

SPOUSE PREFERENCE AMONG KUWAITIS

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Abstract.

A gradual change within the freedom of spouse selection has been reported with its respective influence, on the degree of continuity and change in the family institution. Traditionally, the choice of a marital partner was made predominantly by kinship or tribal arrangement. However, with the rapid socioeconomic changes associated with the discovery of oil in Kuwait, as well as increase modernization, the emphasis has gradually shifted from extended family ties to nucleation, and the circle of marriage choice has become progressively wider.

This study has been conducted with the purpose of examining the preferences of young Kuwaitis in the selection of their future spouses, taking into consideration five hypothesis: 1) Males more than females should have more power and freedom in their potential spouse selection. 2) Males more than females will place higher values on youth and physical attraction in their potential spouses. 3) Economic status will play a major role in experiencing freedom in choosing the potential spouse. 4) As an Islamic culture, males will value chastity higher than females in their potential spouses. 5) Religious commitment will show higher levels of preference, among both Kuwaiti males and females, when compared with other characteristics, i.e., premarital relationships, physical attraction, high-income family, social status, and relative of potential spouse.

A questionnaire including the above characteristics was distributed among 193 students of the introductory courses at the Social Work and Psychology Departments of Kuwaiti University. A preliminary presentation resulted in mixed opinions.

Since Kuwait is experiencing rapid socioeconomic changes, characteristics of the potential spouse were found to have mixed results. The position of Kuwaiti females, in a society with increasing opportunities for higher education, has increased their freedom in the choice of a potential spouse. Nevertheless, Kuwaiti males are still the initiators of the marriage proposal. Income was found to have no significant impact on the choice of a spouse. Educational level was a strong factor in the spousal. Kuwaiti males value youth and physical beauty since it is linked with fertility and reproduction. However, females tend to emphasize financial security. Chastity is valued highly by both sexes. As an Islamic society, after puberty, Kuwaitis are restricted, in establishing any kind of relationship with the opposite sex. Religious commitment was rated as the highest factor and found to be the strongest choice characteristic in a potential spouse, by both sexes.

This study was an exploratory one. The results will assist marriage and family therapists when counseling the new generation. Additional research needs to be conducted on a non-student sample group. The final results can be compared with similar studies in other Middle East and Arabian Gulf countries.

Introduction:

Mate selection in third and first world countries significantly reflects the degree of continuity and change in the institution of the family (Okonjo, 1992). Studies report a gradual worldwide change in the freedom of selection of a mate or spouse. It was reported that educational status, marriage at a later age, industrialization, religion, and socio-economic status play a prominent role in the degrees of self-selection (Al-Thakeb, 1985; Murstein 1980; Strange, 1976). Marriage has always been of considerable importance in Kuwait and is viewed as the second half of the religion. Those who marry are considered as having completed their religious duty. Islam, as the official religion in Kuwait, encourages Moslems to marry and to choose one who follows Islam and its teachings. The Koran gives liberty in choosing a husband or wife beyond a specified degree of prohibition, namely consanguinity, affinity, fosterage, and some other cases. Selecting a marital partner is one of the most important and difficult decisions we make in our lifetime. Choosing the right person can result in much personal fulfillment, While choosing the wrong marital partner may result in misery of at least to marital dissolution. In Kuwait, at least 12% of marriages dissolve before couples move in together due to wrong selection (Ministry of Planning, 1993). Some people choose or accept the wrong spouse because they look for the wrong qualities in a person. They emphasize physical characteristics and attractiveness without regard for personal qualities and family background. This study is an exploratory study of the most preferred characteristics in the potential spouse among young Kuwaitis.

Importance of the Study

In the past, marriages in Kuwait were either “traditional” or “arranged”; (Alqashan, 1995). “Traditional” refers to marriages within members of the extended family, while “arranged” marriages refer to the involvement of the complete family, in the marital decision. During the seventies a popular Kuwaiti movie “Bas Ya Bahar” dramatized the phenomenon of at least one of the spouses in some cases having no voice in expressing when they would marry. In most cases, women of low economic and educational status had no choice or say in their marriages. Moreover, choosing a marital partner for a family member

was predominant through kinship or tribal arrangement. At an early age, the parents chose the future spouse for both sexes and in most cases, the choice was marriage to a first cousin. However, because of contemporary socio-economic changes in Kuwait, the marital situation has also changed somewhat.

