



# Single Women in Erbil

## A qualitative study on the reasons and obstacles behind Women staying single in Erbil city

ID No.4028

(PP 292 - 303)

<https://doi.org/10.21271/zjhs.25.5.19>**Muzhda Mohammed Azeez**Social Work Department - College of Arts / Salahaddin University-Erbil  
muzhda.azeez@su.edu.krd**Received: 01/04/2021****Accepted: 31/05/2021****Published: 20/11/2021**

### Abstract

The subject of single women is a contentious topic in Erbil society. Being professionally successful is often sufficient motivation for a woman to remain single. Women enjoy the competitive process of advancing to executive positions at work and find it extremely satisfying. There are many unmarried women in Erbil for many reasons.

It has been noticed through observation and social relationships that the rate of single women is increasing for many reasons. According to a report published on Rudaw site in 2015 the rate of unmarried women in Iraq (including Kurdistan) reached 85%, while The Iraqi Ministry of Planning announced on Mawazin news site in 2018 that the rate of women (ages between 15-49) who feel safe alone and do not get married early is 85% in Kurdistan to 60% in central and southern Iraq. Some of the women refuse to get married because they want to develop their education level and have a successful career. Those women believe that marriage will prevent them from traveling abroad in order to develop their knowledge, skills, and may will not be able to work in different institutions if they get married especially in Erbil subculture which some traditional men do not always allow their daughters, sisters or wives to travel alone and leave their families behind. In addition, it will be difficult for women to leave their children alone, because most of the women sacrifice the personal desire for the sake of their family.

While other single women do not get married, because of some domestic problems, especially in tribal families when the family does not accept that their daughter marries a man who does not belong to the same tribe. Other families demand dowry such as a big amount of money and an expensive house that cannot be afforded by the grooms. Moreover, the financial reason when the woman works and gets a salary and the family depends on her financially.

The researcher has found out the social, economic, and education issues that are behind women remaining single. In order to get a good result, the researcher used qualitative methodology and interviewed 20 single women in Erbil society from different social, economic, and educational backgrounds. In-depth interviewing helped her to get good information and be able to communicate with them personally; those women have been asked previously prepared questions (semi-structured interviewing). The ages of the women are between 25 - 40 years old and they are working at universities, governmental institutions, and Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs).

**KeyWords:** Single Women, Marriage, Society, Expectations.

### 1- Introduction:

This research is exploring the phenomenon of single women in Erbil, the capital city of the Kurdistan region/Iraq. Nowadays, there is an increasingly apparent trend of well-educated and employed women who are still single; they are seen at universities, governmental and non-governmental institutions, social gatherings, markets, and neighborhoods. They belong to families that have a good economical state, good reputation, and they are qualified for domestic and social life, but they are not married yet.

Why they did not get married? What are the reasons behind unmarried women who prefer to stay single and be called “a spinster” until the age of mid-thirties or forties while in most of the eastern societies young women prefer to marry early, in the beginnings of their twenties?



Studying the society and marriage conditions in Erbil city during the last few years, we can see that there are many changes happening in the social traditions and people's mentalities. What was good in the past is not good or acceptable now, especially after the society has opened to other cultures and communities. For example, 30 years ago, women's major aim was marriage, while now; they have goals such as education, employment, promotion, travel, and independence. In the past, most marriages were arranged by parents or tribes, while now, man and woman meet and agree with each other than decide to tell the family, in the past, men preferred their wives to be housewives, while now, most husbands encourage their wives to continue education and employment.

Throughout studying marriage and what society expects from married women we find that the new female generation has different ideas and expectations from life, more than the traditional views of marriage and women's role as a wife and mother. Many women through education and employment find that they can prove themselves through other kinds of successes at work, a high level of education, and financial independence, in addition to marriage.

Through interviewing some single women, who are well educated, employed, and financially independent, we find different reasons for their staying single, such as changes in traditions and culture, economy, high expectations about future husband, and education.

- **Research problems:**

Observing the increasing number of unmarried women, hearing some of the issues these women face, the lack of official data, especially academic ones, and not having a clear reason about this phenomenon requires finding answers and explanations.

- **Research question:**

What are the reasons and obstacles behind women staying single?

- **Research aims:**

Explore and recognize the reasons and obstacles behind women staying single.

## **2-Methodology**

Methodologically, in this research, qualitative methodology has been used, and semi-structured interviews have been used as a method to collect data. Qualitative methodology is analyzing the data without depending on statistics, but on noticing, observation, collecting data, thinking, and analyzing the interviews. Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews are not based on certain questions, but on some previously prepared questions and other questions that will be asked during the interview.

