Original Research



Sociological Analysis of Youth Value Structures in the Lived Experience of Cohabitation

Firoozeh. Firooz¹, Bagher. Saroukhani², Tahmures. Shiri³

- ¹ PhD student, Department of Sociology, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
- ² Professor, Department of Sociology, Tehran Islamic Azad University of Sciences and Research, Tehran, Iran
- ³ Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Central Tehran Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
- * Corresponding author email address: saroukhani@ut.ac.ir

Received: 2024-02-08 **Revised:** 2024-03-19 **Accepted:** 2024-03-26 **Published:** 2024-04-01

The value structure of youth concerning marriage has undergone significant changes, one of which is exemplified by the increasing prevalence of cohabitation. This article aims to provide a sociological analysis of the value structure of young people within the lived experience of cohabitation in Tehran. The research methodology employed is a mixedmethods approach, utilizing both grounded theory and survey techniques. Data collection tools included interviews and questionnaires, respectively. The study's target population comprised all young individuals with cohabitation experience in Tehran, with 18 participants selected through purposive sampling for the qualitative section and 128 participants for the survey. Qualitative data were analyzed through a three-stage coding process—open coding, axial coding, and selective coding—resulting in the extraction of 144 concepts from the initial data. This process led to the identification of 41 categories and 18 themes. In the final stage of selective coding, the central phenomenon identified was "selective hedonism." Subsequently, the categories were transformed into questionnaire items. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and SPSS22 software. The data analysis reveals that the causal conditions include individual worldview, economic challenges, rejection of traditional culture, desire for independence, sexual and emotional hedonism, and dissatisfaction with formal marriage. The intervening conditions consist of globalization, cultural and social changes, the country's flawed economic structure, and liberation from conventional marriage and divorce norms. The strategies identified are hiding the relationship, resisting tradition, frugality, and implementing macro-structural measures. The outcomes include rational choice, individual and social isolation, reduced levels of commitment and responsibility, and an increase in open relationships within society.

Keywords: Cohabitation, Values, Youth, Selective Hedonism, Rational Choice.

How to cite this article:

Firooz, F., Saroukhani, B., & Shiri, T. (2024). Sociological Analysis of Youth Value Structures in the Lived Experience of Cohabitation. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Society, Law, and Politics, 3*(2), 49-58. https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.isslp.3.2.8

1. Introduction

In developed societies, economic and social transformations, alongside the flow of modernity and the expansion of its associated culture, have significantly impacted various societal layers, particularly the structure of the family. Marriage, as a legal, religious, and cultural practice, is constructed by social norms. "Family

formation is one of the values and behavioral patterns of social life that has undergone substantial changes in recent decades" (Omidvar et al., 2022). "Marriage has significantly transformed in recent decades to the extent that scholars acknowledge the diminishing role of marriage in society". Emerging cohabitation, a form of cohabitation without formal marriage, has been



increasingly discussed in recent years in Iran (Hosseini et al., 2023). "The origin of the cohabitation phenomenon lies in Northern European countries and the women's liberation movement in the United States; thus, for Iranians, it is an imported phenomenon. Cohabitation is problematic in Iran because it contradicts official laws, religious tenets, and the societal norms of the country". The rise in cohabitation has challenged the institution of the family, leading to uncertainty about the reasons for marriage and even the necessity of marriage itself (Hiekel & Castro-Martín, 2014; Hiekel et al., 2014). With the increase in divorce and separation, cohabitation has introduced greater unpredictability into life trajectories. The rise in cohabitation alters the nature of forming and dissolving relationships, affecting not only the couples involved but also other family members, social networks, government support systems, and society as a whole. "Informal cohabitation, which often lacks parental approval, frequently ends in separation" (Danesh et al., 2018).

