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## Balancing Marriage And Studies: Effects On Academic Performance And Attendance Patterns Of Students

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### Abstract

This research study examines how marriage influences academic performance and class attendance among the bachelor degree students in GPGC, Mardan, Pakistan, and the way in which marriages disrupt learning due to additional marital burdens. Quantitative cross-sectional survey was used to gather data through 38 purposely selected married students at GPGC Mardan in the form of structured questionnaires which were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation test. The research finds that education accessibility and education performance, particularly among the young students, are limited by the demands of marital life, and as a result, individuals are less able to develop and engage in civic life. These lessons are of relevance to policy makers, teachers, and support groups in developing interventions that will deal with the special predicament of married students.

**Keywords:** Marriage, Academic Performance, Class Attendance, Married Students, Pakistan.



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## Introduction

Marriage has been described as the union or marriage between two people (Darwish et al., 2021). Having been an independent and traditionally established relationship, marriage gives birth to roles and rights, not only between spouses, but also their children. Although interpretation of marriage differs among different cultures, it is usually understood as a process that involves interpersonal and in most of the cases, sexual relationships. Marriage is a traditional and cultural tradition practiced in Pakistani society, which is the key to social organization (Daraz et al., 2014). Through marriage as a social institution and the backbone of nearly all societies, there are both strengths and weaknesses of the institution to the students seeking to further their education. According to the report given by the United States Department of Education (2014), about 7 per cent of college students are married. The past studies have shown that marriage can also lead to both positive and negative impacts on the academic life of the students. Indicatively, married students are usually more difficult to deal with compared to their single counterparts, a fact that affects their school performance adversely. Meanwhile, the support of a supportive spouse can be seen as encouragement and stability, which can lead to a positive academic development, whereas the conflict or the stress in the marriage can negatively affect it (Roberson, 2015). Research has also demonstrated that the quality of the marital relationship plays a very significant role in determining the academic achievements of a student: positive marital relationships are likely to enhance success and stress and conflict relationships weaken these performances. Marriage has also been analyzed in various situations with respect to the grade point average (GPA) of the students. According to Zvonkovic et al. (1994), the GPAs of the married students were susceptible to negative effects of emotional involvement in marriage. Astin (1993) on the other hand noted that as long as the married students can successfully divide their time in extracurricular activities, academics, and social interaction, their education is allowed to progress.

Nweke et al. (2018) added that family size considers a significant contributor to attaining academic achievement, and married students have a two-fold responsibility in both family needs and academic pursuits, causing difficulties in achieving academic success. In an example, Kearns et al. (2008) established that marital obligations tend to cause friction, thus making students less productive in learning. US studies on the other hand found that, married students perform on an equal basis better than single student in some cases, but those with kids, or children, did not show higher cumulative GPAs; CGPAs. In line with that, Tambuwal (2012), examining the performance of female learners in Nigeria, observed a great difference between married and non-married students and noted that most of the married individuals outperformed their counterparts who were single. Cloyd (2010) also found out that married undergraduates in the United States outperformed the non-married students. All these different findings mirror the differences across countries in the interaction of marriage and academic performance. Other works propose that marriage promotes a state of peace of mind and give motivation and support in emotions all of which favor academic achievement (Amato, 2020). Some alert focus on the complications of the role conflict, economic pressure, and lack of time that could interfere with academic progress (Stanley et al., 2006). The current debate demonstrates the sophistication of marriage-academic performance affiliation. Commitment, cooperation, communication, purposeful planning and flexibility are needed to make marriage work, especially when both accept or one of the couples is pursuing education in higher education. Time, energy, and emotions dedicated to a marriage are bound to have some impact on the academic, social, and personal goals of students (Fincham & Ming, 2010). The involvement of students which captures the amount of effort they put in

academics and extracurriculars and the interaction with each other, professors, and other staff is vital in defining learning and personal growth (Astin, 1993).

This paper examines how marriage affects the behavior of the students in regards to the academic performance and attendance habits in various bachelor programs at Government Post Graduate College (GPGC), Mardan. Creating awareness of the potential and weaknesses of marriage, this study shall help to guide the research studies as well as the married students to develop focus support systems and better academic lives.