20 single women have been interviewed from different social, economic and educational backgrounds and of various ages in Erbil city. The interviews were done during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 (March – April), all of the interviews were online, and each interview took around 2 hours. Skype and Viber calls were used as interviewing tools, and the interviews were changed to written transcripts. The interviewees were promised confidentiality and they give their consent to the researcher (a consent letter was sent to them through email) to use the information and data collected from the interviews to complete the research.

Finding the interviewees happened through snowballing. Some of those women are friends with the researcher, and others were met through other friends. Their ages are between the late twenties and late thirties, from different socio-economic backgrounds, some of them are from tribal families, some are from rich families whom have businesses and trades, and some are from middle-class families with employed parents.

These women were interviewed in terms of being single, educated, and employed women, but later, through analyzing each interviewee, we will find out how their different social backgrounds affect their point of view and ideas.

A major obstacle I had to face during working on this research is the pandemic quarantine due to Covid-19. The researcher couldn't visit libraries or meet the interviewees face to face, therefore, most of the resources were got through the virtual format and the interviews implemented online.



One of the difficulties the researcher faced in writing this research was reaching out to many academic resources on single women to use for literature review. So instead, resources about marriage contract have been used in addition to few resources on single women.

Going through different definitions of marriage according to scholars, the researcher got a clear view about what is marriage, in which ways people can see marriage, and what they are expect to face. Furthermore, interviewing single women and asking them about their opinions on marriage provided similar definitions on marriage and what comes after it.

Another difficulty the researcher faced during interviews was to make these women talk and express their opinions and feelings. Because the topic is sensitive, many of these women – those whom the researcher didn't know before- felt shy to talk directly, and the interviews started with talking about general topics and the researcher's own experience as a single woman in order to gain their trust and talk freely.

The researcher used three languages during interviewing, English, Arabic, and Kurdish languages, some of the women liked to speak in English since their education were in English language, and a couple of the interviewees are Kurds who lived in Baghdad since their childhood and returned to their original city – Erbil- after they grew up, so their Kurdish language was not good enough to carry out a whole interview and they preferred speaking in Arabic language. Coded letters were used to refer to every single woman during analyzing the interviews.

### **3-Literature Review**

#### **3.1 Marriage perceptions:**

What is marriage? According to social scholars, marriage is a kind of relationship that gathers between people legally, and then they belong to each other and build a family “marriage refers to a socially approved sexual union between two or more individuals that is undertaken with some ideas of permanence” (Hughes & Kroehler 2009, p. 320). The type or the form of marriage differs from a society to another. For example, in the Middle Eastern society, a normal marriage happens between a man and a woman, also polygamy exists in Muslim societies. While in other societies, marriage between gays, lesbians, group marriages are considered normal marriages.

Pateman (1988) called marriage as a contract between two parties – man and woman – in which the husband has the power to control the wife and the wife must obey him “marriage is called a contract but, feminists have argued, an institution in which one party, the husband, has exercised the power of a slave- owner over his wife” (Pateman 1988, p. 154). When a girl gets married, she is expected to be responsible for her domestic duties like caring for children, cleaning the house and cooking, and doing what her husband wants because he is the breadwinner and the man of the house “in the marriage contract a wife explicitly agrees to obey her husband” (Pateman 1988, p.159). Pateman compares the wife with an unpaid employee because of the expected role from the wife to work for her husband without being paid and to obey him.

When the girl grows up learning that her future is to be a housewife, this idea creates obstacles in her mind that getting an education and financial independence through being employed is not important and it is not her priority. The girl receives this idea from her family, society, and the environment. Through observing what her ancestors did before, her mother and grandmother, the lack of advice and awareness to her real abilities, leads the girl to follow the traditions and accept the offered contract that is marriage. Pateman mentions John Mill and Thompson – feminist scholars- who argued about this point:

Mill agrees with Thompson on several issues. He argues, for example, that women have no alternative, they are compelled to marry. ‘Wife’ is the only position that their upbringing, lack of education and training, and social and legal pressures realistically leave open to them. (Pateman 1988, p. 161)



In contrast to Pateman (1988), Hathout (2006, p.137) explains how Islamic religion defines marriage. Marriage is an equal relation between man and woman with a mutual interdependence. In marriage, both husband and wife respect each other, each one has special roles and responsibilities in the family and the society, and they are equal to each other.

Hathout quotes two verses from the Holy Quran and says:

They do not indicate a hierarchical notion of gender relations in which wives are inferior to their husbands. In addition to its religious significance, marriage is also a social, legal and moral contract between a man and a woman. Again, this implies equality of status. Its purpose is to provide equal protection to both parties. (Hathout 2006, p.173)

In Islam, the girl has the right to choose her husband, to refuse the proposal that she does not like, and she cannot be forced in order to get married if she does not want. But the implementation of these rights differ from one society to another, for example, in Erbil sub-culture, some tribal families prevent girls to marry a person who doesn't belong to their tribe, or some families do not accept their daughters to marry men from different ethnic groups or religions.