The increase in non-marital cohabitation has altered conventional theoretical models and measurement studying traditional approaches for complicating matters but also enhancing family studies' understanding of cohabitation and its consequences for partners, children, and society (Sassler & Lichter, 2020). Cohabitation has evolved into a subculture that, despite parental disapproval and restrictive traditions, is spreading among some segments of the youth, leading to changes in the continuity of marriage and spousal commitments. "It is unlikely that adolescent girls living in cohabitation will experience the health and economic effects of child marriage. Furthermore, there may be intergenerational negative impacts of cohabitation. Research in developed countries indicates that children from cohabiting families" (Muthengi et al., 2022). The contradiction between the acceptance of cohabitation and legal restrictions has led to the clandestine nature of these relationships. The consequences of this phenomenon include the experience of stress due to its illegality, secrecy, physical and mental health deterioration, negative emotions after the relationship, and unstable emotional outcomes in cohabitation. The most critical aspect of this type of cohabitation, emphasized by most studies, is the opportunity it provides for couples to evaluate each other. This process can reduce the risk of an unsuccessful relationship

ultimately leading to divorce. Therefore, young people view cohabitation before marriage as a tool to improve their chances of future marital success and mitigate the likelihood of divorce.

Research shows that cohabitation is significantly increasing among individuals with higher education (Pilar Wiegand, 2023). In Iran, cohabitation has become prevalent among urban middle-class, young, and university-educated groups. Global experiences indicate a rising trend in this phenomenon. Due to its illegality and severe punishment if exposed, there is no available data on the extent of cohabitation in Islamic Iran. However, survey data from national surveys in the 2010s indicate increased acceptance of this phenomenon at the attitudinal level. In analyzing this phenomenon, it is essential to consider the different types of cohabitation. At least two types of cohabitation are observed in Iran: the first type is primarily classified as a form of premarital relationship, while the second type is considered an alternative to marriage (Chitsaz, 2022). Cohabitation, as an unregistered marital relationship, exists in Iranian society, though it has not become widespread and is a newly emerging phenomenon. According to scientific research, media reports, and academic discussions, it is increasingly recognized as a social issue, particularly in the metropolis of Tehran. Understanding the factors influencing the value structure of youth in the lived experience of cohabitation, as well as its consequences and strategies, requires scientific investigation. Therefore, the research question of this study is: What are the effects of the youth value structure on the lived experience of cohabitation from a sociological perspective?

2. Methods and Materials

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. The primary aim is to analyze the sociological aspects of the youth value structure in the lived experience of cohabitation. Initially, grounded theory, an exploratory method, was utilized. The qualitative sample comprised young individuals with cohabitation experience in Tehran. Through purposive sampling, interviews continued with 18 participants until theoretical saturation was reached. In the survey section, given the undefined population of young individuals with cohabitation experience and their limited





willingness to participate, the researcher pursued the sample until 128 individuals agreed to complete the questionnaire. The quantitative study involved both a questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. Data analysis followed a multi-stage process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, where data collected from the sample population were summarized, coded, categorized, and finally processed to facilitate various analyses and establish connections between the data. In the survey section, descriptive statistics were used to present findings from the questionnaire analysis, focusing on demographic characteristics and responses to the components of cohabitation.

3. Findings and Results

The qualitative findings, based on in-depth interviews using grounded theory, focus primarily on the effects of youth value structures on the lived experience of cohabitation. A purposive sample of 18 participants was selected in 2021. Concepts derived from the coding process were organized into a paradigmatic model consisting of four sections: causal conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and outcomes, centered around the core phenomenon. Notably, 144 concepts were extracted from the initial data, leading to the identification of 41 categories and 18 themes. In the final stage of selective coding, the core phenomenon identified was "selective hedonism." The categories were subsequently transformed into questionnaire items and administered to 128 young cohabitants in Tehran. The results for each section of the questionnaire are presented under the corresponding concepts.