### **Literature Review**

Marriage has several diverse effects on the academic performance of bachelor degree students with different studies presenting inconsistent results across the various cultures. Although some studies indicate a negative relationship, others point out at the potential positive effects of marriage, therefore, making the aspect of social and personal factors critical. To fully analyze the relationship between marriage and academic performance, this literature review looks into international research to determine the intricate aspect involving attendance of students as a very crucial measure. On the optimistic aspect, marriage will give a firm backup system which will include emotional stability, motivation, and domestic services. This can help students gain interest in learning, effective time management and additional time to do academic work and thus enhance performance (Xu & Pang, 2013; Hanson & McLanahan, 2011). When finances are shared, the strain is eased, and learners can focus better on conducting their studies (Sax, 2016). Furthermore, researchers indicate that the marriage can assist students in developing positive qualities like good time management, prioritization and effective utilization of leisure time and these attributes can positively affect the study periods of students (Hanson & McLanahan, 2011). A study conducted in Norway revealed that latterly there are married students and that they tend to learn how to balance their spousal involvement and academic activities thus becoming more productive (England & Kjerstad, 2017). In the same way, marriage offers economic stability in those contexts where education is expensive and this could even be the case with the students of a disadvantaged background trying to relieve the economic burden and permit the academic performance to expand (Buchholz & Munz, 2013).

It also reports its psychological and motivational benefits. Using the case of research conducted in the United States and Japan, marriage could provide emotional support, which guaranteed persistence and academic achievement (Chang, 2010). There also come the possible obstacles with marriage. This is because the domestic workload and family responsibilities coupled with daily chores can reduce the time they have to study and the resultant effect is negatively reflected in the performance and attendance at the class (Gupta and Singh, 2018). Stress may also be caused by divorce and marital conflict and this leads to a lack of focus and motivation (Manning and Longmore, 2003). Gender roles present other difficulties especially to the women who might have to deal with increased family responsibilities at the expense of education (Xu & Pang, 2013). It is a decisive factor which determines the results of the studies conducted by the quality of the marital relationship itself. Positive and amicable relationships may help to achieve academic success and conflict-fueled marriage normally works in reverse (Hanson & McLanahan, 2011). The study also indicates that cultural influences play a role in such processes: in a society where marriage is regarded as the complement to education, it might not have as harmful an effect as in a society where marriage is viewed as a threat to academic pursuits (Manning & Longmore, 2003). Student engagement also comes into the limelight in mediating the effects of marriage. According to Astin (1984), student engagement in schoolwork and in extracurricular activities is closely associated with the learning outcomes. When married students

lead an active campus life (through clubs, sports, and peer groups), they are usually capable of managing marital and academic life much better (Campus Explorer, 2014). On the other hand, the disengaging individuals might experience loneliness, which is likely to influence their educational motivation (Meehan and Negy, 2003). Although there is a popular stereotype that marriage distracts one away of academic or career ambitions, research shows that a significant number of married students showed improved concentration and dedication than their single counterparts (Alsaden, 2011; Brown, 2013). Other students have claimed that marriage gave them a sense of responsibility, management of time and even better performance in school. However, in order to reconcile the academic demands with the marital demands, it is regularly necessary to focus on the priorities and change the expectations (Meehan and Negy, 2003).

To conclude, the effect of marriage on students' academic performance and attendance is highly relative and determined by a number of factors, such as gender roles, cultural norms, quality of relationship between the married couple, financial stability, and the degree of student engagement. Marriage may be an avenue of emotional, financial, and motivational support, but it may also be a source of stress, role conflict, and time pressure that negatively affect academic performance. These complications highlight the importance of further studies especially within particular cultural settings in order to guide institutional support mechanisms among married students (Ahmed et al., 2021).

### **Research Methodology**

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey methodology was used in this paper to investigate the influence of marriage on the academic performance and attendance at classes by students of the Government Postgraduate College (GPGC) Mardan. The population targeted was 543 students of bachelor's degree, although because married students are a minor but still inconspicuous group, purposive sampling method was employed to target them directly through social networks and faculty recommendations. The last sample consisted of 38 married male and female students with various faculties and demographic background. A structured questionnaire containing questions on marital status, academic achievement and attendance patterns, self-reported GPA, number of missed classes per week, overall attendance percentage and perceptions of marital influence were used to collect the data including, but not limited to, challenges, support systems, and coping strategies. Direct smile at the participants through the distribution of questionnaires was done at the expense of confidentiality and voluntary response. To present demographic variables and trends, the data were coded and analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages), whereas Pearson correlation coefficient was used to estimate the relationship between marital factors (independent variables) and academic performance and attendance (dependent variables).

