

# **The Relation of the Shahed Students Perception of their Campus Environment and Individual and Familial Characteristics with social adjustment**

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**Abstract\*:**

Object: The present study was carried out to observe the Shahed students\*\* in the campus environment and study their individual and familial characteristics in correlation to their social adjustment.

Method: The research subjects were 315 female and male college students; they were selected through the proportionate stratified sampling method from Tehran universities' students. The used instrument to data collection was the California Personality inventory and a researcher- made inventory to measure Shahed students' perceptions from the campus environment and demographic characteristics. The data was analyzed by using hierarchical regression analysis.

Result: The findings showed that the students' satisfaction of the Shahed quota in the university entrance exam, the professors' reaction and other students' positive attitude towards them, as well as their marriage status were the most predictive factors for their social adjustment. There was no significant correlation between the family variables such as the mother's re-marriage with Shahed students' social adjustment.

Discussion: Possible causes of non-significant relation between family variables and social adjustment have been discussed.

Key words: Shahed students, social adjustment, individual characteristic, mother re-marriage, Shahed quota satisfaction, campus environment.

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\*\*Shahed students: Students whose fathers were martyred during the imposed War of Iran- Iraq and other students namely non-Shahed students.

## **Introduction**

In the Islamic Rep. of Iran, it is considered as a great success for the youth to enter the university. That of course, could bring different changes and issues in their life, such as the adjustment to a new environment, and so on. Leong and Bonz (1997) reminded entering to the university as a stressful life experience for the youngsters.

In the present paper, the correlation between Shahed students perception of the campus environment; the individual and familial characteristics; with their social adjustment has been studied. First the backgrounds of the related factors, such as the student perception of the universities, psychological atmosphere like optimistic and pessimistic views, have been evaluated. Then, the affective factors such as the mother's re-marriage, the individual features of the Shahed children, and the effect of loss of father on the social adjustment and on the psychological health have been studied.

The negative attitude of the other students towards Shahed students and also the comparison of the self-confidence in between them and non-Shahed students are not focused in researches.

The issue of the optimistic and pessimistic students' perception from others has been studied by Chang, Sanna, and Yong (2003). They have investigated the relationship between student's optimistic (good expectations) and pessimistic (bad expectations) with students' life satisfaction and depression. They brought other researchers to a new topic as a relationship of the optimistic and pessimistic and psychological adjustment. For example, Chang and D'Zurilla (1997, sited in Chang, Sanna, and Young, 2003) found positive relationship between optimistic and life satisfaction, and pessimistic with depression symptoms.

In a cross-cultural study among American and Korean students, there was a positive correlation between optimism and life satisfaction. While a negative correlation observed between optimism and depression. Between pessimism and depression, a positive correlation has been observed and between pessimism with life satisfaction a negative correlation. Those correlations were statistically significant and the results between American and Korean students were all the same (Chan, Sanna & Young 2003).

Family is the most important educational environment that has a great role on the children's psychological, social, and physical health. Therefore, losing one of the parents after incidents like divorce, death, or war could tremendously affect the family structure. The results of the Guidubaldi, Perry, and Cleminshaw's research (1983)

showed that girls and boy's cognition abilities, specially their problem solving skills; and qualitative skills have been greatly affected by the absence of father. Children who live in families that for any reason, fathers are absent, have lower school performance, lower I.Q and school achievement, they are more distracted and careless in class, compared to children who live with both parents.

Research findings indicated the positive effects of the presence of the step-fathers and step-mothers on boy's adjustment, but negative on girls. For example, Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1979) showed that the effect of the mother's remarriage on their children is related to their age and sex. It proved that for younger kids, the adjustment is easier than children between 9 to 12 years old. Santrock and Warshak (1979) showed that boys between ages from 6 up to 11 who live with step-father are more mature, more adaptable and have better social skills, compared to those who live with a single mother. These results were probably due to the fact that most of the boys were happy to have a new step- father and were emotionally dependent to him (Wallerstien, Kelly 1980).