3.1. Demographic Characteristics

According to the demographic characteristics section of the questionnaire, the sample consisted of 74 women and 54 men, indicating a higher number of women. The average age of respondents was 36 years, with the youngest being 24 and the oldest 42 years old. The duration of cohabitation revealed that 14.1% had lived together for less than one year, 40.6% for one to two years, 23.4% for two to three years, 17.2% for three to four years, and 4.7% for more than four years. Thus, most respondents had cohabited for approximately one to two years. In terms of educational attainment, 4.7% had a high school diploma, 9.4% had an associate degree,

26.6% had a bachelor's degree, 39.1% had a master's degree, and 20.3% held a doctoral degree, with the majority holding a master's degree. This finding aligns with the research of Pilar Wiegand Cruz (2023), which also indicated a higher prevalence of cohabitation among educated individuals.

3.2. Causal Conditions

According to the causal factors of the "selective hedonism" phenomenon, the majority of young people with cohabitation experience in Tehran are living with a partner despite familial and cultural opposition, often doing so covertly. These youths, influenced by their "personal worldview," engage in cohabitation. The concept of an individual worldview encompasses personal values, a lack of belief in formal marriage, and lower levels of commitment, which were assessed through items such as diminishing religious beliefs, individualistic values, living in the moment, the imbalance between family rights and women's social conditions (e.g., lack of child custody rights, the need for spousal permission to travel), lack of desire for children, avoidance of responsibility, and egalitarian relationships. The statistical distribution of the impact of individual worldview on the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 4.7% of respondents completely disagreed, 12.5% disagreed, 18.8% somewhat agreed, 39.9% agreed, and 25% completely agreed.

Although many are grappling with "economic challenges," the statistical distribution of the impact of economic challenges on the lived experience of cohabitation indicates that 17.2% completely disagreed, 23.4% disagreed, 31.3% somewhat agreed, 18.8% agreed, and 9.4% completely agreed. Thus, the majority of respondents somewhat agreed with the impact of economic challenges on their cohabitation experience. Economic challenges that motivate cohabitation are largely due to the high costs of marriage and a calculating mindset. These were assessed through items such as rent, household items, daily expenses, dowry, high living costs, high dowry, and shared responsibility between men and women for providing life's necessities, and the importance of material wealth.

Cohabitants often exhibit a "rejection of culture and traditions." The concept of rejecting culture and traditions, which manifests as resistance to traditional norms and a generational gap, was assessed through





items such as the importance of virginity, familyarranged marriage, elaborate ceremonies with extended family, distancing from family to maintain respect, familial restrictions on opposite-gender relationships, insistence on extravagant ceremonies, and the lack of upbringing to handle problems, The rebelliousness against parents. statistical distribution of the impact of rejecting culture and traditions on the lived experience of cohabitation indicates that 6.3% of respondents completely disagreed, 15.6% disagreed, 28.1% somewhat agreed, 34.4% agreed, and 15.6% completely agreed.

These individuals also exhibit a "desire independence" due to challenges faced during singlehood, educational migration, and distancing from family, with individualism fitting their personal circumstances. The impact of the "desire for independence" concept was assessed through items such as enduring family beliefs, fewer family-related issues, escaping family responsibilities, living alone in another city, having a private residence, the need for power, maintaining personal boundaries, freedom of action, and relief from family pressures for family and relative relationships, ceremonies, and so forth, delaying marriage, and the successful experience of friends and acquaintances. The statistical distribution of the impact of the desire for independence on the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 4.7% of respondents completely disagreed, 9.4% disagreed, 21.9% somewhat agreed, 31.3% agreed, and 32.8% completely agreed.

"Sexual and emotional gratification" is a fundamental need that necessitates love and affection. Hedonism, a trait inherent to all humans, finds meaning through mutual love and commitment. Traditional marriage, with its restrictions and rules, requires individuals to adhere to the relationship's framework. The statistical distribution of the impact of sexual and emotional gratification on the lived experience of cohabitation indicates that 4.7% of respondents completely disagreed, 12.5% disagreed, 18.8% somewhat agreed, 39.9% agreed, and 25% completely agreed. The influence of sexual and emotional gratification, often the initial motivation for such relationships among the youth, finds meaning through mutual love and commitment. This was assessed through items such as the need for affection and intimacy, calmness, well-being, embracing, quality relationships, understanding,

passion, love, gradual and processual love, fulfillment of sexual needs, the need for support, trust, honesty, care, protection, and mutual respect.

