Structural Relationships of Social and Marriage-Related Factors with the Amount of relationship with the Opposite Sex

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Abstract: In the recent years, one of the issues, which young people have encountered as a social norm, is friendship and relationship between girls and boys particularly at the university while there are legal, social, cultural and religious limitations in this respect, which causes concern and anxiety among parents and authorities. The purpose of this study is to investigate the structural relationships of social and marriage-related factors with the amount of relationships with the opposite sex. The statistical population is single students of Bahonar University of Kerman in the Iranian academic year of 2010-2011. Samples are 384 (212 girls and 172 boys) students. The research approach we have adopted is descriptive ex post facto research. Two researcher-prepared questionnaires have been used to gather data: a ten-item questionnaire intended to measure the amount of relationship with the opposite sex and a twenty-item questionnaire intended to measure social and marriage-related factors. Construct validity of the questionnaires was examined using confirmatory factor analysis approach. To analyze the data and structural equation modeling (SEM), SPSS18 and Amos18 software were used, respectively. The results of structural equation modeling showed that, the indices for measuring the elements have an acceptable validity and reliability and based on these elements a model could be drawn to explain the relationship with the opposite sex among teenagers and youth.

1. Introduction

Sexual needs are a fact. Interest to the opposite sex increases from puberty. The puberty and its positive and negative consequences and the way the important institutions such as family, school and universities deal with are among the critical issues of each community (Ahmadi, 2007). One of the important outcomes of puberty is a tendency to have relationships with the opposite sex. Scientific research also shows that, familiarity, promises and adventures associated with the opposite sex will form an important part of human development (Lotf Abadi, 2001).

Desire to know and interact with the opposite sex, in the context of personal, social, cultural, and familial norms are among the matters, which finally occur foe for both girls and boys after reaching puberty, adolescence, and youth and it may happen many out of moral and religious norms. On the other hand, the skills to communicate with the opposite sex and eventually get through mate choice and completion through intellectual and emotional interactions with the opposite sex have a great importance in each individual's (Kaveh, 2007). The a person, who puts it

well behind, will have an acceptable growth and excellence in the rest of his or her life, while the people who are not equipped with such skills will not only provide problems for themselves, but also damages, problems, and troubles for the opposite sex had relationship with. Therefore, recognizing the nature of this relationship and factors affecting it as well as determining the right limitations in this relationship, particularly in universities, is a major concern of all segments of society.

Although friendships and relationships with the opposite sex in Iran as well as other countries, due to human nature and the mutual desire between the two sexes, has a long history but, in recent years, the increased number of adolescents and youth having such relations, lowered age of first date and considering this issue as a social norm among adolescents and youths, despite all the limitations and restrictions, have concerned social analysts, parents and authorities of educational system and universities.

Nowadays, due to the reasons such as educational and scientific cooperation, exchange of materials and resources, work environment and financial activities,

we cannot generally rule to stop working, organizational or educational relations of women and men. However, it does not mean any unrestrained relationships in the schools, colleges, and workplaces (Ghaffari, 2007). The relationship between boys and girls in all areas and instances that refer to the human identity is a necessity today's world. In addition, the relationships of boys and girls before getting married has been an important but covered with the ambiguity, doubt and anxiety issue. In one hand, the pressures and stresses of adolescence and instinctive tensions lead youths toward relations with the opposite sex and on other hand, social, cultural, and moral considerations in this regard act as barriers (Kothari, 1995). These contradictory situations in the society always had created uncertain and confusing situation for young people in terms of how to cope with this problem. Therefore, in the pathology of male and female relationships, we should pay attention to the origins of this relationship. Ahmadi (2001) divided the factors causing right or wrong behaviors in this relationship into three categories:

- Young people and their unreal thoughts
- Social media and ways of dealing with youths
- family issues and how parents deal with youths

2. Literature Review

One of the obliquities of youths due to the friendship with deviant peer is relationships with the opposite sex. From the view of social motivation, people who have friends of the opposite sex introduce themselves as powerful and socially competent persons and in such a circumstances, girls or boys without such a relation regard themselves as humble and helpless. This attitude plays an important role in stimulating youth to make friends with the opposite sex (Ahmadi, 2001). Results of Connolly (2004) showed that, mixed-gender groups in schools, especially at the youth level, increases the dependence to the opposite sex. The impact of friends of the same sex has the most importance in love affairs.