In addition, step-fathers are usually capable and pay more attention to their step-children. Mothers who married again usually are happier and feel more secure than those who did not. Because they have fewer responsibilities, less financial problems, and they do not feel alone anymore. Therefore, they spend more time with their children. They are less preoccupied and can better express their feelings to their son. Regarding girls, it is different; researches indicated that girls who have a step-father do not have better conditions; they are more stressed out comparing to girls who live in normal families (Santrock & Warshak, 1979).

Researches in Iran showed that children's adjustment after the mother's remarriage does not only depend on their age and sex, but also on their personality, the attention paid to the children and their parenting style also. The results of the research conducted on Shahed children whose mothers re-married are not the same. Heidary (1997) evaluated the effective psychological, social and educational factors on academic achievement and psychological status of Shahed high school students, in the city of Hamadan. He found that, even though the percentage of depression and school failure for the Shahed students is more than non-shahed students; the mother's remarriage factor had no significant effect on the school student failure, self-respect and depression.

Researches conducted on the effect of the mother remarriage on Shahed children according to their gender, gave different results. For example, Rahimi (2002) found about family adaptation of girls and boys Shahed students in the city of Birjand

(Khorassan Province) high schools, that there is a significant and positive correlation between the presence of a step-father and the maladjustment of Shahed boys. Asgari (2002) studied high school Shahed students and their mothers. He investigated the effect of the mother's remarriage on their children's adaptability at psycho-social and academic achievement. The results showed that, Shahed's widow's remarriage decrease their obsessive-compulsive disorder, interpersonal sensitivity, phobia, paranoid thoughts, anxiety, and depression. However, it does not observed significant relationship between their children's social adjustment and psychological status. In addition, there is an obvious and positive correlation between mother's remarriage and Shahed children's school failure. One of the aims of this paper was to analyze the correlation between mother remarriage on Shahed student social adjustment. Moayed's findings (1995) also confirmed that Shahed widow's remarriage had positive effects on Shahed students; but negative effects on the school achievements of the children of 12 to 16 years old.

Some of the researches such as Jahad Daneshgahi Ahwaz (1982) on Shahed childhood indicate that children aged from 10 to 15 became isolated. On the other hand, Dodge (1995) found that there are no significant differences between the groups of Shahed and non-Shahed students of Marivan City from the age of 15 to 18, considering their conduct disorder and self-respect. Other findings of the same research show that regarding the two above mentioned aspects, there is no difference between Shahed students whose mother re-married and those whose mother were not.

The relationship between the age of the children at college level and their father's martyrdom or the mother re-marriage and the social adjustment has been less taken into consideration. In the present research, to evaluate the perception of the Shahed students of the university's environment, issues such as ordinary students' positive opinion, the attitude of the professors towards Shahed students were considered. Shahed students feelings, either offensive or not towards other students' issues regarding their Shahed quota, have been studied. The correlation of these factors on Shahed students' social adjustment has been analyzed.

## **Method**

The present research is a survey study with regression and correlation statistical method. The subjects consist of 315 Shahed college students (168 females & 147 males) from Tehran's different universities, who have been selected with proportionate stratified sampling method.

## **Instruments**

A) California personality inventory: To testify the collage students' social adjustment, the California personality inventory has been used. This inventory measures the profile of individual and social adjustment, and it is prepared by Thrope, Clarck and Tiegs (1939, sited in Khodayaree et al, 2002). The inventory has two parts: self adjustment and social adjustment. In present research used social adjustment part. This part includes 6 subscales which are as follows: 1) social standards, 2) social skills, 3) anti-social tendencies, 4) family relationships, 5) educational relationships, and 6) social relationships. All the subscales are marked by Yes = 1 or No = 0 answers.