Many young cohabitants cite "disapproval of formal marriage" as a reason for entering into such a relationship. The statistical distribution of the impact of disapproval of formal marriage on the lived experience of cohabitation indicates that 9.4% of respondents completely disagreed, 15.6% disagreed, somewhat agreed, 21.9% agreed, and 12.5% completely agreed. The concept of disapproval of formal marriage, arising from fear, doubt, and skepticism about marriage and the belief in the necessity of pre-marital acquaintance, was assessed through items such as witnessing discord among couples, fear of divorce, high divorce rates, complications of the divorce process and its aftermath, doubt in spouse selection, expectations from a spouse, and testing a partner before formal marriage.

3.3. Intervening Conditions

According to the interviewees, in recent decades, media and social networks have influenced attitudes and perspectives, steering individuals toward modernity and shaping various behaviors, which was categorized under the concept of "globalization."

"Cultural and social changes" that have pervaded various aspects of society are among the intervening factors affecting attitudes toward cohabitation. The concept of the impact of cultural and social changes, derived from transformations in attitudes toward gender, diminished supervision, and expanded social relationships, was assessed through items such as the diminishing of gender stereotypes (dominant male and subordinate female roles), the widespread presence of women in society, lifestyle changes from traditional to modern, liberation from traditional values without functional benefits, normalization of relationships with the opposite gender, and extensive networks relationships: workplace interactions, and free communication in universities. The statistical distribution of the impact of cultural and social changes on the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 12.5% of respondents completely disagreed, 15.6% disagreed, 21.9% somewhat agreed, 28.1% agreed, and 21.9% completely agreed.





Under the condition of the "country's flawed economic structure," where economic instability and inflation are prominent issues, the value structure of the youth is also affected. The statistical distribution of the impact of the country's flawed economic structure on the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 10.9% of respondents completely disagreed, 26.6% disagreed, 31.3% somewhat agreed, 15.6% agreed, and 15.6% completely agreed. The country's flawed economic structure, marked by economic instability and inflation, was assessed through items such as rising prices, the chaotic economic situation, and price instability.

"Escape from conventional marriage and divorce norms" is a significant factor driving cohabitation. The impact of escaping conventional marriage and divorce norms, derived from the high costs and unnecessary norms, was assessed through items such as the costs of engagement, wedding, and other ceremonies, unnecessary but customary purchases, dowry, alimony, responsibilities of the husband, duties of the wife's family, traditional spouse selection methods, family influence in spouse selection, virginity, and extravagant ceremonies. The statistical distribution of the impact of escaping conventional marriage and divorce norms on the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 3.1% of respondents completely disagreed, 12.5% disagreed, 28.1% somewhat agreed, 23.4% agreed, and 32.8% completely agreed.

3.4. Strategies

In response to all these factors, several strategies were identified, with "hiding the relationship" being the most commonly employed personal strategy. The concept of "hiding the relationship," stemming from the categories of conservatism and relationship secrecy and commitment, was assessed through items such as keeping the relationship secret, living far from family, relatives, and acquaintances, not attending family and social events, remaining silent and not explaining the reason for not marrying, respecting the partner's feelings, having a companion, and emotional and emotional release. The statistical distribution of the strategy of hiding the relationship in the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 3.1% of respondents completely disagreed, 3.1% disagreed, 18.8% somewhat agreed, 32.8% agreed, and 42.2% completely agreed.

Another strategy identified was "frugality," where many young people are willing to live with their partner by reducing or compromising their needs to the extent that they can "practice frugality." The statistical distribution of the strategy of frugality in the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 7.8% of respondents completely disagreed, 26.6% disagreed, 29.9% somewhat agreed, 21.9% agreed, and 14.1% completely agreed. Frugality, derived from the categories of low financial expectations and shared expenses, was assessed through items such as minimal living essentials, sharing rent, purchasing household items together, and women's employment.