The effect of mass media in creating intellectual atmosphere, behavior making and in all aspects of life, especially among certain age groups such as adolescents and young adults is clear. Mass media, in a one-way fashion, engage youth's minds and even the dictate their clothing, attitudes, and relationship (Ahmadi, 2003). In a study by Harris, the results indicated that, about two third of American adults believed that, watching TV may encourage adolescents to be sexually active. Teenagers themselves, have had placed the impact of TV in their thoughts and behaviors after their friends and their parents (Giordano, 2004). Moreover, satellite TVs and vulgar images and videos could influence the attitudes,

beliefs, and behaviors about the opposite sex and create false picture from opposite sex and sexual behaviors (Kaveh, 2008). Cell phones not only make male and female relationships easier and more convenient, but also minimize the pressure and control of the family and create a background for deviant behaviors and extramarital relations between male and female (Boostani et al, 2009).

In most cases, the relationship between girls and boys, particularly in the educational areas and universities, initiates from cooperation in the courses and scientific instructions. Studies of Golzari (2005) have shown that, the causes of female students to have relationships with the opposite sex were cognition of opposite sex for marriage, simple friendship, scientific guidance and cooperation; also, their current relationships and friendships have established for marriage, simple friendship, fun, and entertainment. Movahhed and colleagues (2009) conducted a study on the students and concluded that, 46 percent of boys, compared with 10 percent of girls, have a tendency to have relationships and friendships with the opposite sex. 33 percent of boys and 25 percent of girls believed that, in order to better doing exercises, they had to have relationships with the opposite sex. 39 percent of boys and 28 percent of girls stated that interaction with the opposite sex contributes to their academic success. 58 percent of boys and 20 percent of girls stated their goals of having such relationships as a background for further understanding the opposite sex. Results of Peggy and colleagues (2006) indicate that, adolescents who have friendship with the opposite sex with a higher academic degree are most likely to continue their education to higher levels.

Sometimes, a wrong reasons to begin a relationship with the opposite sex before marriage, is age pressure and in many cases, especially for girls, they initiate such relationship with marriage promise. A significant percentage of youth do not have the information and knowledge required within the relationship with the opposite sex and consequently, they start such relations under the pretext of better understanding of the opposite sex (Kaveh, 2009). Ghaffari (2007) investigated attitudes of young people of 15 to 29 years old about friendships with the opposite sex. The results showed that, the agreement among boys with such relations is more than among girls. Respondents with higher levels of education and economic welfare are more in agreement concerning the relationship between friendships of boys and girls. Respondents' reasons for relationship with the opposite sex were response to an emotional need, lack of religious faith, negligence and carelessness of family, friends and peers pressure, sexual needs, introduction to marriage, marriage problems, and family planning, respectively. Studies

by Mirzaei and Baraghmadi (2010) showed that, the need to be loved, loneliness, understanding the opposite sex to marry, experience and the media, respectively, are the most important reasons to have relationships with the opposite sex.

Lotf Abadi (2001) stated that, for most of the youths, the purpose of relationships with the opposite sex before marriage was the possibility to marry with desired person and they believe that via friendships before marriage one can marry with a person with the desired moral characteristics and has a more convenient and guaranteed marriage. Results of Hajilari (2005) showed that, the purpose of establishing relationships with the opposite sex for 70 and 47 percent of students were getting rid of loneliness and the possibility of marriage with the desired person, respectively. In addition, factors such as gaining social prestige, gaining experience, understanding the opposite sex, resolving sexual needs, voluptuousness, and happiness, respectively, are important in establishing these relationships.

3. Methodology and Data

This study is descriptive – ex post facto. The statistical population consisted of all single students of Bahonar University of Kerman in the academic year of 2010-2011. Number of samples, based on the Cochran formula, was equal to 384 persons. Sampling method was random- stratified and the sample size for each category was determined based on gender, discipline, according to the population size.