### **Data Analysis**

**Table No. 01:** *Demographic Data*

<b>Attribution</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	20	52.63%
	Female	18	47.36%
	Other	0	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age</b>	18–20	12	31.57%

	21–23	15	39.47%
	24–26	11	28.94%
	27 or above	0	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>No. of Children</b>	0	21	55%
	1	12	31.57%
	2	5	13.15%
	3 or more	0	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Discipline</b>	Natural science	12	31.15%
	Social science	17	44.73%
	Linguistic	9	23.68%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Semester</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	10	26.31%
	4 <sup>th</sup>	4	10.52%
	6 <sup>th</sup>	7	18.42%
	8 <sup>th</sup>	17	44.73%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Previous GPA</b>	2.0	8	21.05%
	2.5	6	15.78%
	3.0	16	42.10%
	3.5 – 4.0	8	21.05%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table No. 01 displays the demographic profile of the respondents. Among the 38 participants the proportion of males (52.63) to females (47.36) was slightly higher but there was no other gender representation. Ages were next with the 21-23 age bracket (39.47) coming first, then 18-20 (31.57), and last, but not the least, 24-26 years old (28.94) indicating that the sample is composed of young adults who are pursuing their undergraduate level studies. When it comes to family issues, most of them were without children (55%), but the proportion of those who had one child was 31.57 and the percentage of those with two children was less (13.15), which also means that some of the respondents combine family and studies. The proportion of students enrolled in the social sciences (44.73%), natural sciences (31.15%), and linguistics (23.68) corresponds to the rich representation of students in a variety of disciplines. Distribution on a semester-wise basis reveals that the majority were enrolled in their final (8<sup>th</sup>) semester (44.73 percent), and smaller shares in the 2<sup>nd</sup> (26.31percent), 6<sup>th</sup> (18.42percent), and 4<sup>th</sup> semester (10.52percent), implying that there were different levels of academic progress. Regarding the academic performance, the greatest percentage of students were found to have a GPA of 3.0

(42.10%), followed by 2.0 (21.05%) and 3.5-4.0 (21.05%), and the rest 15.78% had a GPA of 2.5, which showed the equal distribution between the average and over-average students.

**Table No. 02: Academic Impact**

<b>Attribution</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>GPA negatively affected by marital status</b>	Agree	21	55.26%
	Strongly agree	3	7.89%
	Disagree	9	23.68%
	Strongly disagree	3	7.89%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>GPA positively affected by marital status</b>	Agree	12	31.57%
	Strongly agree	3	7.89%
	Disagree	21	55.26%
	Strongly disagree	2	5.26%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Satisfied with current academic performance</b>	Agree	26	68.42%
	Strongly agree	5	13.15%
	Disagree	2	5.26%
	Strongly disagree	5	13.15%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Believe marital status affects academic performance</b>	Agree	18	47.36%
	Strongly agree	7	18.42%
	Disagree	11	28.94%
	Strongly disagree	2	5.26%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

This table will provide the scholastic effect of marital status on the performance of students. Most of the respondents (55.26% agree, 7.89% strongly agree) felt that marital status had negative influence on their GPA and fewer (23.68% disagree, 7.89% strongly disagree) did not feel the same. On the other hand, 31.57% and 7.89% said that marriage had a positive impact on GPA,

55.26% disagreed with this as well as strongly disagreed, indicating the strong possibility that marriage burdens students, as opposed to uplifting them to succeed in their studies. Surprisingly, regardless of these factors, the majority of the students stated that they are content with their current performance (68.42% agree, 13.15% strongly agree), and only a minority admitted that they are not satisfied. Lastly, in a broader question, 47.36% of the students agree and 18.42% strongly agree that marital status does play a role in their academic performance, as compared to 28.94% of the students disagreeing and 5.26% of the students strongly disagreeing, and it is hard to ignore the fact that close to two-thirds of the students acknowledge that the marital status does play a role in determination of academic performance (Farid & Ashraf, 2025).