While Okin (1989) in her book "*Justice, Gender, and the Family*" argues that when a girl gets married, she becomes weak and dependent because she is required to follow her husband and do what is expected from her that is to be a housewife and a mother. If she is a student, she leaves her education, if she is employed; she leaves it for the sake of her husband and children. That shows us the inequality of the roles and rights between men and women in marriage:

I argue that marriage and the family, as currently practiced in our society, are unjust institutions. They constitute the pivot of a societal system of gender that renders women vulnerable to dependency, exploitation, and abuse. When we look seriously at the distribution between husbands and wives of such critical social goods as work (paid and unpaid), power, prestige, self-esteem, opportunities for self-development, and both physical and economic security, we find socially constructed inequalities between them. (Okin 1989, pp. 135-136)

Okin's argument is similar to Pateman; they both mentioned that women lose their identity as independent persons after they get married. Their argument contrasts the reality of marriage that is an equal participation of a man and a woman in creating a new life. They both did not mention any positive features for marriage and its benefits for women such as building a new life with a man she loves and who cares for her, having her own home, experiencing maternity, and getting support from the husband. Both Okin and Pateman focused on the negative explanations and effects of marriage on women.

### **3.2 The reasons behind women staying single in Iraq:**

Jill Reynolds wrote a book on singlehood and explained that it is an important subject for feminists to work for and analyze. Because when a woman chooses to stay single, it is not only for the lack of marriage proposals, but for improving their personalities and independence as an individual with full rights and freedom of choice:

Reynolds argues that single women's struggles for self-definition are important to feminism. Whether single or married, women may feel pressured to define their identities in terms of relationships, or may struggle to balance independence with their need for connection. Likewise, the fact that many self-help books have focused more on individual singles' failings than the social structures that stigmatize unmarried women underscores the need for feminist activism. (Lehman 2009, p. 309)



Both are important, domestic responsibilities and financial independence that a woman can get after finishing her education and having a good job, and many women can have both and create a balance between them with the help of their husbands and families.

Dunya Al-Rubayee (1997) explained the reasons of Iraqi women staying single in her master thesis in sociology, titled "Factors influencing the delay in the age of marriage for girls Iraqi." According to Al-Rubayee, many factors affected women's situation in society such as industrialization and urbanization. Throughout changes happening in the society, families' mentalities' change that led to change in traditions, especially women's freedom of choice and early marriage.

Cities more suitable for women in general as it can be practiced in the city are the most versatile types of activities, as have economic independence and community center different than the center of the man. The largely liberated from home as no change in the idea of the rule of men and subordination of women and less than the gap between legal provisions that define the human rights center on the one hand and realism of their rights practices Elsewhere. (Al-Rubayee 1997, p.p: 47-48)

- **Education:** in the last decades, women got chances to enter higher education that gave them opportunities to get jobs and be financially independent. This knowledge and independence made women have another kind of expectations about their future life, future husband, and when and who to get married to.

The breadth of educational opportunities for women, particularly during the last quarter of a century, contributed to the formation of new ambitions of their professional and scientific aspects and laid the foundations of new perceptions of themselves and others perceptions of them and has achieved relative freedom in the timing of her marriage and to choose her partner. (Al-Rubayee 1997, p.48)

- **Employment:** sometimes, employed unmarried women help their families financially, this makes some of them refuse the idea of marriage because they are afraid to not be able to help their families after marriage. While other times, the families themselves don't allow their daughters to get married in order not to lose their financial and domestic help and support.

In a master thesis done by Aziz (2010) on "Kurdish women's participation in Paid Employment" there is a clear explanation of the case studies that she analyzed of some successful women in the field of education and employment. In one of the interviews, a single woman named "H" talked about her sense of responsibility towards her family and how she is helping them now, after her graduation and employment:

"The life of the employee does not have that freedom. Before everything is working and responsibilities. At home the situation did not change, but it was different. Before graduation I did not help them in any work, but after I entered employment life, no, I had to work. I did not have anymore the reasons that made me busy from doing domestic works. It is another responsibility that I have to join the family in it. Through the past years they are serving me, so, it is time that I start to serve them." (Aziz 2010, p. 42)

- **Freedom of choice:** in the past, when the girl gets a marriage proposal, her family – parents, brothers, uncles- were those responsible for making the decision whether the girl marries that person or not, it was a family decision. While nowadays, especially the educated and employed girl get is connected with male colleagues at work or study places which gives them chance to communicate with each other, know each other that finally leads to understanding and loving each other before marriage.