However, a fundamental strategy must be implemented by governance and political leaders, entailing "structural and macro-level actions." These include policies and planning to provide social and economic infrastructure for youth to marry permanently while also encouraging marriage through media campaigns. The statistical distribution of the strategy of structural and macro-level actions in the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 20.3% of respondents completely disagreed, 43.8% disagreed, 23.4% somewhat agreed, 10.0% agreed, and 1.6% completely agreed. Therefore, the majority of respondents disagreed with the strategy of structural and macro-level actions in the lived experience of cohabitation. The concept of "structural and macro-level actions," derived from the categories of cultural development, encouraging permanent marriage among youth, and providing social and economic infrastructure, was assessed through items such as media programs promoting marriage, advertisements, education at various levels, improving living conditions, creating employment opportunities, providing housing, marriage loans, and childbearing, and the youth population rejuvenation plan.

Cohabiting youth have adopted the strategy of "challenging traditions," derived from the categories of publicizing the relationship, resisting cultural pressure, and diminishing gender discrimination. This was assessed through items such as family and friends knowing about the relationship, inviting friends to their home, celebrating birthdays with close ones, lack of virginity, having a partner at events, believing that formal marriage laws favor men, and economic partnership between partners. The statistical distribution of the strategy of challenging traditions in the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 21.9% of





respondents completely disagreed, 31.3% disagreed, 21.9% somewhat agreed, 15.6% agreed, and 9.4% completely agreed.

3.5. Outcomes

Finally, the youth believe that the outcome of this decision to cohabit is "rational choice" because it provides sufficient opportunity for mutual understanding and reduces cultural compulsion. The concept of "rational choice," derived from the categories of sufficient time for mutual understanding and reduced cultural pressure, was assessed through items such as the right to choose without others' interference, practical experience of living together, love as the reason for the choice, flexibility and autonomy, having a companion, mutual agreement, respect for others' privacy, and normalization of disregarding customs. The statistical distribution of the outcome of rational choice in the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 10.9% of respondents completely disagreed, 21.9% disagreed, 28.1% somewhat agreed, 26.6% agreed, and 12.5% completely agreed. Therefore, the majority of respondents somewhat agreed with the outcome of rational choice in the lived experience of cohabitation. The result of this research aligns with the findings of Faramarzi et al. (2017).

In this type of relationship, "reduced commitment and responsibilities" often become normalized. The concept of "reduced commitment and responsibilities," derived from the categories of lack of desire for children and multiple relationships, was assessed through items such as abortion, abandoning a child, contraception, and lack of desire for children, ease of ending the relationship, availability of other partners, avoiding responsibility,

and health and sexual problems. The statistical distribution of the outcome of reduced commitment and responsibilities in the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 4.7% of respondents completely disagreed, 12.5% disagreed, 23.4% somewhat agreed, 31.3% agreed, and 28.1% completely agreed.