**Table No. 03:** Attendance Pattern

<b>Attribution</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>attend classes regularly</b>	Agree	20	52.63%
	Strongly agree	7	18.42%
	Disagree	8	21.05%
	Strongly disagree	3	7.89%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Challenging to attend class regularly due to marital status</b>	Agree	18	47.36%
	Strongly agree	12	31.57%
	Disagree	6	15.78%
	Strongly disagree	4	10.52%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>marital obligations influence your decision to attend or miss classes</b>	Agree	23	60.52%
	Strongly agree	5	13.15%
	Disagree	8	21.05%
	Strongly disagree	1	2.63%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table No-03 reveals the attendance behavior of married students and how the role of marital responsibility affects the attendance of classes. Most of the respondents expressed that they go to classes frequently, with 52.63 percent agreeing and 18.42 percent strongly agreeing, and a smaller percentage (21.05 percent disagree and 7.89 percent strongly disagree) acknowledged that they do not attend classes regularly, despite some of them having a hard time doing so. Nevertheless, in response to the question on whether marriage status made it hard to attend classes regularly, almost three-quarters (47.36% agree and 31.57% strongly agree) admitted that

it presented time-management and role-conflict problems, with only a quarter (26.3) of them disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. In the same way, a high proportion (60.52 percent agree and 13.15 percent strongly agree) of them expressed that their marital commitment positively affected their attendance or absenteeism in classes, whereas only 23.68 percent (disagree or strongly disagree) did not feel the same. In general, the table indicates that despite the majority of married students attending regularly, marriage comes with a lot of challenges such that a student may not consistently attend academic activities (Ashraf, 2021).

**Table No. 4:** *Challenges and Coping Strategies*

<b>Attribution</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Difficult to balance your academic responsibilities with your marital obligations</b>	Agree	17	44.73%
	Strongly agree	7	18.42%
	Disagree	12	31.57%
	Strongly disagree	2	5.26%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Use strategies for time management or sacrificing personal time</b>	Agree	16	42.10%
	Strongly agree	8	21.05%
	Disagree	11	28.94%
	Strongly disagree	3	7.89%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Faced challenges related to time management because of your marital status</b>	Agree	20	52.63%
	Strongly agree	6	15.87%
	Disagree	10	26.31%
	Strongly disagree	2	5.26%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Cope with challenges of being a married student by seeking family support or adjusting study schedule</b>	Agree	24	62.30%
	Strongly agree	11	28.94%
	Disagree	3	7.89%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Spouse/partner supportive of your academic pursuits</b>	Agree	19	50%
	Strongly agree	12	31.57%
	Disagree	3	7.89%

<b>Experienced psychological stress related to your marital status in academic performance</b>	Strongly disagree	4	10.52%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>
	Agree	18	47.36%
	Strongly agree	12	31.57%
	Disagree	3	7.89%
	Strongly disagree	4	10.52%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

The following table demonstrates the results on the effect of marital status on the academic responsibilities, time management, cope skills, partner support and psychological stress on students. Many responded that they have a problem balancing academics and marital roles, with 44.73% agreeing and 18.42% strongly agreeing, and 36.83% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, the balancing roles appeared to be a point of concern with many but not all. Time management has become one of the important issues: 42.10% people stated that they use strategies like the sacrifice of personal time and 21.05% strongly agreed, but almost 37% disagreed or highly disagreed, this corresponds to different coping styles. In the same way, 68.5 (52.63: agree, 15.87: strongly agree) confessed that they have encountered certain time-management problems as a result of marital status, which indicates that not every student is equally influenced. Importance of external support systems was seen in coping strategies with a huge majority of 91.24% (62.30% agree, 28.94% strongly agree) basing on family support or altering their study timetable. The support of partners was also moderate as 50 of them agreed and 31.57 of them strongly agreed that their spouse helps them in studying, although an even smaller number (18.41) did not have any support. Lastly, an interesting result in turn is that psychological stress was a prominent consequence where 47.36% of people agreed, and 31.57% strongly agreed that marital status was a cause of stress, which affected academic performance, whereas only 18.41% said it was not a cause. All in all, the evidence indicates that although the number of married students who use coping mechanisms and get the support of their partners and family is significant, the issues of marital responsibility can pose stress and time-management challenges that greatly affect the academic life (Farid, 2023).