To investigate the factors affecting the relations between the sexes, several factors were identified; however, we only used two social and marriage-related factors. Questionnaire with 20 items based on the 5-point Likert scale was prepared to collect the date. The questionnaires were developed by researcher in two dimensions; First, societal factors with components such as, cultural invasion, scientific guidance, educational cooperation between peers and friends and second, marriage-related factors with components of delayed marriage, marriage promise, recognizing opposite sex for marriages. According to retest method, reliability of the questionnaire was equal to 0.87. According to Cronbach's alpha test, in general, reliability was equal to 0.92 and specifically, was 0.84 for social factors and 0.68 for marriage-related factors.

The type and the amount of relationship with the opposite sex were determined by nine-item researcher-made questionnaires. According to retest method and Cronbach's Alpha reliability of this questionnaire was equal to 0.92 and 0.87, respectively.

3.1. Structure of social factors

To develop a model for measuring structure of social factors, at first, the number of components were selected and submitted to experts. After considering their comments, using Amos software to determine load factor for each of the components, and statically analyzing their significant differences with zero, we found that, some components have not gained acceptable coefficients. Finally, a model including four components was developed. The correlation of the components is shown in Figure 2 where, Xi is social factors, X1 is media, X2 is Cultural invasion, X3 is scientific guidance and educational-classroom cooperation and finally, X4 is peers and friends.
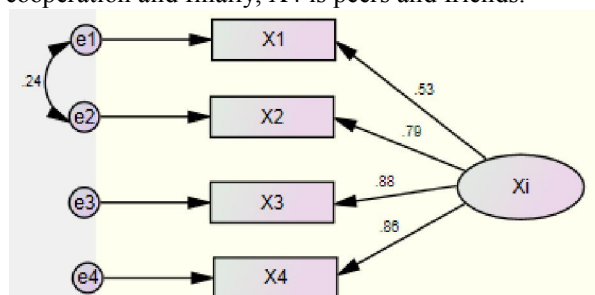

Figure 1: Measurement model for structure of social factors

About the above figure, it is worth mentioning that:

- All positive regression weight or load factor show an acceptable and reasonable conclusion from the theoretical foundations of the above figure.
- Components of scientific guidance and classroom cooperation component along with peers and friends with coefficients of 0.88 and 0.86, respectively, have higher correlation with the structure of social factors. Therefore, they have higher weight in the calculations associated with this hidden variable. In contrast, variables such as cultural invasion and media with coefficients of 0.79 and 0.53, respectively, have lower correlation with structure of social factors and subsequently, have less weight in the associated calculations.

Table 1: estimated general indices for the of social factors' model affecting the amount of relationships with the opposite sex

Index type	Index	Index description	Model	
			Developed model	Independence model
	NPAR	Free parameters of the developed model	9	4
Absolute	CMIN DF P	Non-significant chi-square Degree of freedom Significance level	1.89 1 0.169	302.97 6 0
Relative	RMSEA CMIN/DF	Root Mean Squared Error	0.077 1.89	0.573 50.5

		of Approximation Chi-square to degree of freedom ratio		
Comparative	TLI CFI	Tucker-Lewis fit index Comparative fit index	0.982 0.997	0 0
Parsimony	PNFI PCFI	Parsimony Normed Fit Index Parsimony Comparative Fit Index	0.554 0.562	0 0

Using the overall fit indices, we can answer to the question that, ignoring specific values reported for the parameters, whether, in general, the developed model is supported by experimental data collected or not. If the answer is yes, then the model is acceptable and otherwise it must be corrected. To interpret the values in the above table it should be noted that:

- Existence of the non-significant chi-square (CMIN) equal to 1.89 and significance level of p=0.169 shows a desired result, however, the degrees of freedom (Df) Is also important. The extent the degree of freedom of developed model (equal to 1) is far from zero and close to the degree of freedom of independence model (equal to 6), the more desirable is the model.
- The number of free parameters of the developed model (NPAR) whose value is 9, indicates that, the researcher, while developing the model, did not expended degrees of freedom easily and this is acceptable.
- Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/DF) is a better index to judge the developed model and determine to what extent the data supports it. For this index, values from 1 to 5 are appropriate and values close to 2 to 3 are very good (Ghasemi, 2011). In this table, the value of relative chi-square is equal to 1.89 indicating that, the model is acceptable.
- Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) shows that, the developed model can be considered acceptable or not. This index is known as one of the indicators of a bad fit. Its value varies between zero and one. The smaller the value is, the more acceptable is the model. The obtained 0.077 for the developed model indicates that, the model is acceptable.
- Comparative indicators are developed to examine that, based on the comparison with the developed independence model, whether the model is acceptable or not. The index values range from zero to one and the values higher than 0.90 are considered as acceptable. In the above table, the Tucker- Lewis fit index (TLI) is equal to 0.982 and the comparative fit index (CFI) is equal to

0.997 and since these values are higher than 0.90, therefore, based on these parameters, the developed model is acceptable.

- In addition to the above-mentioned indicators, investigating parsimony indices is necessary to determine the acceptance of the model. For Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) and Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI) values of 0.5 or higher are acceptable, however, some references reported this value as 0.6. In the above table, the values of PNFI and PCFI are equal to 0.554 and 0.562, respectively, indicating that, both are acceptable. The overall fit indices values in the above table show that, our measurement model is acceptable. Nevertheless, if the overall measure of the fitted model will be acceptable, the estimated individual parameters in the model could be meaningless. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the individual parameters. Table 2 shows the estimated parameters individually.

Table 2: investigating the significant differences of estimated parameters from zero for the model of social factors

The significance level P	Critical ratio (CR)	Standard error (SE)	Type of estimate		
			Standard	Standard	
***	6.6	0.087	0.531	0.577	X1 Xi
***	11.14	0.079	0.789	0.876	X2 Xi
			0.875	1	X3 Xi
***	12.18	0.068	0.763	0.825	X4 Xi
0.016	2.41	0.712	0.243	1.72	e1 e2

The *** symbol in Amos software is an alternative to 0.000. Thus, the significance levels of 0.016 are reported differently.

- The value of CR (the ratio of non-standard estimated value of parameter to calculated standard error (SE) for the same parameters) shows the probability of error if the null hypothesis that makes this value equal to zero will be rejected. Since that for the significance level, the maximum error of 0.05 is acceptable, therefore it is concluded that, the calculated parameters have been significantly different from zero.
- In the above table, all of the values estimated for p are less than 0.05 indicating that, the error probability is low and subsequently, no component will be excluded and the model is acceptable with them.

3.2. Structure of marriage-related factors

In this research, in order to evaluate the marriage-related factors, we applied a first order factor model with three components of X5 as promise of

marriage, X6 as delay in marriage, and X7 as understanding the opposite sex for marriage.
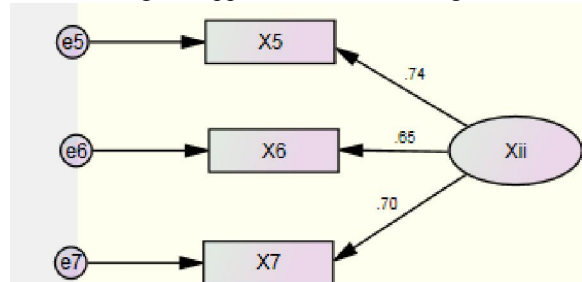

Figure 2: the measurement model for structure of marriage-related factors

It is worth mentioning about the above figure that:

- All positive regression weight or load factor show an acceptable and reasonable conclusion from the theoretical foundations of the above figure.
- Components of promise of marriage and understanding the opposite sex for marriage with coefficients of 0.74 and 0.7, respectively, have higher correlation with the model and marriage-related factors. Therefore, they have higher weight in the calculations associated with this hidden variable. In contrast, the variable of delay in marriage with coefficient of 0.65 has lower correlation with marriage-related factors and subsequently, has less weight in the associated calculations.

3.3. Structure of amount of relationships with the opposite sex

According to the existing theoretical foundations and perspective of community, the relationship with the opposite sex can be evaluated via three components as the amount of face-to-face or absent communications and the number of relationship with the opposite sex. Therefore, in order to evaluate the amount of the relationship with the opposite sex, we used a three-factor model with components of Y1 as in person relationship, Y2 as distance relationship, and Y3 as number of relationship.
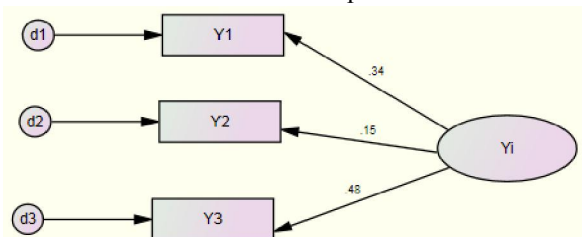

Figure 3: Measurement model for the structure of relationship with the opposite sex

It is worth mentioning about the above figure that:

- All positive regression weight or load factor show an acceptable and reasonable conclusion from the theoretical foundations of the above figure.
- Components of number of relationship and in person relationship with coefficients of 0.48 and 0.34, respectively, have higher correlation with the amount of relationships. Therefore, they have higher weight in the calculations associated with this hidden variable. In contrast, the variable of distance relationship with coefficient of 0.15 has the lowest correlation with the amount of relationships and subsequently, has less weight in the associated calculations. According to these coefficients, the amount of relationships with the opposite sex will be better evaluated with the factors of number of relationship and in person relationship.

4. Results

According to what was mentioned above, the main hypothesis of the research was tested. Therefore, using structural equation modeling, the effect of social and marriage-related factors on the amount of the relationships with the opposite sex was tested and the following results were obtained (Table 3).

The results of the model tests indicate that, the impact of social factors on the relationship with the opposite sex is positive (0.66) meaning that, the more people are affected by social factors (media, cultural invasion, peers, and more classroom cooperation), the more they establish relationships with the opposite sex. In addition, the results show that, the impact of marriage-related factors on the relationship with the opposite sex is positive (0.34) meaning that, the more people affected by the marriage-related factors (marriage delay, marriage promise, and understanding the opposite sex for marriage), the more will be the amount of the relationship with the opposite sex.

- Existence of the non-significant chi-square (CMIN) equal to 58.42 and significance level of p=0.002 shows a desired result, however, the degrees of freedom (Df) Is also important. Concerning that the degree of freedom of developed model (equal to 31) is far from zero and close to the degree of freedom of independence model (equal to 45), the model is desirable.
- The number of free parameters of the developed model (NPAR) whose value is 24, indicates that, the researcher, while developing the model, did not expended degrees of freedom easily and this is acceptable.

- Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/DF) is equal to 1.88 indicating that, the model is acceptable.
- Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) for the developed model is 0.077 indicating that, the model is acceptable.
- In the above table, the Tucker- Lewis fit index (TLI) is equal to 0.937 and the comparative fit index (CFI) is equal to 0.957 and since these values are higher than 0.90, therefore, based on

these parameters, the developed model is acceptable.