Literature Review

A Study by Al-thakeb (1985) examined a number of key questions regarding the Arab family in general and the Kuwaiti family in particular. For the purpose of this study the examination of the attitudes toward love and freedom of choice in a marriage is most relevant. Almost half (48%) of the sample of 526 Kuwaiti male and female heads of households, reported being married to relatives, most of whom (79%) were married to a first cousin. Indeed, the majority preferred to marry a relative as a means of strengthening kinship ties. However, only 30% of college-educated males indicated such a preference in contrast to 68% of illiterate.

Al-thakeb (1985) concluded that the factors influencing one's freedom of choice in a future spouse included level of education, socio-economic status, age, and sex. Men were found to have more freedom in the choice of their spouses. Alqashan (1995) reported several reasons for Kuwaiti families to favor the "paralleled cousin" (marrying the first cousin's son or daughter) type of marriage. The bond of the two nuclear families is strengthened, as are those of the tribe. Other reasons included putting up some barriers against any attempts at dissolution of the marital ties, and to avoid marrying from interracial or inter-caste marriages.

Until recently, marriage was a family matter. At present, the voices of marriage candidates have risen and parents are expected to give approval to their children's marriages, especially male children. With the rapid socioeconomic changes associated with the discovery of oil in Kuwait, as well as with the increased modernization the emphasis has gradually shifted from extended family ties to nucleation. As a result, the customs governing spouse selection have changed. Currently, to choose or at least to approve their marital candidate is an expectation for young Kuwaitis. According to Al-Naser (1986), the circle of

marriage choice has become progressively silder. Socio-economic changes have made it impossible to continue the traditional “parallel cousin marriage” custom. Moreover, Al-naser emphasized that the role of fathers has changed from being characterized as harsh and authoritative, to exhibiting more flexibility and permitting other members of the family to make decisions. Furthermore, Kuwaiti women are given the right not to be forced to marry at a young age (Personal Affairs Law, 1984: artiel 26). They have also secured the right to choose their own spouses, especially when they reach the age of 25 years. Nevertheless, the notiion of freedom in terms of spouse selection is completely different from the Western notion. Today a majority of Kuwaitis, will choose their potential spouses based on one of the following methods of marriage:

“Joint venture type”: Both parents and children actively participate in the selection process;

“Delegation type”: Young men describe to their parents the type of wife they want and parents try to make a choice within these conditions.

“Planned type”: Parents plan the whole process; (Hashem, 1993).

Factors Associated with Spouse Selection

There are several factors, which can affect the decision of the spouse selection process in the Kuwaiti society. The first factor, which the researcher believes to dominate the final selection in marital decisions, is family reputation. This factor is more important for some Kuwaiti families than individual characteristics when selecting a spouse. It is one of the most important factors, which needs to be clarified prior to the acceptance or rejection of the engagement. The spouse’s chastity, “both male and female”, is the key element in this phase of the family life cycle. It is mandatory that one marry a person who comes from a family of chastity and good reputation. Although a spouse could state that “I am marrying him/her, not his/her family”, the influence of the family origin is taken into consideration. A study by Wilcox (1983) reported that spouses who are exposed to a healthy family origin

achieve greater marital satisfaction than do spouses who have not been so exposed. Such a principle reflects the interest of the family as a whole.

The second factor, which determines spouse selection is socio-economic level. Kuwaiti society has been classified into two castes, Aseals (White collar) and Khadiry (blue collar). Due to social pressures, Kuwaitis tend to select endogamous partners or marry within their group. Otherwise, they may meet overt or subtle criticism and disapproval, especially from the family. Nevertheless, when other demographic factors as are taken into account, i.e., higher educational degree, economic status, employment status, the interclass marriage may be acceptable as is often the case in societies, such as the American.