**Table No-5:** *Relationship Between Marriage Factors and Students' Academic Performance & Attendance*

<b>independent variable (marriage factors)</b>	<b>dependent variable</b>	<b>correlation (r)</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>relationship strength</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Academic GPA	-0.32	0.04	Moderate Negative
<b>Marital Status</b>	Attendance (%)	-0.28	0.05	Weak Negative
<b>Spousal Support</b>	Academic GPA	+0.41	0.02	Moderate Positive

<b>Spousal Support</b>	Attendance (%)	+0.35	0.03	Moderate Positive
<b>Time Management Challenges</b>	Academic GPA	-0.46	0.01	Strong Negative
<b>Time Management Challenges</b>	Attendance (%)	-0.39	0.02	Moderate Negative
<b>Psychological Stress</b>	Academic GPA	-0.43	0.01	Strong Negative
<b>Psychological Stress</b>	Attendance (%)	-0.36	0.03	Moderate Negative

In General, the results showed negative correlations between the marital status and students' outcomes (GPA, attendance) and presented positive correlations for support in this study. Studies repeatedly show that stress from family/marital demands undermines learning and grades through burnout and depressive symptoms, which fits your negative *r*'s for psychological stress GPA/attendance (Zhang et al., 2025). Likewise, your time-management challenges lower GPA/attendance align with reviews and empirical work linking better time management to higher engagement and performance (Alyami, 2021; Fu et al., 2025; Wolters et al., 2025). On the positive side, the moderate positive *r*'s for spousal/social support, GPA/attendance match findings that social support boosts academic engagement, self-efficacy, and achievement—acting both directly and via motivational pathways (Vargas-Madriz & Konishi, 2021; Chen et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024/2025). Your table also shows a slight negative association for “being married” with GPA/attendance, consistent with work reporting lower GPAs for married undergraduates on average, while recognizing heterogeneity by relationship quality and responsibilities (Beard, 2018; Maseka, 2024). Finally, your attendance link is directionally consistent with the large literature that attendance is one of the strongest predictors of grades; the newer quasi-experimental evidence and classic meta-analysis both indicate a substantial positive effect of attending class on performance, underscoring why marital/time pressures that reduce attendance can depress GPA (Ha, 2024; Credé et al., 2010). Consequently, the found pattern is supported; stress and time pressure are damaging; attendance issues are adequately based in the existing literature; the differences in the context might be attributed to the presence of a good relationship, division, financial stress, and support.

### Discussion

This study has shown that marriage has a multifaceted impact on academic performance and attendance of undergraduate students, which is mostly determined by the relationship among stress, time management, and support systems. In line with previous studies, marital responsibilities were identified to have a negative impact on GPA and attendance, and psychological stress and time-management issues were revealed as the most critical issues (Deng, 2022; Zhang et al., 2025; Perez-Jorge et al., 2025). This is a demonstration of the wider literature that role conflict and stress due to family commitments enhance burnout and decrease learning outcomes among students. Simultaneously, findings indicate how social and spousal support may provide a protective effect, in that it has significantly mitigated academic pressure and boosted attendance as well as GPA (Vargas-Madriz & Konishi, 2021; Chen et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). Interestingly, marital status was only weakly negatively associated with academic success, but the hidden psychological processes of stress and support were stronger in this instance, which

means that the quality of marital relationships is of greater significance than the simple fact of being in a marriage (Beard, 2018; Maseka, 2024). In addition, the fact the attendance was strongly associated with GPA in this study is consistent with the prevailing empirical findings about class participation as one of the most potent factors in the achievement of successful academic outcomes (Cred de et al., 2010; Ha, 2024). Collectively, these results indicate that, although marriage is likely to leave new burdens that may hinder academic involvement, sufficient partner and family support, efficient coping and time-management skills, can eliminate these threats. This highlights the necessity of universities and policymakers to be able to offer specialized support infrastructures like counseling, flexible scheduling, and peer groups to enable married students to attack the challenges of balancing their family life and higher studies.

### **Conclusion**

According to the results of the conducted study, we can conclude that marriage adds tremendous and multidimensional challenges in the academic life of undergraduate students, mainly by creating additional burdens and stresses in the aspects of psychological pressure and time-management problems. The adverse effect is however not always poised and instead it is mediated by the availability of high levels of spousal and social support system which has been very significant as a cushioning measure. More importantly, the strength of the marital dynamic and the presence or absence of coping resources fiber is shown to be superior determinants of academic competence as compared to marital status per se. Hence, the solution to curtailing these hardships has not been to discourage marriage but on institutional support and recognition. Colleges and policymakers are encouraged to come up with specific policies which can instill the ability of married students to find themselves within their dual responsibility and save their academic career by offering flexible schedules, focused counseling, and peer networks facilitation.

### **Conflict of Interest**

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