In the present research to examine validity, the factor analysis method has been used. The results, showed six factors that explain 68% of total variance. The KMO = 0.99; that demonstrates the capability of sampling. The reliability of the test has been checked by the Cronbach Alfa coefficient and the amount for the Alfa coefficient is equal to 0.98, which shows the suitable internal homogeneity of the inventory.

B) researcher-made questionnaire for the individual and familial characteristics and the perception of the campus atmosphere. This questionnaire is used to verify the family characteristics and their acceptance as Shahed students at the university. This questionnaire includes two sections, the first part deals with the questions of demography and family of these students such as the age at the time they lost their father, and at the mother re-marriage. The second part includes five questions that define the criteria that make them be accepted as Shahed students, their satisfaction and their adjustment.

All these questions are answered by Yes or No and used as dummy coding in calculation. All the research tools have been implemented in groups.

## **Results**

First the students' descriptive statistics with regarding their individual, educational, and families characteristics are presented.

Table 1- Descriptive statistics on individual characteristics of the Shahed students (N=315)

Characteristic		Frequencies	Percentage
Marriage status	Single	276	84/2
	Married	46	14/2
Sex	Female	168	53/3
	Male	147	46/7
Characteristics		mean	SD
Age (present)		22/2	2/66
Age (at the time of the Death of the father)		3	2/7

The Table 1 shows the frequency, gender ratio, their marriage status, their present age and the age at the loss of their fathers.

Table 2 - Descriptive statistics of the sample group according to the Shahed students' major and their college degree in Teheran universities.

College Degree	Frequencies	Percentage	Major	Frequencies	Percentage
College diploma	2	5/0	Human science	193	61
B.sc	290	92/7	Basic science	18	5
Msc./ MA	8	2/3	Technical & Engineering	60	19
MD.	15	4/5	Medical	32	10/2
			art	1	3/0
			agriculture	4	1/2
			others	7	2/3
			No answer	3	1

As it shown in the Table 2, the majority of the Shahed students (92.7%) are studying at Bsc level. Regarding the major, 61% registered in human sciences, 19% in engineering and 10.2% in medical sciences, and the rest in other fields.

Table 3- Descriptive statistics of the re-marriage of the mother of the Shahed students.

Re-married		Single mother		No answer	
frequency	percentage	frequency	percentage	frequency	percentage
98	31/1	208	66/1	9	2/8

As it is shown in Table.3, 31.1% of the mothers of Shahed students' re-married after the loss of their husband and 66.1% stayed single.

Table 4- Descriptive data on the acceptance of the title of Shahed student by shahed students

Students' understanding on the university's atmosphere	Yes		No	
	frequency	percentage	frequency	percentage
Discontent at learning the Shahed quota	132	41/9	183	58/1
Positive opinion of the other students	228	73	87	27
Positive behavior of the professors	153	48/4	162	51/6
Good relationship with the other students	178	56/6	137	43/4
Believe in equal opportunity for all students Shahed and non-Shahed	180	57/4	135	42/6

As it is shown in the table 4, 41.9% of the Shahed students declared that the other students became discontent when they learn that they are Shahed students, 58.1% said that it was not important for them, on the other side, 73% of the Shahed students declared that the other students had a positive opinion about them, meanwhile 27% of them think the contrary. 48.4% said that professors have a positive behavior towards them, and 56.6% said that the other students have a good relationship with them but 43.4% think the contrary.

Regarding academic achievements, 57.4 % believe that their academic achievements are as good as ordinary students, but 42.5% said that they have lower results than the other students.

Evaluating the relation between the research variables and the student social adjustment using the following items: positive opinion regarding the Shahed quota, positive attitude towards Shahed students, professors' attitude towards Shahed Students, and the human sciences major comparing to the other majors help to understand the perception of the Shahed students, of the university's atmosphere (model 1 in the regression). The age of the student at the loss of the father, the re-marriage of the mother, the level of education of the father and mothers as family' variables of the students (model 2 in regression). The student marriage statuses as individual variables (model 3 in regression) have been added.