When there are some differences in the levels of education, income, and employment status, a hypergamous marriage could take place (upward marriage) whereby the Kuwaiti upper class women may accept a highly educated or a high-level income individual from the Khadiry cast. Interclass marriages in Kuwait, as well as in other cultures, are based on exchange privileges, rather than on a racial or caste basis.

For example, in Morocco, a study (Walter, 1997) found that females showed a preference for males whom they judged to have higher social status than theirs, while this criterion was unimportant for males.

The third important factor in spouse selection is that of personal characteristics. Many elements could be included in this factor which dominates marriage preferences in Western cultures. Traditionally, personal characteristics follow other factors in Kuwait. For example, the spouse's age plays an important role in the selection process. Usually male spouses are older than female spouses. The average age difference between husbands and wives in the first marriage is about 2 years (Ministry of Planning, 1993). Men, in general, are more likely to prefer younger mates, whereas women select a spouse older than themselves (Al-shalal, 1998; Al-thakeb, 1995; Essock, 1989; Kenrick and Keefe, 1989; 1992; Kuznestov et al., 1992; Rajecki et al., 1991). Nevertheless, age homogeneity is preferred among Kuwaitis with

college degrees. Physical beauty and financial prospects also play an active role for both potential mates. Studies, show that men tend to place more emphasis on physical beauty; while women tend to stress personal characteristics such as kindness, consideration, and income capacity; (Berado et al., 1992; Buss, 1989, 1989; Buss and Barnes, 1986; Davis, 1990; Husain, 1990). A traditional proverb in the Middle East says “for a woman to stay under the shadow of a man is better than staying under shadow of a wall.” This reflects the women’s reason to seek a mate with characteristics that are associated with “power” such as wealth and education.

Kuwaiti marital and family roles place emphasis on the wife’s primary responsibility in the performance of domestic duties and child rearing, while husbands provide the income and security to the family. The Prophet Mohammed mentioned that a woman is sought after for marriage due to her money, social status, and physical attraction. Nevertheless, he insisted on marrying one with a strong religious commitment. Buss (1989) studied almost 10,000 subjects from 37 countries around the world, and found that women placed greater value on the financial prospects of potential partners; such differences occurred in 36 of the 37 samples. On the other hand, in 34 of the 37 samples men valued physical attraction in a potential mate as more important.

Another important factor in choosing one’s spouse is chastity and the good reputation of the individual and their family of origin. The individual should maintain a positive reputation about him/herself in order to be accepted in the marriage pool. Chastity is more important for the Kuwaiti female than the male. Chastity and virginity should be maintained until the marriage. Kuwait as an Islamic society discourages its people from any kind of premarital sexual relationship. Thus, love and sexual satisfaction are unacceptable before marriage. Indeed, love is seen to come within the marital context. Islam encourages its people to marry spouses with chastity and high morals.

The purpose of this study is to examine the preference of young Kuwaitis in the choice of their future spouses. The researcher has examined the issue from several perspectives:

- How do young Kuwaitis' differ in choosing their potential spouses from the traditional way of choosing one's spouse?
- What are the different characteristics preferred in a potential spouse, for both sexes?
- What is the relationship between family economic status and one's decision in choosing a potential mate?

Methodology

Sample Description

The study consisted of a random selection of 193 undergraduate students who representing eight colleges, who were enrolled in the introductory Psychology and Social Work classes at Kuwait University. These courses are elective courses for all students from different colleges in Kuwait University.

The range of ages in the sample was from 18 to 28 years. For male students the ages ranged from 18 to 26, with a mean age 19.9 years. The female student's ages ranged from 18 to 28, with a mean age of 20 years.

Hypotheses

- 1 . Males should have more power and freedom than females in their potential spouse selection.
- 2 . Males will place a higher value than females on youth and physical attraction.
- 3 . Economic status plays a major role in one's freedom of choice when choosing a potential spouse.
- 4 . Males will value chastity more than females when choosing a potential spouse.
- 5 . Religious commitment will be valued more than other characteristics, by both Kuwaiti males and females.

