

# Gamophobia and Its Relationship with Family Communication Patterns among Unmarried Postgraduate Students at Yarmouk University

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## Abstract

This study aimed to assess the prevalence of gamophobia among unmarried graduate students at Yarmouk University, Jordan, and to explore its correlation with family communication patterns. The sample comprised 255 male and female students selected through convenience sampling. The results indicated that the overall level of gamophobia within the sample was moderate. Notably, gamophobia levels were significantly higher among females and employed students compared to their male and unemployed counterparts. No significant differences in gamophobia levels related to age or educational level were found. Regarding the relationship between gamophobia and family communication patterns, the study identified a significant positive correlation with four specific family role patterns and a significant negative correlation with one family communication pattern. The analysis further showed that family communication patterns ranged from medium to high, with the balanced communication pattern being the most prevalent and the blaming pattern the least. Additionally, while no significant differences in family communication patterns were observed based on gender, differences were noted in the placating pattern in favor of doctoral students, in the placating and super-reasonable patterns favoring employed students, in the placating style for the 25–30 and 30+ age groups, and the irrelevant pattern for those under 25 years old. The balanced communication pattern was more prevalent among participants aged 30 years and older.

**Keywords:** gamophobia; communication; patterns; family; post-graduate students; unmarried people; Yarmouk University.

As we live in an accelerating and constantly moving-forward world, our lifestyles have been directly and indirectly impacted by the recent changes, a state of affairs that adds to our already complex lifestyles. This issue makes people more concerned about meeting the demands that

lifestyles impose on them, causing them to be more cautious and, therefore, more doubtful when making decisions. Simply put, one gets destitute in situations that cause him to keep decisions, especially pivotal ones, pending for extended periods of time. For example, it is never

an easy step to make decisions as regards when to get married; hence, decisions like these are often accompanied by feelings of fear and anxiety. Added to context-specific social and cultural concerns, fear of marriage (technically called gamophobia) is likely to occur, which may affect the individual's stability and psychological well-being, his ability to build healthy relationships with others, and his unique patterns of communication with family members.

Gamophobia, or fear of marriage, has become more widespread among graduate students in the Jordanian society and has become manifest in marriage delay, negatively affecting the psychological health of the individual (Jabr & Hassan, 2022). Marriage phobia may become a conscious state that arises as a result of negative emotional experiences in the nuclear family. For some researchers (e.g., Sanni & Eneh, 2003), parents' incongruities, incompatibilities, and clashes may be a reason for their offspring's aversion to marriage. As the family is the first social institution in which the individual grows up, it inevitably affects the making of his character in all its aspects. The patterns of communication (verbal or non-verbal) between family members are of paramount importance in the proper socialization of children, forming their personalities, directing their behavior, and imparting social values to them. Bakkar (2009) contends that family communication is a significant cause for achieving empathy among family members and enhancing their self-confidence.

Family communication affects the individual's upbringing, shapes his personality and self-concept, and defines his values, beliefs, trends, and inclinations. Family communication also affects the individual's acquisition of the attitudes he can adopt in his environment. An individual's (in)compatibility with his environment depends on his (in)compatibility with his family. To illustrate, an individual who grows up in a cohesive family feels safe, becomes physically fit, and gets psychologically balanced. Conversely, an individual growing up

in a broken, shattered family may be exposed to frustration and deprivation (Morsi, 2008). The findings of Ossia's & Chujor's (2023) study indicated that paternal family background was a primary factor that influenced marriage phobia among single graduate students; the individual's family background influenced his/her behavior in that if a person was found in a home where no good relationship holds between the husband (father) and wife (mother), s/he would become more inclined to refrain from marriage. The findings of several studies have shown that previous traumatic experiences in childhood (e.g., witnessing parents fighting, experiencing parents' emotional or real divorce, viewing parents' relationship as only a marriage of convenience, experiencing domestic violence and/or being abandoned as children) make young people vulnerable to developing a phobia of marriage (Kleinsorge & Covitz, 2012; Bastaits et al., 2018).

Given the findings of some studies (e.g., Bakhshi & Ghomeshi, 2017), a host of factors could then be seen as independent variables affecting gamophobia among students including, but not limited to, unemployment, level of education, fear of excessive increase in the cost of living, failure in marriage, and lack of family communication. Studies (e.g., Gasiorska et al., 2018) have also shown a significant relationship between the level of education and lack of desire to marry.

Delayed marriage among graduate students is rising in various sociocultural contexts that have yet to receive their due share of research (Gasiorska et al., 2018). Therefore, the current study is critical to researchers due to the paucity of research on this topic in the Arab World and abroad. The authors of the current research have noted that most previous studies had investigated gamophobia and family communication patterns independently, rarely investigating the correlation between both. By pulling the two together in this research endeavor, the literature on the topic may be further enriched by the information gained from

field studies conducted in different sociocultural contexts. Therefore, our overarching goal in the current endeavor was to investigate the possible correlation between gamophobia and family communication patterns (namely placating, blaming, being irrelevant, being super-reasonable, and being balanced).

The study's applied significance lies in the feasibility of using the findings to make recommendations to, for example, build up training courses, develop preventive and therapeutic counseling programs aimed at alleviating the negative effects of gamophobia, enhance university students' awareness of positive family communication patterns, and devise novel measures of gamophobia among the youth. Finally, the current study could open the door for further research.