It can consider the idea of love mainly marriage may accelerate and it may tend girl to caution and deliberation, especially the impact of the failure of



emotional experiences from the other side. The perceptions of the girl for a life partner has varied greatly from what it was when the girl was isolated from the contexts of science and work, and may be those perceptions are ideal to some extent makes the girl wait too long before you find in a certain man. In addition to that, the girl may carry perceptions similar about the economic capacity of the marriage is expected, as it may require having a house and independent car and adequate capacity to provide widgets physically and here also may delay her marriage until find and meets those conditions. (Al-Rubayee 1997, p.49).

One of the problems of delay in age of marriage in Iraq and the Arab societies is:

- **Economic reasons:** the most important problem that men face in marriage is dowry. The dowry is the “amount of money that should be in the marriage contract on the pair in exchange for marriage”. (Al-Rubayee 1997, p.56)

The dowry is a tradition in a marriage that gives a legitimate feature to sexual relations between man and woman. In some families, they consider marriage as a trade and a way to get money, they explain that they are losing their daughter and want something back, so they ask for a big amount of dowry.

- **Additional reasons:** There are other obstacles in marriages that young men face that are the conditions and demands that brides and families ask the groom to have or do before marriage such as having properties, separate house, so their daughter will not live with the groom’s parents, car and a good economical state. But these conditions are difficult to be done especially for young men.

The newly married or submitted to the marriage does not have the potential for demands because we find that many of the families that have been married for more than 10 years could not build their own house, so how about the poor people who want to marry? (Al-Rubayee 1997, p.58)

Also, the following reasons decrease girls’ chances in marriage. When the family’s aim from marriage is to gain money or showoff, the base of the marriage will not be a solid one that may lead to many problems between husband and wife. Girls who think about their future and want to have a stable life avoid marriages based on the following reasons and prefer to stay single and be called a “spinster”.

- a- **Showmanship:** some high-class families spend huge amounts of money to celebrate wedding ceremonies and events to show up like very rich high-class people, and this phenomenon spread through time between middle and poor class people.
- b- **The sense of inferiority:** some families find think that having big wedding parties and spending money is a way to limit the sense of inferiority of the bride’s or groom’s family.

Such concerts with extravagance in spending and a way to address some of the shortcomings in both the husband and wife such as: low level of education led each of them to make big party or lack of in aesthetically with the wife or husband. (Al-Rubayee 1997, p.59)

- c- **Greed:** the wedding celebration in original is to announce that these two persons got married and their relation is legal. While through time, people’s greed made them to do big parties and invite all the relatives and friends to get material benefits from their gifts “A lot of people try to establish wedding parties to gain the money from those who were invited to the ceremony.” (Al-Rubayee, 1997 p.59)

#### **4-Research Findings:**

The aim of this research is to explore and recognize the reasons behind women staying single in Erbil city. Through interviewing single women from different backgrounds, ages, and level



of education, I could have good information about the reasons for preferring to stay single. After analyzing the interviews, the following points were recognized as the main reasons behind women staying single:

**1- All of these academically successful single women have supportive families.**

All of those single women who succeeded in getting their higher education certificate, have a good job, have enough freedom to travel and participate in social activities considered themselves as successful women. They explained the reason behind this level of success in their life is having a supportive family.

B.M is 31 years old young lady; she has a master's degree and works at one of the international NGOs. When she has been asked about how she reached this high level of education and successful work she said "I have a very supportive family and they always supported me in all my steps. In addition I always believed in myself and my qualifications and felt that I need to learn more and move forward."

And the same thing with M.M, a 30 years old lecturer in one of the universities, mentioned "I always like to read and get knowledge and get higher levels of education and employment. And of course, my family supported me and encouraged me to study, to improve work and personality, and to travel to participate in different pieces of training and workshops."

While H.K, a 31 years old lecturer at university, mentioned that she faced obstacles in her way until she reached this high level of education and employment, and she could pass them with the support of her tribal family. "I had ambition and still have it. I could get my master's degree and could have all these experiences through my efforts and hard working. I was studying and working at the same time! Of course I faced obstacles but they were not that difficult! I could overcome the obstacles as I had a supportive family! My family supported me in all the steps!"

Also, each interviewee mentioned that their families did not pressure them to marry or stress them about being called a spinster; their families supported those women's choices.

According to these answers, it has been found that different types of families started to have an open mind and support their daughters in order for them to get a high level of education, employment, and do not think that girls' future is only to get married. This support helps these single women to have control over their own lives and take their own decisions about their personal lives.

**2- Marriage is a stage that all women should reach to create their own families, especially to have children.**

Most of these single women consider marriage as a stage in their life they have to go through, and their aims are to build their own family and have children. B.M explained marriage as "Marriage for me is a new stage of life, finding someone that can complete you and you feel that your life will be nicer and you will be happier to spend your life with this person and be ready to establish a family."