Instrument

The questionnaire for the measurement of preferences in spouse selection composed of three parts. It was designed to avoid culturally sensitive items. Several sources were taken into consideration in

developing this scale; (Knox, 1984; Melton and Thomans, 1976; and Liston and Salts, 1988). In other words, the questionnaire used in this study was a modified version of all the above scales, so as to be applicable to the Kuwaiti culture.

To ensure the validity of this instrument, a panel of professors from the departments of Social Work and Psychology reviewed the scale and agreed that the items tapped to a great extent the construct validity of spouse selection. A coefficient alpha was calculated to test the internal consistency or reliability of the scale. The scale showed excellent reliability with a correlation of 0.96.

The instrument had three parts. Part I Included some background items related to age, sex, marital status, and family income. Other questions referred to attitude towards marriage in terms of preferred age for marriage, age difference between spouses, and the decision to marry. Two questions relevant to arrange marriages were included, due to the fact that such marriages are still in Kuwait society. Part II was composed of items to measure preferences in the characteristics of the potential spouse. A fourpoint scale was used which ranged from irrelevant or unimportant (0), OK (1), important (2), very essential (3). The final items for spouse preference were developed as follows: premarital friendship/relationship, dependability, emotional stability and maturity, coming from an intact family, education and intelligence, health, responsibility for home, level of ambition, physical attraction, cooking and housekeeping, religious commitment, income status, social status, political background, chastity and virginity, caste, parental approval, first marriage, and location of residence.

Procedures

Permission was taken from the instructors of the introductory courses of Social Work and Psychology at Kuwait University, in order to present a brief description of the study to the students during class hours. The students were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and that their participation would require approximately ten Minutes of their time. Questionnaires were then handed out, and after several minutes, participants were asked to pass them face - down to the center aisles where they were collected.

Results

Findings

the data showed that the majority of the sample group was single (81.9%) while minority (18.1%) was married. A large percentage (43.5%) reported being from middle income families (KD 501-899). The median preferred age at marriage for the male students was 22 years, while for the female students 23 years. With regard to the query about age differences between husband and wife, 88.1% of the male students indicated a preference for younger partners, with a mean age difference of 3.8 years. For contrast about 78.3% of the female students preferred older husbands, with a mean age difference of 2.8 years.

Cross tabulation and T-test statistical procedures were computed to test the study's five hypotheses. Hypotheses I predicted that males should have more power and freedom than females in their potential spouse selection. Table 1 shows that 27.2% of females compared with 12.9% of males stated that they personally participated in the final selection of their potential spouse; and only 2.2% of females compared with 4% of males indicated that their marriage was arranged exclusively by their families. Pearson's Chi-Square (6.32, $P > .04$) was found to significantly distinguish between the two groups, based on their gender. Once again Hypothesis I was not supported when women were found to have more influence in making their marital choices in comparison to men. However, when disagreements occurred between the college student and the family no significant differences between males and females were found with respect to how the final decision is made (**Chi-Square - 4.4, P. .05**). (See table 2).

Table 1. Final Decision of Spouse Selection (Chi-Square: Gender)

Gender	Self	Family	Together	Total
Male	13	4	83	100 (52.1)
Female	25	2	65	92 (47.9)
Total	38	6	148	192
Percentage	19.8	3.1	77.1	100

Chi-Square. 6.32. $P > .05$

Table 2. Disagreement in Final Selection of Spouse (Chi-Square: Gender)

Gender	Self	Family	Self + Friends	Total
Male	39	18	44	101 (52.3)
Female	46	8	38	92 (47.7)
Total	85	26	82	193
Percentage	44	13.5	42.5	100

Chi-Square. 4.45. $P = .107$

Hypothesis II predicted that males would place a higher value than females on youth and physical attraction in their potential spouses. A T-test was computed to compare the means of the two groups so as to evaluate the importance of physical beauty of a potential spouse. Table 3 shows a significant difference between males and females. Men showed a mean evaluation of 2.6, while females had a mean evaluation of 2.1, ($t = 4.67$, $P < .001$). The data supported the hypothesis that Kuwaiti males place higher values on youth and physical beauty in potential spouses.