The current study was limited in scope as it had enrolled only a small sample of unmarried graduate students in one sociocultural context - Yarmouk University. The participants were accessed as they were enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2023/2024 AD. Given the validity and reliability values for each, the study findings were determined by both tools (the Gamophobia Scale and the Family Communication Patterns Scale). Added to this is the level of the participants' objectivity when responding to the questionnaire paragraphs (items) of each scale.

## Literature Review

### Gamophobia

Gamophobia (or phobia of marriage) is the feeling of fear of marriage and preference not to be joined in matrimony. The term is derived from the Greek word "gamos", meaning marriage, contrasting with "autophobia" which is the fear of not having a relationship, or the fear of remaining unmarried, or getting married to the wrong person (for details, see Fani & Kheirabadi, 2011).

As a form of social phobia, gamophobia is associated with an intense and persistent fear of

entering into a relationship or committing one's self to a life partner. A set of indicators including, but not limited to, difficulty expressing oneself, feeling anxious when discussing marriage, and being panic-stricken by the idea itself is very common among those who fear the idea of being joined in matrimony. Hence, individuals with gamophobia believe that marriage is a negative thing that should be avoided (Ghita & Beshara, 2019).

Marriage phobia is commonly believed to be an abnormal, irrational, and exaggerated fear. Individuals who have this phobia experience undue anxiety, fear the idea of being with another person, have the bogey of raising children, and are preoccupied with feelings of failure and disappointment as a marital partner (Fani & Kheirabadi, 2011). Al-Jundi (2017) defines it as a psychological disorder that ultimately crystallizes in a state of phobia outside the individual's control. He adds that it is not based on logical reasons regarding formal engagement, especially marriage. It is more common among men, who tend to fear marriage due to personal, financial, and social risks.

An individual suffering from gamophobia displays a cluster of symptoms, such as an intense and irrational fear of marriage and fear of its obligations. It may reach the point that thinking about marriage or seeing someone getting married causes this type of phobia and reinforces it if it has already been experienced. Complete avoidance of marriage events, panic attacks, and mood disturbances are common indicators whenever the idea of marriage is presented or discussed. Panic attacks are accompanied by physical/body signs/symptoms such as trembling, crying, rapid heartbeat, disturbed breathing, nausea, dizziness, and sweating (Jabr & Hassan, 2022). Psychological symptoms may also appear in states of depression, loss of interest, and feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness (Ossia & Chujor, 2023).

Jannati (2023) argues that homophobia is a common disorder that any individual, especially

males, can suffer from as a result of a constellation of personal, social, and economic factors that indeed affect an individual's decision to tie the knot. These include low self-confidence, poor economic conditions, and unsuccessful previous experiences. Other reasons that may contribute to increasing the likelihood of marriage phobia include an individual's fear of commitment, the fright of staying with one person for the rest of one's life, and the risk of shouldering the responsibilities that come with such commitment. The responsibilities include daily personal demands and housing costs. Emotional requirements, such as trust, loyalty, love, true friendship, and respect, are of no less concern to the individual, especially those who have had previous unsuccessful marriages. People who have unfaithful partners experience much emotional pain; they probably act this way to protect themselves from being in the same situation again. In addition to the fear of betrayal, rejection, and abandonment, other individuals may fear marriage due to peers' failure to maintain a successful marriage or due to an increase in divorce rates over the years. A point worthy of mention here is that a significant cause of some people's anxiety is their fear of being blessed with children after getting married (Nwoye, 1991; Caughlin et al., 2000).

Marriage phobia may arise due to unsuccessful marriage experiences that the individual witnesses in the family or close social circle (Reis & Rusbult, 2004). Marriage phobia may, therefore, be rooted in the family and community environment, and it may transform into rigid beliefs with self-talk/contemplation (Rostami et al., 2020). In this context, Ossia and Chujor (2023) argue that paternal family background is an influential factor in marriage phobia among unmarried graduate students. Hence, an individual's family background undoubtedly affects his/her behavior. The lack of a good/healthy relationship between the husband (father) and wife (mother) may cause the person

to become more inclined to refrain from marriage.

Abassi et al. (2023) have pointed out that marriage phobia may be linked to an individual's longing for perfectionism, or one's lack of decision-making power, his fear of being betrayed, his fear of being connected to someone, and/or exposure to ridicule, irresponsibility, dependency, and self-blame. Previous painful incidents in early childhood, such as watching parents quarrel, experiencing an emotional or absolute divorce, or hearing repeated stories about failed marriages among close friends, can all aggravate fear of marriage among the youth (Bastaitis et al., 2018). Adults who have experienced domestic violence (especially from their parents), been abandoned as children, or abused by foster guardians are also vulnerable to marriage phobia (Kleinsorge & Covitz, 2012). Labadie et al. (2018) argue that sexual harassment (by sex offenders or rapists) is considered one of the most severe factors that force traumatized victims to distance themselves from others.

Marriage phobia is linked to the experiences that an individual goes through, whether through print or electronic (social) media, which undoubtedly play a significant role in shaping people's interest in marriage or in developing their fear of marriage (Olotu, 2016). Research has also shown that increased women's income (and their connection to the labor market) has enhanced their independence, allowing them to remain unmarried (Ellwood et al., 2004). The results of Kalmijn's (2011) study have shown a relationship between the improvement of people's economic situation on the one hand and marriage on the other, such that the lower the monthly salary and the higher the unemployment rates, the greater the chances of escaping marriage.