D.M a biologist at university, defines marriage as "it's kind of changing status from living your life alone to sharing it with someone else and depending and trusting on each other and it gives you kind of stability and strength." And she likes to marry in order not to stay alone and to have children "I don't want to stay alone in the future I dream about having babies and to have my own family and life."

While H.K considers marriage as a social contract "marriage is a contract between two persons! This contract is based on love, trust, respect and understanding each other." Also, M.M has the same idea about marriage "Marriage for me is a kind of contract between to people who agree to live together and build a family." And R.A shares the same idea about marriage; she says that "marriage is creating a mutual life between two people that is based on love and understanding each other."



F.H is a social worker in one of the secondary schools defines marriage as “it is stability with a person who completes me, and the most important thing is that to have children, I love them a lot and I cannot have them without marriage.” Her main aim from a marriage is to have children. And R.S, 38 years old lecturer at university has aim of marriage that is to have children, emotional, sexual life, and more freedom. She says “it is some kind of stability of emotion and having more freedom in a very conservative community, I want to have children (like them), and emotions stability. It is the only legal way to experience my emotions.”

G.A 30 years old, a teacher in one of the primary schools thinks that marriage is a duty and all women must do it, to save themselves from people’s speech. While RR has a very emotional idea about marriage “marriage is an agreement between two people who love each other, complete each other, and support each other in happiness and sadness.”

Finally, H.A, 28 years old master student in the UK defines marriage as “Marriage is a cooperative life for a couple of persons supporting each other to be what they want and bring a new educated generation to their country. It should be a nice and simple life without the traditional regulations that may get them to challenges in life. Simply I think the couple should be more like friends not to think who is going to control the other one.”

### **3- Some women belong to traditional or tribal families that affect their marriage decisions.**

These single women don’t have a problem with marriage itself, but with what they face before and after marriage, such as the pressures of some social traditions, families, and the mentality and the nature of the future husband.

For example, H.K thinks that marriage will save the girl from being called spinster by the people around her “every single girl this community afraid from the word of spinster – QAYRA.” Also, she explains the way her family tries to make her accept to marry by “Well, sometimes yes! As I have mentioned earlier because we are living in a traditional community, the families are under the pressures of the community! I realize if my family was not a part of this community they would never talk about this issue with me! But in general, they do not pressure, they just explain what happens to me if I did not get married and etc.”

M.M explains the issue in detail and says “when you are not married every person asks you why you are not married, even the family expects you to get married at a specific age, because the social beliefs and traditions put special roles for people and when men and women reach special age, they have to get married and have children. And if they don’t get married, many questions arise about the reason behind not getting married.” Additionally, M talks about other kinds of pressures that affect single women such as “As I mentioned above, I like my freedom and my life as a single. And of course there are cultural, social and educational reasons. Cultural because there are some cultural and social beliefs about how and when to get married and to whom it is preferred to marry, those beliefs that we grow up with them. Also, there are educational reasons that I got through opening my mind to the world and having my own ideas and desires about marriage and future husband.”

D.M talks about her family and how they do not support her choices about whom to marry and says “my family affects me a lot because I don’t even get any support from them and they have always a negative effect on my choice. Also, there are other reasons such as: The person, his education level and his social level feeling if I have any feeling to him or not affect marriage choices a lot.”

While F.H says that her family does not allow her to marry a man who is not in their level of education, social class, and financial incomes. And R.S blames the gender-based differences in our society and how men have freedom of choice and having relations more than women, she says “it is the very conservative tradition that prevents female to know people well, or choose (we should wait for the man who comes to ask for our hands), we as female don't have





the right to choose ...while, it is very acceptable for men to have relations even sexual relations.”

Furthermore, H.A explains the reason behind her family’s pressure on her to get married “they pressure me to get married, as they want me to be more acceptable in the society and to be far from gossips, but they can't affect my decision since i have my own personality and I know what I want in my life.”

Erbil society is rapidly changing, new generations have new way of thinking, they are open-minded and accept many things that were not acceptable in the past. Some of these single women belonged to families whom believed the old traditional way of marriage with its different conditions that created the problems mentioned above for these single women.

#### **4- They are happy in their current situation as single women.**

Some of these women are happy and like their lives as single, especially those who have enough freedom to go out, travel, participate in social life, continue their education, and develop at work. B.M says “I consider myself happy now; I don’t know if I get married how will be my life or the person that I may choose will be the right one. Currently, I live with my parents who are very caring and kind and I have a good job that people dream of and I have my freedom in everything and do whatever I like.” While HK thinks that she has to be Patient until she finds the right person to marry him “I have no problem with being single! I am accepting the reality and I still wait for the right guy...and I am sure he is coming.”