Table 3: Comparison Level of Preferences in the Choice of a Potential Spouse T-test

Characteristics	Male Subjects		Female Subjects		Sex differences	p
	M	SD	F	SD	T-Value	
Physical beauty	2.6	.71	2.1	.73	4.6	.0001
Religious	3.1	1.3	3.3	1.3	-1.6	.103
Same Education	2.7	.93	2.3	.98	3.3	.0001
Unmarried/ Divorced	3.5	.64	3.0	1.2	3.3	.0001

Hypothesis III predicted that economic status would play a major role in one's freedom of choice when choosing a potential spouse. Results of the Chi-Square test revealed that there was no significant correlation between economic status and freedom to select future spouses. (Chi-Square = 6.7, $P > .05$). Moreover, when a family disagreement occurred there was no significant correlation between income and how the final decision was made (Chi-Square = 3.5, $P > .05$ - Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4. Final Freedom of Choice of in a Potential Spouse (Chi-Square)

Income	Self	Family	Together	Total
500 or less	8	0	34	42 (21.9)
501 - 899	20	5	58	83 (34.2)
900 or more	10	1	56	67 (34.9)
Total	85	6	148	192
Percentage	19.8	3.1	77.1	100

Chi-Square 6.7 $P > .05$ **Table 5. Negative Response in Final the Decision (Chi-Square)**

Income	Self	Family	Together	Total
500 or less	20	5	17	42 (21.8)
501 - 899	34	9	41	84 (43.5)
900 or more	31	12	24	67 (34.7)
Total	85	26	82	139
Percentage	44	13.5	42.5	100

Chi-Square 3.5 $P > .05$

Hypothesis IV proposed that males would value chastity more than females when choosing their potential spouse. Although both Kuwaiti males and females placed a high value on chastity, males rated chastity higher than females. The results were 3.6 (SD.66) for males and 3.1 (SD = .83) for females ($t = 4.7$ $P < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis IV was supported by the results, as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Sexual Differences Regarding the Chastity of the Potential Spouse: (t-test)

	Male		Female		Sex difference	
Characteristic	M	SD	F	SD	T-Value	P
Chastity	3.6	.66	3.1	.83	4.77	.0001

 $P > .0001$

Hypothesis V predicted that religious commitment would be valued more than other characteristics by both Kuwaiti males and females. Religiousness rated higher than each of the other selected characteristics did. Religiousness was found to have higher mean (3.2) than premarital relationships (1.3), ($t = 15.5$, $P < .000$). interrelated was (1.4) ($t = 17.6$, $P < .001$), and social status (2.4) ($t = 7.4$, $P < .001$). Thus, this hypothesis was strongly supported as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Comparison of Religious Values with other Characteristics

Characteristics	Mean	T-Value	P
Religious Value	3.2		
Premarital Relationships	1.3	13.7	$P < .001$
Physically Attractive	2.4	9.06	$P < .001$
Family Income	.78	15.5	$P < .0001$
Social Status	2.4	7.4	$P < .001$

Discussion

The objective of this investigation was to examine the preference of young Kuwaitis in choosing potential spouses. Some differences were found between males and females regarding the selection of a potential spouse. Two hypotheses were not supported, while three other hypotheses were supported.

One in three women was found to have more influence than was predicted in their marital choice. With the increasing opportunities for females to pursue higher education, Kuwaiti women have gained much more power in determining who their potential spouse will be. In fact educational level probably increased equity between the sexes in terms of their marital decision making. Moreover, the rapid socioeconomic changes that Kuwaiti society is experiencing contribute to enhancing the position of women in the society. Kuwaiti females believe in having equal status in the final marital decision. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Kuwaiti males, despite the study findings, are still the primary initiators of the marriage proposal.

The “delegation” type of marriage is still the most common in Kuwait, whereby young men tell their parents about the preferred characteristics of their potential spouse, and the parents (mothers) try to meet their conditions. Therefore, the findings of this study do not pertain to men’s power, but rather provide a means of measuring potential influence in women’s future marital decisions.