Several theories have provided some logical explanations for gamophobia. One of these theories is Erikson's theory of psychological and social development. Erikson believes that personality develops in a series of stages where

the impact of social experience over the entire lifespan is ubiquitous. Erikson argues that there are eight distinct stages that an individual must go through to develop generally from early childhood to late adulthood. In this theoretical framework, it is also believed that the intimate relationship versus isolation (youth stage: 20-39) constitutes the definite stage when fear of marriage is likely to occur. In this stage, young people mature sexually and are thus able to make decisions regarding marriage. The decision at this stage may result from positive or adverse childhood experiences, shaped by many conflicting forces, such as the influence of peer groups and parent's marital background (Olotu, 2016).

The theory of Social Learning is another theoretical framework that provides some explanation of gamophobia. It holds that one's behavior is learned through observation, i.e., human learning occurs through observing others' behaviors. Influenced by what they observe, people decide which behaviors to choose on their own or perform later. One basic premise of the theory is that humans are active information processors, constantly thinking about the relationship between their behavior and its consequences and bearings. As children observe individuals behave differently, they might take some (such as parents within the family, friends within their peer group, and teachers at school) as role models. To them, these models provide examples of behavior that should be observed and imitated. Observational learning can lead to learning completely new behaviors or influence the frequency of occurrence of previously learned ones. It is worth noting that the theory of social learning underlies the assumption that direct consequences do not shape behavior; instead, it considers the consequences, ramifications, and bearings of the action (Bandura & Walters, 1977). To the advocates of this theory, phobia is seen through the lenses of learning by modeling. Observing an individual can have a positive or negative impact on the behavior of the observer. It calls for identifying

whoever has been involved in the young adult's life and whoever has caused inappropriate learned behaviors that have led to fear of marriage (Olotu, 2016).

#### Patterns of family communication

Family relationships are primarily constrained by family members' communication patterns/roles. Hence, healthy family relationships reflect positive patterns, but unhealthy relationships reflect negative patterns—states that affect the attainment of happiness and fulfillment of satisfaction for all family members.

As a concept, communication refers to the process through which interaction takes place between individuals in a particular context. This includes exchanging information and facts and being aware of different sensations, feelings, trends, and points of view. The transfer of various experiences through symbols, language, and gestures could be added to the forces that influence the receiving party and ensure understanding of the content of the message (Al-Juhani & Abu Asaad, 2019). Family communication is therefore defined as family members' interactive behavioral patterns that have an impact on all of them, determine family tasks for all of them, strengthen personal relationships between all of them, and preserve family rules and forms of behavior in the family as one coherent whole (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Shend et al. (2017, 418) argue that family communication is "the scientific study that describes the communicative relationships, whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, that takes place between members of the same family to identify the forces influencing them and adopt appropriate methods to support them and thus influence each individual through his relationship with the others."

Cherry (2016) defines family communication patterns as the methods family members adopt in dialogue and discussion. They manifest in two types of communication: dialogue (which includes parents' discussions with children without predetermined limits) and

respect (which includes showing obedience and appreciation for parents, achieving communication and harmony in attitudes and opinions). On the other hand, Abu Aita (2019) defines family communication patterns as the behaviors and practices that family members carry out when interacting with each other. They appear during their daily encounters and in times of conflict and disagreement.

Family communication is essential to achieve psychological and emotional satisfaction/balance. Feelings of love are expressed through encouragement and support, the use of expressions of courtship and special names for family members, and the use of non-verbal communication such as body language, eye contact, and gestures that express tenderness and care – all contributing to increasing their level of self-esteem (Madahi et al., 2013). Family communication aims to achieve understanding and harmony among family members and to enhance common denominators among its members. Concisely, the aims are establishing the rules of positive interaction, meeting the needs of different individuals, instilling values in them, teaching them how to manage emotions, and instilling in them the skill of listening (Xiao et al., 2011).

Several theories have addressed the patterns/roles of family communication, emphasizing their importance in achieving and unenhancing stability in family relationships. One of these theories is the theory of Multigenerational Family Therapy, Bowen points out that parents help children acquire positive behaviors and thus help them deal successfully with the circumstances they may face. Through family therapy, family members are helped to gain awareness of communication patterns, feelings, and thoughts to devise ways to relieve pressure. This requires maintaining a family environment that allows for the exchange of information, contributes to controlling feelings and emotions, and aids in developing positive attitudes. All of these can be affected by focusing on verbal and non-verbal

communication and viewing problems as opportunities for interaction (Abu Aita, 2019).

Bowen's family system model is based on the supposition that an individual's symptoms are merely reflections of embodiments, or metaphors, of the type of parental relationship that are nothing more than the product of unresolved conflicts within the family (Aladdin, 2019). Hence, multigenerational family therapy seeks to achieve self-differentiation from others and contribute to developing positive communication patterns among the group to mitigate the causes of disintegration or lack of communication among family members (Wilke et al., 2015).

On the other hand, Koerner and Fitzpatrick's theory of family communication patterns focuses on family communication's role in the individual's cognitive development and psychological well-being and the organized cognitive schemes responsible for communication between family members. It articulates how individuals exchange ideas as a family group on the one hand and how they exchange the same ideas with other individuals outside the family system (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2012).