M.M thinks that staying single is better than getting married to the wrong person who will limit her ambitions and freedom “To stay single until I completely agree on the proposed man, because getting married to satisfy others will not be a successful marriage.” And R.S agrees with M.M and says “well, it depends on the man that I will engage with. If he is open mind then the marriage is the better choice, but if he was conservative then it is better to stay single.”

#### **5- They have many conditions for the future husband.**

When women get older and reach higher positions at work and education, their marriage conditions get higher and expect special features in their future husbands that may be difficult to be found. Most of them said that these are no perfect human, and they cannot find the perfect husband, but they mentioned the features they like to be in their future husband. For example, H.A says “a man who thinks about marriage the way I told you before... and support me to make my dreams true, as I'm so ambitious and still have so many things want to work on them and get them. The most important thing is I like to be a mum. I think I passed the stage that I need a man to allocate a good future for me since I can build my future by myself and the evidence is that it is going to be 2 years I'm living and studying in the UK alone and I could, strongly, face all challenges.”

While F.H and G.A both agree that the future husband must be from a good family from high social class, with high educational level, and religious because their fathers and mothers will not accept them to marry to men without these conditions.

B.M wants a strong man whom she can depend on “I always dream of a caring, kind man and at the same time a strong man that I feel I can depend on him. Of course I would like him to have a strong characteristic and charisma plus being smart and from a social class close to my family's social class.”

Furthermore, H.K and M.M mention that their future husband must be open-minded person who understands their need to work and develop. H.K says “I think there is no perfect husband at all! But I would like to say the good or the right person to me is somebody who understands me and the world, who has a respectful work, educated, religious, and respected by people, strong personality and from a respectful family.”

While M.M thinks that looking for these conditions keeps her single because she couldn’t find a person who has them all, she says “There is no perfect husband, and maybe that’s why I am



single until now. But generally, kind, educated, open-minded, gentleman, a person whom I can love and live with.”

### **5-Conclusion:**

This research presented single women in Erbil city - Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the reasons behind their staying single. Through analyzing other writers' views on marriage, and its definitions, it has been found that women expect responsibilities and limitations for their freedom, sacrifice their personal ambitions for the sake of family and children. This makes many women think about staying single or delaying marriage time until they can get their ambitions in the aspects of education and employment.

While in Iraq, many women in the past accepted the traditional ways of marriage, but now, when the community changed and developed, women got an education and got employed, and people's ideas about marriage have been changed.

Some women have high ambitions about what they want from future husbands, while some families seek financial support and gains from their daughter's marriage that create obstacles in the face of women's marriage on one hand.

On the other hand, men cannot provide or the demands of the bride and her families such as having properties, big celebrations, and large amount of money for the dowry that puts obstacles on marriage.

Throughout interviewing young, well-educated, and employed single women in Erbil city, the reasons behind women staying single were recognized. Some of these reasons are cultural, financial, and educational.

Some women feel free and happy with their families that make them do not think about getting married now and losing their happy life, while others face traditions and family decisions that affect their marriage choices. There are also women who have many conditions and demands about the future husband that are very difficult to be found in men; therefore they are still single until now.

Mostly, all the interviewees mentioned that they like to get married when they find a suitable husband in order to create their own family and have children, also to get rid of people's speeches about single women and why they are still unmarried.

Finally, with the majority of the interviewees, the level of education affected marriage choices and chances. When women's level of education gets higher, they develop their careers, they experience a certain level of freedom, they find it difficult to get married, and potentially lose all of their hard work. Also, because their marriage expectations get higher and their way of thinking change. While men think twice before asking for well-educated women because they worry about the big demands, open mentalities, and their request for freedom and employment choices.

### **6-Bibliography:**

- Alrubayee, D., (1997) *Factors influencing the delay in the age of marriage for girls Iraqi*. MA dissertation. Baghdad University.
- Aziz, M., (2010) *Kurdish women's participation in Paid Employment*. MA dissertation. University of Kurdistan-Hawler.
- Fink, C. (2012) *Spinsters Reloaded: Single Older Women in American Popular Culture*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Hathout, M., Jamil, U., Hathout, G. & Ali, N. (2006) *The Status of Women, In Pursuit of Justice: The Jurisprudence of Human Rights in Islam*. Los Angeles: Muslim Public Affairs Council. (pp. 161-199)
- Hughes, M. & Kroehler, C. J., (2005) *Sociology the Core*. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Lehman, K. (2009) The Single Woman: A Discursive Investigation, *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 308-310.
- Okin, S. M. (1989) *Justice, Gender, and the Family*. Chicago: Basic Books.
- Pateman, C. (1988) *The Sexual Contract*. Oxford: Stanford University Press.
- Reynolds, J. (2008) *The Single Woman: A Discursive Investigation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Taylor, A. (2012) *Single Women in Popular Culture: The Limits of Post feminism*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.