Table 5- Hierarchical regression for Shahed students, variables of the perception of the university atmosphere, familial variables, and individual variables.

models	Regression coefficients				Variance analysis		Model summaries	
	Models variables	$\beta$	T	Sig.	F	Sig.	R	R2
Model 1	satisfaction to Shahed quota	0/146	2/06	0/04	4/60	0/001	0/283	0/080
	Other students positive opinion	0/153	2/28	0/02				
	Professors' opinion	0/149	2/08	0/03				
	Human Science major	-0/014	-0/19	0/84				
Model 2	Age of the student at the loss of the father	-0/027	-0/39	0/69	2/37	0/01	0/29	0/084
	Mothers' re-marriage	0/051	0/74	0/45				
	Fathers' education	-0/068	-0/77	0/44				
	Mothers' education	0/020	0/22	0/81				
Model 3	Student marriage status	0/22	3/10	0/0002	2/66	0/003	0/355	0/126
	Gender	-0/02	-0/38	0/70				
	Age	-0/10	-1/31	0/18				

The regression coefficient value in model 1 is 0.28 for variables related to students' opinion about universities atmosphere. By increasing the model 2 variables (Families factors) the regression coefficient value raised to 1%. By adding up the model 3 variables (individual factors of the Shahed students) the regression coefficient value rose to 6% and reached  $R = 0.35$ . Regression equation that predicts Shahed student's adjustment is statistically significant at alpha level = 0.05 is as follows:

$$\text{Social adjustment} = 0.22 (\text{students marital status}) + 0.149 (\text{professors positive attitude}) + 0.15 (\text{positive opinion of the other students}) + 0.14 (\text{positive acceptance of the Shahed quota})$$

### Discussion

The findings of the present research showed that there were three variables out of the other variables related to the Shahed students' perception of the university atmosphere that have significant relation with their social adjustment. The first variable is the positive acceptance of the Shahed quota. The question was as follows: Whether or not the common students were discontent at learning that students whose father died during the imposed war were enjoying the Shahed quota.

The second variable was the influence and importance of the positive attitude of the common students towards Shahed students on their social adjustment.

The third variable was the positive attitude of the professors towards Shahed students; in fact, this variable predicts the social adjustment of the Shahed Students.

As it was presented in the regression equation, in the findings section, three out of the four significant variables that predict the student's social adjustment were related to the Shahed students' understanding of the university's atmosphere.

The fourth one was the students' marital status. The lack of predictability of family variables and Shahed students' social adjustment expresses the lack of the influence of the family demography variables on their social adjustment.

These findings were consistent by other researchers such as Heidary (1997) and Asgari (2002). Heidary found out that the mother re-marriage factor has no significant relation with Shahed students' school achievements, self-respect and depression. Asgari also could not find any significant relation between the mothers' re-marriage factor, the psychological and social adjustment of the Shahed students.

Among the individual and familial variables of the Shahed students and their perception of the university's atmosphere, the last one has the most important part in the prediction of their social adjustment. There are few researches about Shahed students' positive or negative understanding of the university atmosphere. Even though the university atmosphere can play an important part on the positive or negative understandings of the Shahed students, their optimism and pessimism may influence their understanding.

The present research has more or less the same results as Chang, Sanna and Young's (2003) works. The interaction of pessimism and optimism with depression or satisfaction of life in Korean and American students' has been studied.

As the family variables such as mothers' re-marriage, and also mother's or father's education have a significant relation upon Shahed student's adjustment so the eventual reason of adjustment be explained by their entry into youth with its consequences on the personality, and the wish to be more emotionally independent. The important issue in the present research is the effective factors and their affections on Shahed students' life style.

We suggest that further researches by first extending the understanding scale of the students to the university's atmosphere study the relation between optimism and pessimism of Shahed students and their understanding of the university's atmosphere.

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