As one of the founders of family counseling who added an essential imprint in building the theory of family communication, Satir believes that humans are naturally optimistic and innately possess life energy through which they can communicate positively, understand others, and accept them with tolerance and affection. However, they need to realize the potential energy they innately possess to communicate, interact with each other, and realize themselves as active agents (Rasheed et al., 2009). Therefore, the theory focuses on relationships and concepts that bring about family stability by activating communication patterns and defining the relationships between family members. Satir emphasizes the importance of family cohesion to make family members more capable of understanding each other, a state of affairs that can be reached by focusing on the process of

sending and receiving messages, i.e., the means through which communication occurs within the family (Brubacher, 2006).

One of Satir's primary contributions to the field of family communication is dichotomy of the communication patterns/styles, thus dividing the communication roles within the family into five patterns. The first four are called negative communication patterns. These are placating, blaming, being irrelevant, and being super-reasonable. They are all maladaptive, destructive, and frustrating styles, thus negatively affecting the individual's physical well-being and lowering his self-worth. The fifth pattern, being balanced, on the other hand, is a healthy, adaptive pattern (Piddocke, 2010). The following is a detailed description of the person who adopts each communication role/pattern:

- **Placater:** Someone who is weak and indecisive; denies conflicts but tends to apologize; seems generally nice; always agrees to everything.
- **Blamer:** someone who finds others full of mistakes; reprimands them for their mistakes; does not take responsibility for resolving conflicts; is characterized by being judgmental of others; always sees himself as right and others as wrong; and denies his role in causing problems.
- **Irrelevant:** Someone who confuses and distracts others; establishes no connection with family affairs; seems as if he has nothing to do with others; always seeks to avoid problems and conflicts rather than seek solutions for them; seems disconnected from others; and does not offer help.
- **Super-Reasonable:** someone who is very rational; is characterized by inflexibility and rigidity; is detached by keeping distant from others; seems calm and unemotional; has control of his emotions; and does not open up to others.
- **Balanced:** someone who is flexible; is characterized by being open and real; expresses himself authentically and honestly; shows congruence between verbal and non-verbal messages; maintains eye contact when

conversing; and does not pass judgment during the communication process.

Upon reviewing the literature on the subject, the researchers have found several relevant studies conducted in various sociocultural contexts. For example, Shearman and Dumlao (2008) conducted a study that aimed to compare patterns of communication and family conflict common in Japan vis-à-vis those common in the United States of America. Their study sample consisted of (304) university students. Whereas (173) students were selected from a university in the eastern United States, (131) students were selected from two universities in Tokyo, Japan. The results showed that the consensual family type (the type in which both the dialogue style and the obedience/commitment style are high) was most common in the United States. In contrast, the laissez-faire family type (in which the dialogue and obedience/commitment styles are low) was most common in Japan.

Ragheb's and Badir's (2012) study aimed to identify patterns of family dialogue and their ramifications on developing self-management among children. The overarching goal was to identify the prevailing family communication patterns in the social context in which their study was conducted. The study sample consisted of (378) male and female university students in Cairo and Giza in Egypt. The study results showed that the style of discussion came in first place among the study participants.

Salehi et al.'s (2012) study aimed to determine gender differences in family communication patterns among a sample of students at Islamic Azad University in Tehran. The study sample consisted of (204) male and female students. The results indicated no statistically significant differences in family communication patterns (communication/dialogue patterns, obedience patterns, and commitment) due to the gender variable.

In Jordan, where the current study was conducted, Khatahtbeh (2017) had already investigated the relationship between forms of

family interaction and Yarmouk University students' social skills. The study sample consisted of (452) male and female students. The Family Interaction Forms and Social Skills Scale were used to achieve the study's objectives. The results showed that the democratic style was the most common style of family interaction and that there was a statistically significant difference due to the gender variable favoring males.

Al-Akaishi et al. (2020) conducted a study that aimed to identify the correlation between parental treatment methods and family communication in Emirati families from the point of view of a sample of citizen students at the University of Sharjah. The study sample consisted of (259) female students from the United Arab Emirates. The results indicated that family communication in the Emirati family was generally positive.

Magable's (2021) study aimed to identify family communication patterns and their relationship to anxiety in choosing a life partner by a sample of (736) female students at Yarmouk University - Jordan. The results showed that the congruent/balanced pattern came first, while the blaming pattern came last.

Mustafa et al. (2021) conducted a study to identify family communication patterns between parents and their children when choosing a life partner. The study sample consisted of (400) respondents of both genders, ranging in age between 18 to 35 years, from all over the Malaysian Peninsula. The results showed that the preventive family communication style was most common when discussing matters related to marriage and had a statistically significant influence on young people's decision-making regarding marriage.

Ren (2022) investigated the psychological characteristics of Chinese youth who fear marriage. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher followed a qualitative approach by interviewing (6) people who were suffering from marriage phobia, whose ages ranged between (20-30) years. The results showed four main psychological aspects of youth fearing marriage:

fear of losing opportunities for career advancement, fear of marital infidelity (adultery), fear of repeating parents' marriage experiences, and fear of not fulfilling expectations regarding matrimonial life.

Shalabi (2022) conducted a study to identify the most common family communication patterns among university students and their level of social self-efficacy. The study sample consisted of (303) male and female students enrolled at some universities in the Riyadh region - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The results indicated that the most common family communication patterns among the study sample were as follows: the consensual communication pattern, followed by the protective pattern, which in turn followed by the pluralistic communication pattern, and finally, the neutral pattern. The results showed a statistically significant difference due to the gender variable favoring males, but there was no statistically significant difference due to the age variable.