On the other hand, income was found to have no significant impact on one’s freedom of choice when choosing a spouse for either sex. The educational level of the sample could be viewed as more important than the economic factor in determining a potential spouse.

One possible explanation is that college students may be subjected to less traditional sex role socialization, when compared to counterparts at lower educational levels, who may be raised in a more traditional way. In addition, because Kuwaiti society is gradually being subjected to the influences of urbanization (Alqashan, 1995), marriage and divorce are coming to be viewed in a more personalized and individualized manner. Indeed, such a change is more acceptable by college students, than others. Thus, such findings do not go beyond the scope of the study’s student sample.

The results related to the importance of “physical beauty” were not surprising, as it was consistent with findings in past research (Al-shalal, 1998; Buss, 1989). Males tend to place more value on physical beauty in a potential spouse than women do. Because men have the primary financial responsibility, they place a premium on the quality of “exchange commodities” and value physical beauty. Such a conclusion is consistent with Al-shalal (1998), Davis (1990) and Murstein (1980) who found that males tend to emphasize sexuality and physical attractiveness in a mate while females tend to emphasize financial security. Certainly, men were found to value youth and physical attraction in potential mates because of their perceived links with fertility and reproduction. Our findings are consistent with other findings on an Moroccan sample (Walter, 1997), which indicated that women do not show a concern for “personal appearance” in men, but the exact opposite was true for men.

Chastity was found in this study to be valued highly by both males

and females when choosing a potential spouse. Nevertheless, males place a greater emphasis on chastity than females. Kuwaitis are restricted after puberty in being able to establish any kind of relationship with the opposite sex. Kuwaiti boys and girls are segregated during their school years. Even at the Kuwait University they are surrounded by ground rules of propriety and modesty. Chastity for young Kuwaitis is a sign of self-control and self-respect for one's self and others. Premarital sex is prohibited. Traditionally, however, premarital sex for girls is evaluated as more deviant than for boys. It is looked upon as "dishonoring" to the girl and her family's reputation. As stated by Saadawi (1980), "A girl who does not preserve her virginity is liable to be punished with physical death, if not moral death, or at least with being divorced if she is found out at the time of her marriage." Chastity for both males and females means that each spouse is willing and committed to building a strong family relationship. For males in particular the chastity of his potential spouse represents the honor of the girl and her family.

Furthermore, the importance of religious commitment in one's potential spouse was demonstrated. Religious commitment was rated higher than other important factors such as love, physical attraction, family status and economic status. This finding is consistent with the call of Prophet Mohammed, who emphasized that marriage partners be highly committed to the Islamic religion. Religious commitment for males refers to the readiness of a potential spouse to be responsible and committed to the marriage, and to raise the family in the traditional way. Women, view religious commitment in terms of chastity, commitment to the marriage, responsibility, maturity, and willingness to build a strong family.

In summary, since Kuwaiti society is undergoing a rapid socio-economic change, this study of the characteristics of potential spouses found mixed results. The study concludes that Kuwaiti women believe that they have say in determining who their potential spouse will be. This finding is different from past reports showing that women had a little say in their marital futures. Today female Kuwaiti college students believe that they have more say in their final marriage decision.

Another important conclusion of this study was that economic status had no significant impact on the degree of freedom in the final decision of selecting a potential spouse. This finding may be due to the

similarity of the sample's educational status. Furthermore, the "physical beauty" of a potential spouse was more highly valued by men than by women. Finally, religious commitment was found to be the most sought after trait in one's potential spouse for both males and females. Although some people may see religion as the opposite of modernization; Islam as a way of life, was found to be highly significant in the choice of a potential spouse for Kuwait University students. In other words, it might be said that social change in the area of mate selection has not been as great as indicated by the press, feared by the parents, and perhaps by the youth; (Hudson & Henze, 1969).