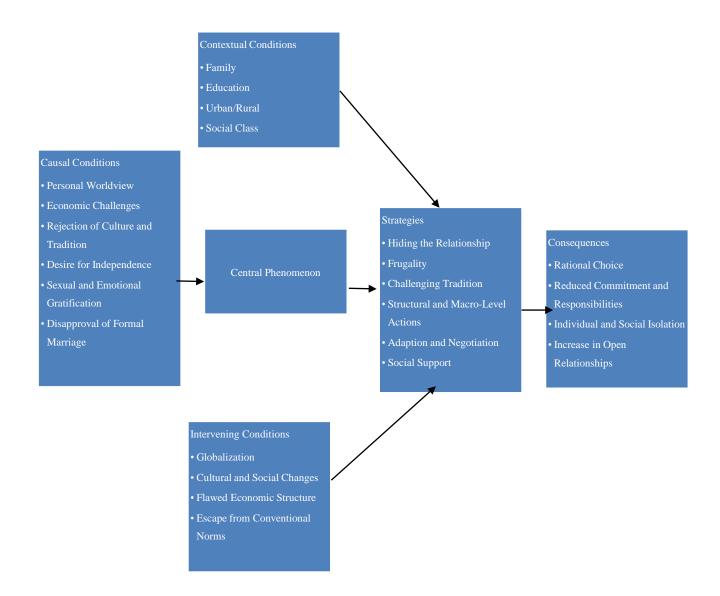
One of the outcomes is "individual and social isolation," stemming from the categories of psychological problems and lack of social legitimacy. This was assessed through items such as hiding the relationship, lack of conditions for childbearing, psychological problems, reduced self-esteem, lying, fear and anxiety of being exposed, guilt, fear of the future, lack of social support, family rejection, stigmatization and social labeling, and not having a normal life. The statistical distribution of the outcome of "individual and social isolation" in the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 4.7% of respondents completely disagreed, 18.8% disagreed, 23.4% somewhat agreed, 35.9% agreed, and 17.2% completely agreed.

If cohabitation becomes more prevalent, it is likely that "an increase in open relationships in society" will also occur. This outcome, derived from the categories of structural weakness in family formation and behavioral changes among youth, was assessed through items such as delayed marriage among youth, the stringent and cumbersome conditions for obtaining loans, high rent costs, employment, inflation, changing patterns, the diversity of new lifestyles, and the weakening of the traditional family structure. The statistical distribution of the outcome of increased open relationships in society in the lived experience of cohabitation shows that 4.7% of respondents completely disagreed, 18.8% disagreed, 23.4% somewhat agreed, 35.9% agreed, and 17.2% completely agreed.





Figure 1
Final Conceptual Model



4. Discussion and Conclusion

The family unit has undergone significant changes worldwide, including in Iran, where certain aspects have been notably affected. In recent decades, individuals have been increasingly exposed to globalization, leading to heightened global awareness. One of the key transformations experienced by Iranian families in recent years is the incorporation of love and individual choice into family dynamics. Young people are now selecting spouses based on personal affection, free from

the constraints of traditional family expectations. Consequently, families have less influence over marriage, spouse selection, and childbearing, although the extent and nature of this transformation vary across social classes and family groups. A growing trend in informal, unauthorized, and individualistic relationships exemplifies postmodern individualism, impacting the traditional family structure. This has led to the emergence of a new form of cohabitation, known as "cohabitation," which has become one of the diverse patterns of marriage and family formation among young people in recent decades. This study scientifically





examined cohabitation from various dimensions, identifying "selective hedonism" as the central phenomenon, derived from the perspectives of young people with lived experiences of cohabitation. A significant number of respondents held advanced degrees, aligning this study with the prior findings (Alivardi Nia et al., 2024; Chitsaz, 2022; Pilar Wiegand, 2023).

According to the causal factors of the "selective hedonism" phenomenon, most young people with cohabitation experience in Tehran, despite familial and cultural opposition, are engaging in cohabitation covertly. These individuals enter cohabitation influenced by their "personal worldview." The findings of this section align with prior studies (Mahjell Kazemi, 2020; Motlagh & Ghorishi, 2022; Ramazatifar & Adish, 2018a, 2018b).

Many young cohabitants face "economic challenges," and the majority of respondents somewhat agree that these challenges impact their cohabitation experience. This finding is consistent with the prior results (Motlagh & Ghorishi, 2022).

Cohabitants often exhibit a "rejection of culture and traditions," with the majority of respondents agreeing that this factor influences their cohabitation experience. This finding is in line with the prior studies (Jafari, 2017; Omidvar et al., 2022).

These individuals also express a "desire for independence." The findings of this section align with the prior research (Omidvar et al., 2022).

Young respondents believe that "sexual and emotional gratification" is a primary need that must be addressed, and the majority agree that this factor significantly influences their cohabitation experience. This finding corresponds with the prior research (Mahjell Kazemi, 2020).