كوران، م. (2015) العراق يتصدر الدول العربية في نسبة العنوسة. {على الخط}. يمكن الحصول عليه:

<https://www.rudaw.net/arabic/middleeast/iraq/2106201516> (يوم الزيارة 2020/7/10)

وزارة التخطيط العراقية. (2018) نسب صادمه للنساء في العراق.. 7% تزوجن دون 15 سنة و 85% يستخدمن الموبايل. {على الخط}.

يمكن الحصول عليه: <https://www.mawazin.net/Details.aspx?jimare=21789> (يوم الزيارة 2020/4/6)

### **7-Annex: Consent Letter Sample**

#### **Single Women in Erbil**

#### **Consent to take part in research**

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves having an interview with the researcher, answering personal and general questions asked by the researcher, and providing information related to the topic.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a published research and public seminar.
- I understand that I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

The researcher:

Muzhda Mohammed Azeez

Assistant Lecturer – Social Work Department, College of Arts/ Salahhadin University – Erbil

Mobile: 0750 454 4093

E-mail: muzhda.azeez@su.edu.krd

Signature of participant:

## الفتيات العازبات في مدينة أربيل دراسة نوعية عن أسباب وعقبات بقاء الفتيات عزاوات في مدينة أربيل

مژده محمد عزيز

كلية الاداب - قسم الخدمة الاجتماعية / جامعة صلاح الدين-أربيل

### ملخص

موضوع الفتاة العزباء من المواضيع المثيرة للجدل في مدينة أربيل. غالباً ما يكون النجاح المهني دافعاً كافياً للفتاة لتبقى عزباء، حيث تتمتع هي بالتنافس العملي لتتقدم إلى المناصب التنفيذية في العمل وتجدها مرضية للغاية. هناك العديد من الفتيات غير المتزوجات في مدينة أربيل لأسباب عديدة. من خلال المراقبة والعلاقات الاجتماعية لوحظ أن معدل النساء غير المتزوجات أخذ في التزايد لأسباب عديدة. و بحسب تقرير (العراق يتصدر الدول العربية في نسبة العنوسة)، الذي نشر على موقع روداو سنة 2015، فقد بلغ نسبة الفتيات الغير متزوجات اللاتي وصلن سن الزواج في العراق (من ضمنها كردستان) 85%، كما أعلنت وزارة التخطيط العراقية على موقع موازين نيوز سنة 2018 ان نسبة الفتيات بعمر (15-49) اللاتي يشعرن بالامان عند تواجدهن بالبيت لوحدهن هو 85% في كردستان مقابل 60% في وسط و جنوب العراق و لا يشعرن بالحاجة للزواج المبكر. قد ترفض بعض النساء الزواج لأنهن يرغبن في تطوير مستواهن التعليمي والحصول على حياة مهنية ناجحة. تعتقد هؤلاء النساء أن الزواج سيمنعهن من السفر إلى الخارج من أجل تنمية معلوماتهن، ولن يستطعن العمل في المؤسسات المختلفة إذا تزوجن لا سيما في بعض مناطق مدينة أربيل حيث لا يسمح بعض الرجال التقليديين لبناتهن او لخواجتهن بالسير بمفردهن وترك عائلتهن خلفهن. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، من الصعب على المرأة ترك أطفالها بمفردهم، لأن معظم النساء يضحين برغباتهن الشخصية من أجل أسرهن. بينما تتمتع بعض النساء عن الزواج بسبب بعض المشاكل المنزلية، خاصة في العائلات القبلية عندما لا تقبل الأسرة أن تزوج الابنة من رجل لا ينتمي إلى نفس القبيلة، او تطالب عائلات أخرى بالمهر المبالغ فيه كطلب مبلغ كبير من المال ومنزل باهظ الثمن لا يستطيع العرسان توفيره. بالإضافة الى ذلك، هناك سبب اعتماد اسرة الفتاة العزباء عليها ماديا و رفضهم لزواجها خوفا من حرمانهم من دعمها المادي. من خلال هذا البحث، تم استطلاع بعض المشاكل الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والتعليمية التي تكون عائقا امام زواج الفتيات. للوصول الى استنتاجات منطقية تم استخدام المنهجية النوعية في هذا البحث، حيث تم اجراء مقابلات مع عشرين فتاة عزباء اللاتي تتراوح اعمارهن ما بين 25-40 سنة و يعملن في الجامعات والمؤسسات الحكومية والمنظمات غير الحكومية في مدينة أربيل و هن من خلفيات اجتماعية واقتصادية وتعليمية مختلفة، كما تمت توجيه أسئلة معدة مسبقاً لتلك الفتيات (مقابلة شبه منظمة). و ساهمت هذه المقابلات المتعمقة و قدرة التواصل الشخصي من قبل الباحثة معهن في الحصول على معلومات جيدة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** المرأة العزباء، الزواج، المجتمع، التوقعات.