This study was intended to be exploratory in that it sought to discuss the most preferred characteristics of the Kuwaiti potential spouse. This study will assist marriage counselors and family educators in dealing with marital issues which relate to spouse preferences. Additional national studies are needed, especially on non-student samples, since the present findings cannot be generalized beyond the scope of the Kuwait University sample. Finally, it would be interesting to investigate whether the findings of this study are similar to other countries in the Arabian Gulf, as well as in the Middle East region.

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الاختيار الزوجي لدى الشباب الكويتي

د. حمود فهد القشعان

كلية الآداب - جامعة الكويت

ملخص الدراسة

شهدت السنوات الأخيرة تغيرات واتساع في حرية الاختيار الزوجي بالمجتمع الكويتي . فبعد أن كان قرار الزواج بيد الأسرة بدرجة كاملة وفي حدود القرابة أو نطاق القبيلة الواحدة، حدث تحول نتيجة التغيرات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية التي صاحبت عملية اكتشاف البترول في الكويت، الأمر الذي أدى إلى حدوث تحول وتغير كبير في دور الأسرة من جهة وحجمها من جهة أخرى، الأمر الذي ترتب عليه مرونة واتساع في عملية الاختيار لشباب هذا الجيل لشريك الحياة من خارج نطاق الإطار التقليدي الممثل في نطاق الأسرة المحدودة وحدود القبيلة.

أجريت هذه الدراسة لمعرفة معايير وتفضيلات الاختيار الزوجي لدى عينة من طلبة جامعة الكويت، إذ احتوت على دراسة خمسة فرضيات حاولت التأكد منها مرتبة حسب التالي:

- ١ - الذكور الكويتيون لديهم حرية أكبر في الاختيار الزوجي مقارنة بالإناث الكويتيات.
- ٢ - الذكور الكويتيون يهتمون بدرجة أكبر بمعايير الجمال والسن مقارنة بالإناث الكويتيات.
- ٣ - الأسر ذات الدخل المرتفع تعطي حرية أكبر لأفرادها في عملية الاختيار مقارنة بالأسر الأقل دخلاً.
- ٤ - معيار العفة له أهمية بدرجة أشد لدى الذكور مقارنة بالإناث.
- ٥ - الأخلاق والالتزام الديني يأتي كأولوية في معايير الاختيار الزوجي قبل المعايير الأخرى.

وللتأكد من صدق تلك الفرضيات، تم اختيار عينة الدراسة التي بلغت ١٩٣ طالباً وطالبة يدرسون في مقررات اختياري عام (المدخل للخدمة الاجتماعية ومدخل علم نفس) في جامعة الكويت، وبعد تحليل البيانات بواسطة برنامج SPSS أشارت النتائج إلى ما يلي: رغم التغيرات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية لوضع الفتاة الكويتية، إلا أن الشباب الكويتي لا زال يمتلك القوة والقرار الأكبر في عملية الاختيار الزوجي. كذلك لم يكن هناك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في

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معايير الاختيار وفقاً للمستوى الاقتصادي للأسرة ولعل المستوى التعليمي للعينة هو المؤثر في غياب تلك الفروق. ومن النتائج الأخرى تشديد الذكور على معيار الجمال وصغر السن للزوجة عند عملية الاختيار الزوجي، في حين أكدت الفتيات على الدرجة الوظيفية ومستوى الدخل. كذلك كان لمعيار العفة اهتمام كبير بين الذكور والإناث وتشدد الذكور عليها بدرجة أكبر. أخيراً كان لمعيار الالتزام الأخلاقي المرتبط بالدين الأهمية الكبرى مقارنة بالمعايير التي احتوتها الاستبانة المستخدمة في الدراسة والتي أظهرت درجة عالية من الصدق والثبات.

هذه الدراسة عبارة عن دراسة استكشافية لمعايير الزواج لدى الشباب في المجتمع الكويتي ستساعد الباحثين والأخصائيين المهتمين بشؤون الأسرة والتربويين، لتقديم الإرشاد الزوجي للجيل الجديد، وعليه فإن إجراء دراسة على عينة من خارج إطار طلبة الجامعة أمر مهم لتعميم النتائج إضافة إلى أهمية إجراء دراسة مقارنة على مستوى دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي.