and sometimes destructive expectations; plus, clarity in all aspects of

marriage (Hashemi Golmehar et al., 2021) can predict the formation and correctness of marriage.

Additionally, the presence of rich attractions (Rostami et al., 2020) and indicators of beauty, good morals, wisdom, compatibility (Hassani et al., 2020), and also compatibility in physical, social, economic, and ethnic dimensions (Naini, 2018), may act as facilitators of marriage. Similarly, having high-level goals such as forming a family, personal development, increasing provision, peace, maintaining chastity and protection from sin, increasing faith, and raising a righteous generation (Rezaei 2018) motivates some people to marry.

According to the findings of this research, the formation of marriage is influenced by individual, intrinsic, and extrinsic factors. Culture and religion, by setting laws and defining concepts related to marriage, are predictors of successful marriage. Couples who adhere to the prevailing cultural interaction model in society and a democratic family-oriented culture in their marriage (Shirdel et al., 2022) and have cultural compatibility (Derakhsh et al., 2019), are more likely to have a continuing marriage. The presence of religious beliefs (Kolaei et al., 2018), and spiritual orientation in life (Moazzen Jami et al., 2018) are other determinants of the continuity of marriage.

According to participants, the continuity of the relationship is contingent upon correct formation, conscious choice (Tajbakhsh & Goodarzi, 2021) and having support from extended families (Dehghan Nezhad, 2022). Similarly, having economic, social, psychological, and educational readiness at the time of formation also affects this area (Rajabi et al., 2022). Couples who have identified their own and each other's personality traits and express their emotions accordingly have a better chance of continuity (Hosni & Nouri, 2022). Economic and social factors are effective in the continuity of marriage. The ability to procure housing, having a job, job satisfaction, job stability, the absence of job conflicts, appropriate working hours, non-shift work, day shift, adequate and legitimate income, income stability, appropriate economic management (Haratian et al., 2020), are conditions for the stability of marriage. Having social capital (Shariati et al., 2021) and cohesion, flourishing, and social acceptance of the couple (Ghorbani, 2022), support the couple relationship in critical marriage moments. The effective role of social institutions such as the Psychology Organization, Sociology Association, formal and informal media, universities, education (Eskafi Noghani et al., 2020), can be another social factor effective in marriage.

Another factor in the continuity of marriage is the positive and effective presence of extended families. The interactive style of parents as a model for couples (Norouzi et al., 2022) and family dynamics and relationships between families (Ahmadi & Samarein 2022), help in the cohesion of marriage. Family support in various areas such as financial, emotional, support in household chores, and childcare (Derakhsh et al., 2019), if it does not have an intervening aspect, helps in the cohesion of couples' relationships.

It seems that conscious childbearing and the presence of children in the family as a factor in enhancing the couple's personality, increasing resilience, increasing the strength of marriage and agreement in childbearing and the number of children, are determining factors in the continuity of marriage (Kiyani et al., 2021). Another determining factor in the continuity of marriage is personality traits such as agreeableness, humility, and responsibility in duty-conscious and assertive extroverted couples (Nazari et al., 2020). Traits such as responsibility and empathy (Afsari Rad et al., 2020), empathy and commitment, grooming, cooperation, avoiding irritability, and striving to satisfy each other's needs (Hosni & Nouri, 2022), having a strong ego (Sadafi et al., 2019) are elements of the continuity of the couple relationship. Additionally, society can play a role in the continuity of the couple relationship by providing tangible and acceptable models of successful marriage (Ghazikhani, 2022).

The continuity of the couple relationship, in addition to a correct choice, requires skill. Having skills in emotional expressiveness (Fayyaz Saberi et al., 2021; Haji Shahkaram et al., 2021), forgiveness and observing respects (Ghazikhani, 2022), appreciation and ability to express feelings and grievances (Aflatooni et al., 2022), effective apology (KavehFarsani, 2021), self-awareness skills, awareness of personality differences, communication skills, realism, religious and spiritual skills, trust-building (Talaenejad et al., 2022), loving (Fayyaz Saberi et al., 2021), can predict the continuity of the couple relationship. Another factor is having common points or, in other words, shared meanings and dreams. Having aligned beliefs, common points, shared goals, recognizing phenomena that occur in couple relationships such as child rearing (Derakhshan et al., 2023), are identified as factors that strengthen marriage. The communication style of the couple also plays a role in the continuity of the relationship. A relationship based on cooperation, understanding, proper management, respect, trust, and loyalty (Rasi Varej & Ehsani, 2020), consultative interaction and with a sense of

security (Kabiri & Khakpour, 2020), clear, transparent, and unambiguous interaction (Hashemi Golmehar et al., 2021), are effective factors in the continuity of the couple relationship. On the other hand, couples who pursue transcendent goals (Fathi-Ashtiani & Ahmadi, 2004), and have high levels of general satisfaction with life, sexual relationships, and emotional and emotional satisfaction (Xie et al., 2018), have a better prognosis in terms of the continuity of marriage.