- The values of Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) and Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI) are equal to 0.629 and 0.659, respectively, indicating that, both are acceptable. The overall fit indices values in the above table show that, our measurement model is acceptable. These results are consistent with the results of many researches and proposed theories.
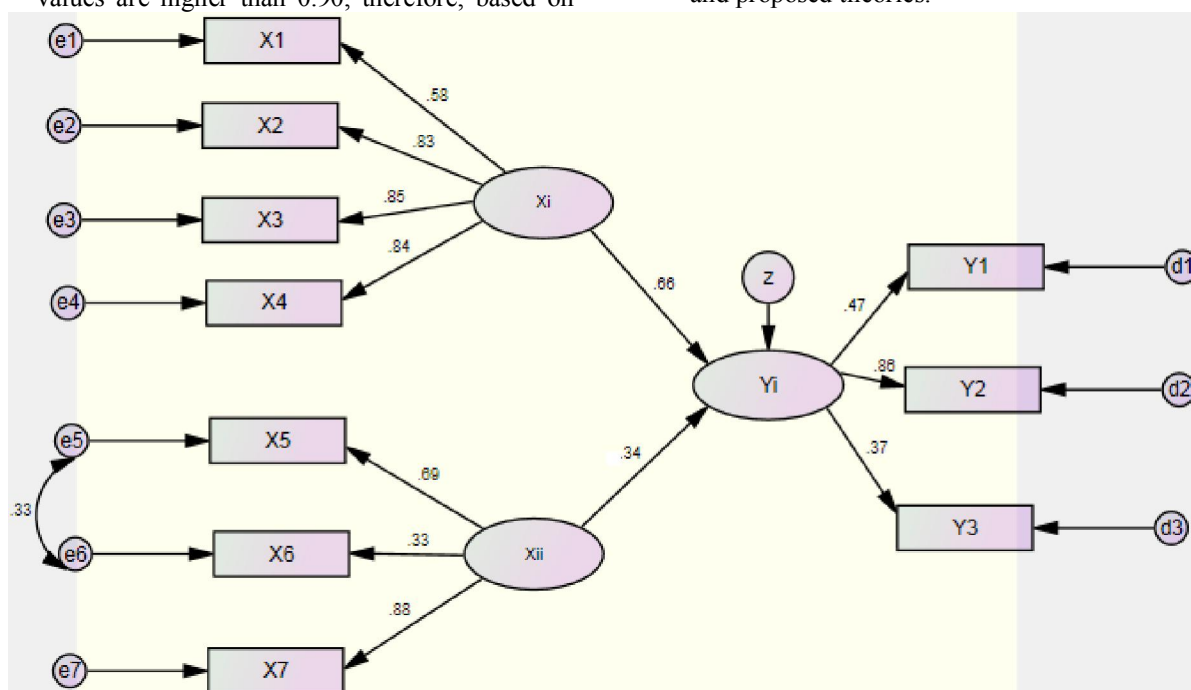

Figure 5: investigating the effect of social and marriage-related factors on the amount of the relationships with the opposite sex

Table 3: Overall fit indices to assess the impact of social and marriage-related factors on the relationship with the opposite sex

Index type	Index	Index description	Model	
			Developed model	Independence model
	NPAR	Free parameters of the developed model	24	10
Absolute	CMIN	Non-significant chi-square	58.42	675.1
	DF	Degree of freedom	31	45
	P	Significance level	0.002	0
Relative	RMSEA	Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation	0.077	0.305
	CMIN/DF	Chi-square to degree of freedom ratio	1.88	15.1
Comparative	TLI	Tucker-Lewis fit index	0.937	0
	CFI	Comparative fit index	0.957	0
parsimony	PNFI	Parsimony Normed Fit Index	0.629	0
	PCFI	Parsimony Comparative Fit Index	0.659	0

5. Conclusion

Feelings, thoughts and behaviors toward the opposite sex are the most exciting feature of human life that engage the mind from mid-adolescence the end of youth and adulthood. Regardless of the customs and social-cultural rules in a given society and apart from hiding this big secret and considering as taboo in our community, dreaming about the opposite sex, establishing relationships with the opposite sex, stories, enjoyments, euphoria and tragedy of love, matchmaking and engagement, marriage, separation and ... are very effective and important parts of everyone's life in the real world with good and evil. These emotions, thoughts and behaviors have

undeniable impacts on the development of gender identity, attitudes toward opposite sex, and marriage. Given the importance of this issue, the authors investigated the influence of social and marriage-related factors and factors on the amount of the relationships between the sexes.

Regression coefficients of the structural equation modeling suggest that, social factors (media, cultural invasion, educational and classroom cooperation, and the impact of peers and friends) have a positive impact on the relationship with the opposite sex. The model results also indicated that, among the social factors, schoolwork and friends have the greatest impact on relations between the sexes. These findings are in agreement with the results of Golzari (2005), Hajilari (2005), Movahhed and colleagues (2009), Miller (1998), and Connolly (2004), who investigated the influence of friends and peer groups in relationships with the opposite sex. To explain these findings we can say that, the youths pay extra attention to camaraderie and friendship with peers. Community of adolescent provides an environment that has a profound effect on them. Peer groups can have a lot of power and can affect group members. One of the obliquities of youths due to the friendship with deviant peer is relationships with the opposite sex. From the view of social motivation, having girlfriends is a personal and social power and for girls, girls it is considered as a higher sex appeal and social prestige to have a boyfriend. For this reason, girls or boys without such a relation regard themselves as humble and helpless. This attitude plays an important role in stimulating youth to make friends with the opposite sex. Sometimes, emotional ties established due to the academic and classroom cooperation, could lead to a profound relationships with the opposite sex. Therefore, it is recommended to the family and the community to control the type and the condition of the relationships and friendships of their youths in a subtle fashion. They can create conditions through witch these relationships could be guided in the right direction. Moreover, it is recommended to the students to have such relations with the classmates of opposite sex only if it is essential and restrict these relations to the accepted boundaries of culture and society.

Based on these results, some TV programs (media) like some of series and movies are encouraging and guiding the youth to have relationships with the opposite sex; since in some of the movies, it is a form of cultural pride to have a relationship with the opposite sex and it increases the tendency of young people to have such relations. Therefore, it is recommended that the authorities consider Islamic patterns in producing TV shows and movies.

The findings of this study showed that, with the increase of cultural invasion and the trend toward the satellite TVs, Internet, foreign vulgar movies etc., the relationship with the opposite sex will be increased. The results of Moayyedi (2000) and Ahmadi (2008) have confirmed the relationship between cultural invasion and the media with the relationships with the opposite sex. In explaining these findings, we can say that, by emerging todays new technologies, greater diversion areas for youths are provided. In addition, we are observing the influence of foreign culture and promotion of the materialistic culture and moral degeneracy among the teenagers and young adults. All these factors play a major role in the relations between the sexes. Therefore, it is recommended to the authorities to deal with cultural invasion and try to reduce the relationships with the opposite sex by improving the quality of domestic media programs as well as informing the youth about the correct use of new technologies such as mobile phones, Internet.

Other results of the model showed that, the marriage-related factors (delay in marriage, promise of marriage, and understanding the opposite sex for marriage) have a significant positive impact on the relationship with the opposite sex. Promise of marriage and the understanding the opposite sex have the greatest impact on relations between the sexes. These results are in agreement with the findings Golzari (2005), Ahmadi (2008) and Meston & buss (2007), which showed that, understanding the opposite sex for marriage is one of the most important objectives of such friendship between girls and boys. In fact, a significant percentage of young people do not have the information and knowledge required to communicate with the opposite sex because the scientific and systematic training to suit the conditions are not sufficiently provided by the experts and still there is no information about the basic life skills among educational contents. These issues cause that the youths to start such relations under the pretext of better understanding of the opposite to start a better life. About relationship between marriage promise and the relationship with the opposite sex, it can be said that, almost all boys give marriage promise to their girlfriends develop this imagination in their minds. Since the nature of this imagination is the freedom from anxiety created by the conflict between their acts and the rules and norms accepted by society, thus in most cases, the imagination remains in the romance state and never is materialized. Presence of the marriage promise in these relationships is only the kind of satisfaction for boys and girls and improves relations between them. The results show that, the age students and marriage postponement have impact on the relationship with the opposite sex is. This finding is in

agreement with the results of Schofield (1968) who showed that, with increasing the age, the relationship with the opposite sex would be increased. It seems logical that, with the increase of age, the tendency to marriage and founding a family would be increased and if the necessary conditions for marriage would not be provided, the marriage will be delayed and this causes the young to have relationships with the opposite sex.

Therefore, it is recommended that, the authorities and families try to provide appropriate and timely marriage conditions for youths. In addition, counseling centers, schools, and universities can create appropriate attitudes and raise awareness about the proper relationship with the opposite sex to help youth. .

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