Many young cohabitants cite "disapproval of formal marriage" as a reason for entering this type of relationship, with the majority somewhat agreeing with this perspective. This finding aligns with the prior results (Mahjell Kazemi, 2020).

Among the intervening conditions, interviewees identified "globalization" as a factor influencing attitudes and behaviors, driving individuals toward modernity. This finding is consistent with the prior research (Danesh et al., 2018).

"Cultural and social changes" have permeated various aspects of society, influencing attitudes toward cohabitation. The majority of respondents agree that these changes affect their cohabitation experience. This finding aligns with the prior studies (Berrington et al., 2015; Mahjell Kazemi, 2020).

The "country's flawed economic structure," characterized by economic instability and inflation, also affects the value structure of young people regarding marriage. The majority of respondents somewhat agree that this flawed structure influences their cohabitation experience. This finding is consistent with prior research (Alivardi Nia et al., 2024; Danesh et al., 2018).

"Escape from conventional marriage and divorce norms" is another significant factor driving cohabitation, with the majority of respondents fully agreeing with its impact on their lived experience. In response to these factors, various strategies were employed, with "hiding the relationship" being the most common personal strategy. The majority of respondents fully agree with the use of this strategy in their cohabitation experience, consistent with prior findings (Mahjell Kazemi, 2020).

Another strategy identified is "frugality," with the majority of respondents somewhat agreeing with this approach in their cohabitation experience. However, the fundamental strategy should be implemented by governance and political leaders through "structural and macro-level actions" that provide social and economic infrastructure for permanent marriage among young people. The majority of respondents disagree with the effectiveness of these structural and macro-level actions in their cohabitation experience.

Cohabiting youth have adopted the strategy of "challenging traditions," but the majority of respondents disagree with its impact on their cohabitation experience. This finding aligns with the prior studies (Danesh et al., 2018; Mahjell Kazemi, 2020; Omidvar et al., 2022).

Finally, young people believe that the outcome of cohabitation is a "rational choice" because it provides sufficient time for mutual understanding and reduces cultural constraints. The majority of respondents somewhat agree with the rational choice outcome in their cohabitation experience, consistent with the prior findings (French et al., 2014; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011; Sassler & Lichter, 2020).





In this type of relationship, "reduced commitment and responsibilities" often become normalized. The majority of respondents agree with the reduced commitment and responsibilities outcome in their cohabitation experience, consistent with the prior research (Mahjell Kazemi, 2020; Ramazatifar & Adish, 2018a, 2018b).

Another outcome is "individual and social isolation," with the majority of respondents agreeing with this outcome in their cohabitation experience. This finding aligns with the prior studies (Danesh et al., 2018; Omidvar et al., 2022).

As cohabitation becomes more common, there is a gradual "increase in open relationships in society." The majority of respondents agree with this outcome, consistent with the findings of prior studies (Omidvar et al., 2022; Pilar Wiegand, 2023; Sassler & Lichter, 2020).

As previously mentioned, the modernization of societies has led to significant changes in various domains, particularly the family institution, with long-term negative consequences. In recent decades, the pattern of cohabitation in Iran has undergone substantial changes, reflecting significant shifts in the values and beliefs of young people. These changes are also evident in the types of marriages that are now emerging, indicating a transformation in the traditional family structure as many young people are considering alternative forms of partnership, such as cohabitation.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

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

Transparency Statement

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

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethical Considerations

Not applicable.