Numerous studies have shown that relationship dissolution is associated with psychological, physical, and social harm, thus attention to the factors effective in marriage failure is important. Cultural, social, and economic changes are among the factors effective in the dissolution of the couple relationship. The presence and absence of social networks (Ebrahimi et al., 2022), specific and unrealistic definitions regarding marital satisfaction, superficiality, and idealism (Rezapour Mirsaleh et al., 2021), change in the meaning and concept of divorce (Haji Shahkaram et al., 2021), increasing women's entry into the labor market, their financial independence (Banihashemi et al., 2020), unemployment, low income, unstable employment, earning income through inappropriate means, lack of housing and indebtedness (Ebrahimi & MohammadLou, 2021), are social and economic factors predicting the dissolution of marriage. Dependence on family and social networks (Ebrahimi et al., 2022), lack of variety and attraction in marriage and the risk of monotony in the relationship, beating, envy, lying, moral and psychological violence, and addiction (Ebrahimi & MohammadLou, 2021), deficiency in socialization education in the family (Balali et al., 2019), changes in the pattern of childbearing by couples (Ghasemi, 2022) or lack of desire for childbearing (Pouya Far & Tajbakhsh 2022), are predictors of the dissolution of the couple relationship.

Lack of understanding (Ebrahimi 2020), lack of attraction (Balali et al., 2019), lack of personal and social cohesion (Bahoosh et al., 2022), indifference to grooming, loss of sexual attractions (Ardali et al., 2021), destructive trust factors such as interaction with the opposite sex, and substance use (Ardali et al., 2021) are individual factors effective in the dissolution of marriage.

Another relationship-dissolving factor in couples is the inability to manage differences and non-acceptance of those differences. The presence of differences resulting from unequal marriage (Fouladiyan & Shojaee, 2020), family differences (Hedari & Modabernezhad, 2021), can be factors leaning towards the dissolution of the couple relationship. In addition to differences, interaction poverty can also guide

the couple relationship towards dissolution. The interaction style and quality of interaction of couples (Abdollahi et al., 2020), poverty of emotional-verbal interaction, psychological-sexual repelling force of couples (Afrooz et al., 2022) and cause spouse aversion and ultimately dissolution.

The presence of mental and personality disorders threatens the stability and durability of the relationship. The personality factor of neuroticism (Heydarnia et al., 2021), schemas of disconnection/rejection and self-direction/dysfunctional performance alongside insecure avoidant and anxious attachment styles (Adlparvar et al., 2021), damaged self-esteem and injuries in the emotional area (Noorani et al., 2021), can have a role in the dissolution of the couple relationship. Physical disorders also have a similar effect as mental and personality disorders. Unexpected physical injuries (Hedari & Modabernezhad, 2021), for example; cervical cancer (Fugmann et al., 2022), is associated with an increased inclination towards separation.

In reviewing the data obtained and in the inter-gender comparison, it was determined that there is no gender difference in referring to main categories, subcategories, and concepts. However, women referred to more codes in all cases. Since speech is a sign of thought; it can be inferred that women think about the relationship more than men. Women had the most references in the relationship dissolution section (625 codes); men had the most references in the formation section (531 codes). From this statistic, it appears that women pay more attention to dissolution and men think more about formation. Perhaps this statistic can be explained by the great importance of the relationship and consequently women's concern about losing the relationship and its damages and consequences. Women referred to 576 codes in formation, 440 codes in continuation, and 625 codes in dissolution. While these statistics for men are as follows; formation 531 codes, continuation 382 codes, and dissolution 396 codes. Given these numbers, it can be concluded that the occupational concerns of women and men about the stages of the relationship are different. For women, in order, dissolution, formation, continuation, and for men formation, dissolution, and continuation are important. It seems that dissolution is a greater concern for women and formation for men, and in both genders, the continuation of the relationship creates the least concern.

Formation and dissolution had more clarity in the minds of participants and in these two sections they referred to more codes and concepts; but in terms of continuation,

participants referred to fewer codes and concepts. One of the conclusions regarding the latter issue could be that in Iranian society, individuals have more reasons and criteria for decision-making for formation and dissolution; but the continuation of the relationship in a pessimistic state is accidental and in an optimistic state is the product of repeated trial and error and to a lesser extent the product of education. It was also determined, another noteworthy point in this research is the need to avoid considering the factors effective in different stages of marriage as constant, in other words, some factors do not show constant behavior throughout the marriage.

5. Suggestions and Limitations

This study, while comprehensive, has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, its generalizability may be limited due to the specific cultural, economic, and social context of Iran, which might not reflect the dynamics of marital relationships in other regions or cultures. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative data, while rich in detail, may introduce subjectivity in interpreting the results, potentially influencing the objectivity of the findings. Furthermore, the study predominantly engages with a specific population segment, which may not fully capture the diverse experiences and viewpoints within the broader community. Lastly, the ethical considerations, though thoroughly addressed, could potentially influence participant responses, especially on sensitive topics like marital dissolution.

The findings of this research can be a basis for new research and policymaking in the field of marriage, and attention to these points is recommended for marriage stakeholders. Given the research findings in the formation section, it is necessary for experts and policymakers in the field of marriage to note that the formation of marriage is currently more influenced by culture, family, and social and economic issues than any other factor. Therefore, in macro decision-making and in the therapy room during pre-marriage counseling, attention to extrinsic factors becomes important. After extrinsic factors, individual and intrinsic factors need attention. The continuity of the couple relationship is influenced by how the relationship is formed. If a relationship is properly formed, its durability is more likely. The quality of the continuity of the relationship can predict its dissolution. In the continuation of the relationship, having skills and common meaning seems essential. In this section, individual factors become important, these factors

are influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic factors. In the continuation section, attention to enriching the couple's relationship and teaching skills seems necessary. In the divorce section, the data showed that in Iranian society, individuals are more influenced by individual factors regarding divorce, from this it can be inferred that in the divorce counseling room, paying attention to individual factors before addressing intrinsic and extrinsic factors, may increase the likelihood of preventing divorce.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. This research has an ethical code from Kharazmi University with the identifier IR.KHU.REC.1401.043.

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