Al-Zbun's (2023) study aimed to discover the most common familial communication patterns among Hashemite University-Jordan students. The study sample consisted of (600) male and female students. The results indicated that the level of family communication patterns was relatively moderate. The study also showed that the dialogue-oriented style was the most common. A statistically significant difference in the level of dialogue-oriented family communication style due to the gender variable favoring males was attested.

Cantekin's and Kunduraci's (2024) study aimed to uncover marriage phobia among public university students in Turkey concerning family affiliation on the one hand and parental attitudes on the other hand. The study sample consisted of (992) male and female students. The results showed that students who suffered from a high degree of marriage phobia had a low level of family affiliation/sense of belonging. It was also shown that those students viewed their parents' attention as low; therefore, their psychological independence turned low. On the other hand, the



results showed a low level of marriage phobia among students with a high level of family affiliation/belonging.

Methods and Procedures

Believing to be suiting the objectives of the current study, the descriptive, correlational approach was used.

Study Participants

(255) unmarried postgraduate students at Yarmouk University, enrolled in the second semester of the 2023/2024 academic year, participated in the study. They were selected using the convenience sampling method (i.e., based on their accessibility and availability). Table (1) below shows the distribution of the study sample members according to gender, educational level, age, and employment status.

Table (1): Sample distribution according to the variables of the study

| Variable          | Category        | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Sex               | Male            | 97        | 38.0       |
|                   | Female          | 158       | 62.0       |
| Educational Level | MA              | 163       | 63.9       |
|                   | PhD             | 92        | 36.1       |
| Employment status | Unemployed      | 167       | 65.5       |
|                   | Employed        | 88        | 34.5       |
| Age               | Less than 25    | 107       | 42.0       |
|                   | 25-less than 30 | 80        | 31.4       |
|                   | 30-and above    | 68        | 26.7       |
| Total             |                 | 255       | 100.0      |

Two Instruments

Two instruments, the gamophobia scale, and the family communication patterns scale, were modified to suit the study's context and used to collect the participants' responses. Before being administered, the reliability of each scale was verified. Below is a detailed description of the verification processes.

Validation of the Gamophobia Scale

To achieve the study's objectives, the researchers adapted the gamophobia scale in light of the ones already available in the past relevant studies, such as Qaqah et al. (2023) and Ossai and Chujor (2023). Initially, the scale consisted of (22) items.

It was presented initially to several specialists in psychological counseling and educational psychology to verify the scale's validity. They were cordially asked to assess all items (paragraphs) regarding their relevance to the scale, clarity in wording, and suitability/appropriateness to the study context. The referees were requested to delete, add, or modify any paragraphs (items) and voice any

concerns they deemed appropriate. Taking the referees' comments into account, two paragraphs were deleted, and the wording of some paragraphs was adjusted. As a result, the final version of the scale consisted of (20) items.

To further verify the validity/reliability of the scale, it was piloted on an experimental sample of (30) male and female students from the study population who were not part of the study sample. Two criteria were taken into account for accepting the items of the scale: (1) the correlation coefficient be (0.20) or more, (2) the statistical significance of the correlation, and (3) the correlation coefficients between each item and the scale as a whole. It turned out that Pearson correlation coefficients between the item and the total score for the scale ranged between (0.40-0.78).

To verify the scale's reliability, it was re-applied to the same piloting sample two weeks after the first application. The scale's reliability was measured using the Pearson correlation coefficient for the two applications. It turned out that the correlation for the whole scale was

(0.91). Furthermore, the internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach alpha) was also worked out. It was (0.82) for the total scale. These preliminary results conclude that the scales had relatively high degrees of reliability.

#### Validation of Family Communication Patterns Scale:

To achieve the study's objectives, the Family Communication Patterns developed by Shawashreh et al. (2020) were used after being modified to fit the objectives of the current study. It is worth noting that Shawashreh et al.'s (2020) scale had already been developed in light of Satir's theory. In its developed version, the scale consisted of (25) items divided into five communication roles/patterns: Placating, blaming, being irrelevant, being super-reasonable, and being congruent/Balanced.

As for the procedures undertaken to ensure the reliability/validity of the scale in its original form, Shawashreh et al. (2020) verified the content validity of the scale by presenting it to several specialists in the field of psychological counseling and educational psychology. The construct validity indicators were worked out for the study items/paragraphs. The correlation coefficients of the paragraph with its relevant dimension/category ranged between (0.34-0.65). In the current study, the scale was presented in its initial form (25 items) to several specialists in psychological counseling and educational psychology. They were cordially requested to evaluate the scale items' relevance to the five communication patterns, clarity in wording, and suitability to the study context. They were also informed that they could delete, add, or modify any paragraph (item) if needed and provide/voice any further comments/concerns they deemed appropriate. Referees' comments on the wording of some paragraphs were also considered. In its final shape, the scale consisted of (25) items dispersed into the five communication roles/patterns.

Reliability/validity indicators for the scale were also calculated by piloting it on a sample of (30) male and female students from the study

population. Two criteria were taken into consideration for accepting the items/paragraphs: (1) the correlation coefficient be (0.20) or more, so the correlation be statistically significant, and (2) there be correlation coefficients between each paragraph and the pattern to which it belongs. Accordingly, Pearson correlation coefficients between the paragraph and its pattern ranged between (0.68-0.77) for the placating pattern, (0.60-0.86) for the blaming pattern, (0.39-0.80) for the Irrelevant pattern, (0.51-0.76) for the super-responsible pattern, and (0.47-0.74) for the balanced pattern.

As for the procedures undertaken to ensure the scale's reliability in its original form, Shawashreh et al. (2020) worked out the internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach alpha). The values for the placating, blaming, irrelevant, super-reasonable, and balanced types were 0.79, 0.90, 0.80, 0.77, and 0.72, respectively. The stability of the scale was also verified by the test-retest method. After the applications, Pearson correlation coefficients between the first and second applications were calculated. The test-retest reliability coefficients for the patterns were 0.89, 0.92, 0.81, 0.84, and 0.77, respectively.

To verify the scale's reliability in the current study, it was piloted on a sample of (30) male and female students from the population who were not part of the study sample. The scale was re-applied to the same piloting sample two weeks after the first application. The scale's reliability was measured using the test-retest method by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient between the first and second applications. The internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach alpha) was also calculated. Internal consistency coefficients ranged between (0.71-0.85) for the five patterns, and repetition reliability coefficients ranged between (0.82-0.92).

#### Correlation of the two Scales

A five-point scale was used when answering the items in both scales. The answers were horizontally arranged in a descending fashion like this: always, often, sometimes, rarely, never. The weight for each answer was as follows: (5)

points for always, (4) points for often, (3) points for sometimes, two points for rarely, and one point for never. Arithmetically, the following statistical criteria were used for the means: (1.00 - less than 2.33) is a low level; (2.33 - less than 3.67) is a medium level; and (3.67 - 5.00) is a high level.

Statistical Processing

The means and standard deviations were calculated to answer the first and third questions of the study. A four-way analysis of variance and multiple four-way analyses of variance were used to answer the second and fourth questions.

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to answer the fifth question.

Findings: Presentation and Discussion

First question: What is the level of homophobia among unmarried Yarmouk University graduate students?

The means and standard deviations were calculated for the level of gamophobia among the study sample. Figures obtained from the field are displayed in Table (2) below:

Table (2): Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of the participants’ responses to germophobia measurement scale

| Rank | No. | Paragraphs/items  | Means | Standard Deviation | Level   |
|------|-----|---|-------|--------------------|---------|
| 1    | 20  | I feel annoyed when I hear stories of a friend's unsuccessful marriage.   | 3.49  | 1.342              | Average |
| 2    | 6   | I hesitate to make the decision to get married.   | 3.28  | 1.417              | Average |
| 3    | 8   | I get worried about the social pressures associated with marriage.  | 3.23  | 1.350              | Average |
| 4    | 3   | I feel scared of losing my freedom if I get married.  | 3.18  | 1.378              | Average |
| 5    | 10  | I get scared when I think about the responsibilities of parenting.  | 3.11  | 1.417              | Average |
| 6    | 12  | I feel worried about my ability to handle the stress of a marital relationship.                                     | 3.09  | 1.304              | Average |
| 7    | 15  | I feel worried about changing my lifestyle when I get married.  | 3.06  | 1.295              | Average |
| 8    | 9   | I feel frightened and get scared taking on the economic responsibilities of the family.                             | 3.05  | 1.318              | Average |
| 9    | 4   | I feel afraid that I will not be able to handle the responsibilities of being married.                              | 3.04  | 1.357              | Average |
| 10   | 18  | I worry that I cannot meet my partner's expectations.   | 3.00  | 1.184              | Average |
| 11   | 16  | I feel afraid of being away from my family when I get married.  | 2.99  | 1.425              | Average |
| 12   | 2   | I feel intimidated and get scared of a long-term emotional commitment.  | 2.98  | 1.367              | Average |
| 13   | 5   | I feel worried that my marital relationship may fail.   | 2.96  | 1.314              | Average |
| 14   | 11  | I feel that I am psychologically unprepared for the loads of a matrimonial life.                                    | 2.96  | 1.377              | Average |
| 15   | 19  | I am afraid that when I get married, I will not be able to maintain a balance between family and professional life. | 2.94  | 1.252              | Average |
| 16   | 13  | I feel afraid of losing financial independence when I get married.  | 2.89  | 1.386              | Average |
| 17   | 7   | I feel uncomfortable about my commitment to a life partner.   | 2.75  | 1.381              | Average |
| 18   | 14  | I feel dreadful and get scared about the idea of sharing my life with someone else.                                 | 2.71  | 1.358              | Average |

| Rank                       | No. | Paragraphs/items  | Means       | Standard Deviation | Level          |
|----------------------------|-----|---|-------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 19                         | 1   | I feel nervous and anxious when others talk about marriage.   | 2.64        | 1.312              | Average        |
| 20                         | 17  | I feel afraid of marriage as a result of my parents' mistreatment of each other or their separation | 1.99        | 1.301              | Average        |
| <b>Level of gamophobia</b> |     |   | <b>2.97</b> | <b>.940</b>        | <b>Average</b> |

Table (2) shows that the means for the level of gamophobia among the respondents was 2.97 and that the means for the scale items ranged between 1.99-3.49. What this means is that the level of fear among the participants swayed from low to medium. The reasons for the alternation were miscellaneous. First, this might be because the participants had loads of academic responsibilities, thus feeling stressed and needing to be more relaxed about their current educational onuses. Hence, graduate students devote much time and effort to completing their studies as they typically desire academic success, attain professional stability, and reach personal independence before tying the knot. Second, graduate students might be psychologically unprepared to commit to a life partner, unwilling to accept marital and family responsibilities, worried about motherhood and fatherhood, and fearful of personal incompatibility with a life partner as they might be concerned/worried. About failing to please the better half or meet his/her expectations. Third, family tensions that could affect marriage were also a reason that spiked gamophobia among some of the participants. These include conflicts with a life partner, inability to understand each other, and inability to solve problems positively. These tensions could have also been combined with concerns about the possibility of temporary

separation or divorce – all leading to catastrophic failure of the entire marital relationship. Third, graduate students might also have had concerns about potential changes in lifestyle after marriage. Such concerns include potential loss of their identity, narrowing their personal freedom space, and being afraid of not maintaining a balance between work on the one hand and family life on the other. Fourth, some graduate students might have had previous negative experiences in romantic relationships or marriage. Finally, financial concerns could have also been a factor that might have amplified their gamophobia. Many of them could not afford marriage costs, nor could they shoulder the add-on financial responsibilities afterward. Overall, the result from this sociocultural context supports what was already obtained in Beigi's and Torabpour's (2020) study conducted at the Abadan University of Medical Sciences in Iran.

Second Question: Are there statistically significant differences in the level of gamophobia among unmarried Yarmouk University graduate students according to the variables of gender, age, educational level, and (un)employment?

To find out, the means and standard deviations were worked out for the four variables. The figures are displayed in Table (3) below:

Table (3): Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations for the level of gamophobia among unmarried graduate students due to the variables of gender, age, educational level, and employment status

| Variable          | Categories | Means | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------|------------|-------|--------------------|
| Sex               | Male       | 2.76  | .905               |
|                   | female     | 3.10  | .940               |
| Educational Level | Master     | 2.95  | .971               |
|                   | PhD        | 3.01  | .887               |
| Employment Status | Unemployed | 2.85  | .899               |
|                   | Employed   | 3.19  | .979               |

|            |                 |      |       |
|------------|-----------------|------|-------|
| <b>Age</b> | Less than 25    | 2.90 | .932  |
|            | 25-less than 30 | 2.99 | .887  |
|            | 30 and above    | 3.04 | 1.018 |

Given the figures in Table 3 above, there were apparent differences between the arithmetic means for the level of gamophobia among the respondents due to gender, age, educational

level, and unemployment. A four-way variance analysis was used to determine the statistical significance of the differences. Table (4) below displays the findings:

Table (4): Four-way analysis of variance of the participant's responses on the level of homophobia scale due to the variables of gender, age, educational level, and employment status

| Source of Variance | Sum of Squares | Degrees of Freedom | Means of Squares | T-value | Statistical Significance |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| Sex                | 9.504          | 1                  | 9.504            | 11.421  | .001*                    |
| Educational level  | .010           | 1                  | .010             | .012    | .911                     |
| Employment Status  | 8.681          | 1                  | 8.681            | 10.432  | .001*                    |
| Age                | .469           | 2                  | .234             | .282    | .755                     |
| Error              | 207.210        | 249                | .832             |         |                          |
| Sum/Total          | 224.451        | 254                |                  |         |                          |

Table (4) above shows that there are statistically significant differences in the respondents' estimations of the level of homophobia due to the variable of gender. The difference is in favor of females. This finding could be explained by recourse to several compelling forces. First, this could be attributed to some biological influences that have increased gamophobia in females, i.e. hormonal changes such as estrogen that indeed causes an increase in fear. Second, females' emotional and mental states are unlike males; females are usually more vulnerable to emotional thinking and mental analysis. In other words, they are more inclined to avoid risks and thus ensure success and stability when joined in matrimony. By her physiological making, the female is usually more reluctant to make fateful decisions, such as the decision to marry.

Moreover, females are more vulnerable to family and social pressures. To illustrate, females have different social expectations and burdens regarding marriage and family life than males. Choosing a life partner may be a bold step that requires psychological, physical, and social preparation. Finally, females may become anxious about motherhood and the imminent responsibilities afterward.

As for the employment variable, the results showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the respondents' estimations of the level of homophobia. The difference was in favor of the employed (vis-à-vis the unemployed). This result might be attributed to the responsibilities and work pressures laid on the shoulders of the employed. Hence, they might feel that marriage could increase the challenges and pressures they already face; they may also find it difficult to maintain a balance between work on the one hand and personal and marital life on the other. Most notably, males tend to have a greater desire to achieve professional and financial stability before marriage. In their view, stability is closely related to achieving professional success, financial independence, and ensuring sufficient income for marriage. Thus, males are inclined to establish independence to support a family independently. When all confounding forces are put together, they point to males' tendency to think analytically and plan well before deciding to marry. They assess their financial capabilities and professional status (i.e., set up their priorities) before committing to a life partner. For a man in our culture, a job provides a source of financial income, which gives personal

financial and professional independence. A person with a job can bear the financial burdens of marriage and thus achieve independence without depending on a life partner. The findings show that men focus more on achieving professional success and personal goals than on achieving marital and family stability.

This finding confirms what Ellwood and Jencks (2004) have already pointed out regarding the influence of one's income on one's decision to get married. The argument is like this: Women's increased income and joining the labor market/force have enhanced a sense of independence that allows them to choose to remain unmarried (probably for extended periods). This result also confirms what Kalmijn (2011) has pointed out about the relationship between the economic status of women and men on the one hand and their decision to get married on the other. The correspondence is like this: the lower the monthly salary and the higher the unemployment rate, the greater the chances to escape/evoke marriage.