References

- Alivardi Nia, A., Osia, S. A., & Abbasi Kalan, H. (2024). A sociological explanation of students' attitudes towards white marriage: Application of Iker's social learning theory. *Iranian Social Issues*, *14*(2). https://doi.org/10.61186/jspi.14.2.253
- Berrington, A. B., Perelli-Harris, B., & Trevena, P. (2015). Commitment and the changing sequence of cohabitation, childbearing and marriage: insights from qualitative research in the UK. *Demographic Research*, 33, 327-362. https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2015.33.12
- Chitsaz, M. J. (2022). An examination of the status of cohabitation in Iran: A meta-synthesis of cohabitation research. *Iranian Social Issues Research*, 2(5). https://risi.ihss.ac.ir/Article/39860
- Danesh, P., Omidvar, P., & Zadeh Mazandarani, M. J. (2018). Examining factors affecting the tendency towards cohabitation without marriage among youth in Tehran. *Quarterly Journal of Social-Cultural Development Studies*, 3, 9-31. http://journals.sabz.ac.ir/scds/article-1-312-fa.html
- French, M. T., Popovici, I., Robins, P. K., & Homer, J. F. (2014).

 Personal traits, cohabitation, and marriage. *Social science research*, 45, 184-199.

 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2014.01.002
- Hiekel, N., & Castro-Martín, T. (2014). Grasping the diversity of cohabitation: Fertility intentions among cohabiters across Europe. *Journal of marriage and family*, 76(3), 489-505. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12112
- Hiekel, N., Liefbroer, A. C., & Poortman, A. R. (2014). Understanding diversity in the meaning of cohabitation across Europe. *European Journal of Population*, *30*(4), 391-410. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10680-014-9321-1
- Hosseini, S. N., Mirzaei, S. M., & Sarukhani, B. (2023). A sociological study of youth attitudes towards cohabitation and emerging co-living forms. *Social-Cultural Changes*, *18*(71), 1-20. https://journals.iau.ir/article_692197.html
- Jafari, E. (2017). Changing concepts of family from white marriage to homosexuality: A look at lifestyle, issues, and challenges. *Quarterly Journal of Women's Rights Protection Studies*, *3*(8), 137-165. https://civilica.com/doc/796683/
- Mahjell Kazemi, S. (2020). Examination of cultural factors influencing students' attitudes towards white marriage at free and state universities in Tehran https://civilica.com/doc/1345857/
- Motlagh, M., & Ghorishi, M. (2022). A sociological study of the cohabitation phenomenon in Tehran. *Iranian Social Issues Research*, 2(5).

https://ensani.ir/fa/article/527886/%D9%85%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%87-

%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%87-

%D8%B4%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%AA%DB%8 C-%D9%BE%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF%D9%87-

%D9%87%D9%85%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B4%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%B1-

%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86





- Muthengi, E., Muthoni, L., & Austrian, K. (2022). Comparing cohabiting unions and formal marriages among adolescent girls in Zambia: The role of premarital fertility and parental support. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *70*(3), S47-S53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2021.11.024
- Omidvar, P., Danesh, P., & Zahedi Mazandarani, M. J. (2022). Sociological analysis of the cohabitation phenomenon from the perspectives of clerics and sociologists. *Social Studies and Research in Iran*, 11(3), 43. https://jisr.ut.ac.ir/article_87725.html
- Pilar Wiegand, C. (2023). The changing social gradient of marriage and cohabitation in seven Latin American countries. *Social science* research. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2023.102898
- Ramazatifar, H., & Adish, M. A. (2018a). A study of lived experiences of individuals regarding cohabitation in Iran: A qualitative study of youth in Gilan County. *Quarterly Journal of Social Development Studies*, 7(1), 195-217. https://journals.sabz.ac.ir/scds/article-1-531-fa.html&sw=
- Ramazatifar, H., & Adish, M. A. (2018b). A study of lived experiences of individuals regarding white marriage in Iran: A qualitative study of youth in Gilan County. *Quarterly Journal of Social-Cultural Development Studies*, 1, 195-217. https://journals.sabz.ac.ir/scds/article-1-531-fa.pdf
- Regnerus, M., & Uecker, J. (2011). Premarital sex in America:

 How young Americans meet, mate, and think about marrying.

 Oxford University Press.

 https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199743285.001.0001
- Sassler, S., & Lichter, D. T. (2020). Cohabitation and Marriage: Complexity and Diversity in Union-Formation Patterns. *Journal of marriage and family*, 82(1), 35-61. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12617