### كچی سه لته شاری ههولیر

تویژینه وهیه کی چۆنیتیبه سه بهارت به هۆکار و رێگریه کانی له پشت هاوسه رگیری نه کردنی کچ له شاری ههولیردا

مژده محمد عزيز

بهشی کاری کۆمه لایهتی - کۆلیژی ئاداب / زانکۆی سه لاهه ددین-ههولیر

### پوخته

باهتی (کچ) له شاری ههولیردا باهتیکه گرنکه، سه رهکوتنی کچ له بواری کاردا تا رادهیه کی زۆر هانی کچان ده دات، هاوسه رگیری نه کهن. کچان چۆ لهو کبیرکێیه دا ده بینن، که له میانهی وه رگرتنی پۆستی بالا له کارکردندا ههیه، ئەمەش یه کیکه لهو فاکتوره نهی هاوسه رگیری نه کردنیان. له ریی ئه و په یوه ندییه کۆمه لایهتی و تیبینی کردنی به بهشداریکردنی تویژهره وه ده رکوت، که به هۆی چهن دین هۆکاری جیا جیاوه رێژهی مانه وهی کچ و هاوسه رگیری نه کردنیان، له زیادبووندایه. به پیتی راپۆرتی (العراق يتصدر الدول العربية في نسبة العنوسة)، که له ساپتی رهوداو له (2010) دا بلاوکراوه ته وه، رێژهی کچ له عیراق گهیشته 80٪، ههروهها به پیتی راپۆرتیکه وه زارهتی پلاندانانی عیراقی که له ساپتی مهوازين، لا سالی (2018) دا بلاوکراوه ته وه، ئاماژه به وه کراوه، رێژهی ئه و کچانهی که ته مه نیان له تیوان (10-15) (40-60) سالدايه، پیناوايه: به بچ هاوسه رگیری زیاتر ههست به سه لاهه تی و ئارامی ده کهن گهیشته 80٪ له کوردستاندا و له ناوه راست و باشووری عیراقیش (70٪)، به شیک لهو کچانه هاوسه رگیری رهنده که نه وه، به وهی ده یانه و پیت زیاتر، باهخ به رزکردنه وهی ئاستی خویندنیان بدهن و کاریکی گونجاو وه دهستببخهن، ههروهها به هۆی ئه وهی ههتا ئیستاش له به شیک له خیزانهکان له شاری ههولیر، لهو باوه ردهان ناکرێ، کچ به ته نهها گهشت بکات بۆ ده ره وهی ولات، بۆیه به شیک له کچان لهو باوه ردهان هاوسه رگیری ده پیت به ره بهر ده م ئازادیاندا، به تایبهت گهشتگردن به مه بهستی خویندن. له گه ل ئه وه شدا به هۆی کیشیه کۆمه لایهتی و بیرکردنه وهی خێله کی له ئیو به شیک له خیزانهکان، که ریکه نادهن کچه کانیان هاوسه رگیری له گه ل پیاوێک بکهن که له هه مان خێلی خۆیان نه ییت، ئەمە سه رباری بوونی خیزانگه لیک، هه رکات داخوازی کچه کانیان ده ییت، داواکاری زۆر و قورسیان هه یه له به رامبه ر به شوودانی کچه کانیان، که ره نگه هه ندخ له کوران نه توانن دایینی بکهن. هۆکاریکی دیکه، ده گه رپته وه بۆ باری دارایی کچان، به هۆی ئه وهی ئەم کچانه کارده کهن و ئەرکی دایینکردنی داها و پیداو یستی خیزانه کانیان له ئەستۆیه. له ریی ئەم تویژینه وه یه وه ده رکوت که کاریگه ریه کانی هه ریه ک له باری (کۆمه لایه تی، ئابووری و ته کادیمی)، له پشت هاوسه رنه گه رینه کردنی کچانه وه یه. بۆ ده سته کوه تی زانیاری وردو ته کادیمی، پشت به میتۆدی چۆنایه تی به ستراره، که خۆی له چاوپیکه وتن و تیبینی کردن به به شداریکردندا ده یینته وه، که چاوپیکه وتن له گه ل (20) کچ له شاری ههولیر ئه نجام دراوه که ته مه نیان له تیوان (20-40) سالدايه و کارده کهن له دامه زراوهی حکومی و نا حکومی (ریکخراوه کانی کۆمه لگای مه ده نی)، هه ریه که یان له رووی کۆمه لایه تی و ئابووری و ته کادیمی وه جیاوازان.

**وشه کللییه کان:** کچ، هاوسه رگیری، کۆمه لگا، چاوه رپوانیه کان.