As for age, the respondents' responses have shown that there was no statistically significant difference in the level of homophobia among the study sample due to the age variable. In simple terms, marriage phobia tends not to be linked to a specific age. This means that changes in economic and social conditions and changes in personal thinking and common beliefs (regarding the concept of marriage) could have

affected people of all ages. As age does not significantly affect the level of gammophobia, psychological states of the person and social factors surrounding him are the determining factors.

As for the impact of the educational level of the participants, the respondents' answers showed that there was no statistically significant difference in their estimations of the level of homophobia. This result could be attributed to the participants' increased levels of awareness. Whether social or cultural (or both), the respondents showed that they possessed higher awareness and, thus, a deeper understanding of marriage (at least as a concept). Being graduate students, the respondents demonstrated that they had personal orientations to successfully and effectively deal with future marriage problems and had professional orientations that made them less fearful about marriage due to their focus on their career path. We should also not forget that constant changes in people's perception of the concept of marriage make individuals of different educational levels experience marriage phobia alike.

Third question: What are family communication patterns among unmarried Yarmouk University graduate students?

To answer this question, the means and standard deviations of the respondents' estimations of family communication patterns were worked out. Table (5) displays the findings:

Table (5): Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of the participant's responses on the communication patterns scale

| Rank | No | Pattern                         | Means | Standard Deviation | Level   |
|------|----|---------------------------------|-------|--------------------|---------|
| 1    | 5  | <b>Being congruent/balanced</b> | 3.75  | .786               | High    |
| 2    | 1  | <b>Placating</b>                | 3.40  | .856               | Average |
| 3    | 3  | <b>Being irrelevant</b>         | 2.71  | .821               | Average |
| 4    | 4  | <b>Being super-reasonable</b>   | 2.67  | .836               | Average |
| 5    | 2  | <b>Blaming</b>                  | 2.37  | .868               | Average |

Table (5) clearly shows that the means for the participants' estimations of family communication patterns ranged between (2.37-3.75), a level ranging between medium and high,

with the "balanced" pattern ranking first on the scale. This may be attributed to the level of family awareness and the psychological and emotional support that enhances positive

interaction between family members. Graduate students were found to be cognizant of the importance of family relationships and their impact on family members' mental health. They were aware of the importance of healthy relationships between family members and opted to invest in these relationships, showing greater psychological and emotional preparation. However, while paying more attention to their family relationships, they tried hard to balance their academic life on the one hand and their family life on the other.

This result is consistent with that obtained in Shearman and Dumlao's (2008) study, which has shown that the consensual family type (the style in which both the style of dialogue and the style of obedience and commitment are high) is the most common type among university students in the United States of America. Our findings in this respect are also consistent with those reported in Ragheb's and Badir's (2012) study, which has shown the style of dialogue coming in first place among university students in the cities of Cairo and Giza in the Arab Republic of Egypt. This is also consistent with Khatahtbeh's (2017) study, whose results show that the democratic style is the most common style of family interaction among students at Yarmouk University in Jordan. Our results in this respect are also consistent with those reported in Al-Akaishi et al.'s (2020) study, whose results demonstrate a positive level of family communication among Emirati families from the perspective of a sample of citizen students enrolled at the University of Sharjah - UAE. The results of the current study also support those obtained by Al-Magable (2021), who has shown that the balanced style came in first place among female students at Yarmouk University – Jordan. The findings of Shalabi (2022) also showed that

the harmonious communication style was the most common among female university students in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Finally, Alzbun's (2023) study has shown that the dialogue-oriented style is the most common among students at the Hashemite University - Jordan.

The "blaming" pattern came in last place at a moderate level. This finding might be attributed to the academic pressures and professional obligations that graduate students face. In simple terms, graduate students often experience anxiety and stress on and out of campus. Added to all this is family orientation, especially if it encourages the style of blaming and criticizing as a means of communication. Some students may have had negative experiences when communicating with their families. Those are more likely to use blaming and criticism than effective communication styles with their family members. Our finding is consistent with that obtained by Al-Mgable (2021), who has shown that the blaming style came last among female students at Yarmouk University - Jordan. However, our finding in this respect contradicts that reported in Shalabi's (2022) study, which showed that the neutral style is the least common family communication style among university students in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Fourth question: Are there statistically significant differences in the patterns of family communication among unmarried Yarmouk University graduate students due to the variables of gender, age, educational level, and (un)employment?

The means and standard deviations of family communication patterns among unmarried graduate students at Yarmouk University were used as the study variables to answer this question. Table (6) below displays the findings:

Table (6): Means and standard deviations for family communication patterns among unmarried graduate students according to the variables of gender, age, education level, and employment.

| Variable | Categories |   | Placating | Blaming | Being irrelevant | Being super-reasonable | Being congruent/balanced |
|----------|------------|---|-----------|---------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sex      | Male       | M | 3.38      | 2.35    | 2.66             | 2.67                   | 3.87                     |
|          |            | S | .848      | .826    | .728             | .753                   | .696                     |

| Variable          | Categories      |   | Placating | Blaming | Being irrelevant | Being super-reasonable | Being congruent/balanced |
|-------------------|-----------------|---|-----------|---------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Educational level | Female          | M | 3.41      | 2.38    | 2.74             | 2.66                   | 3.68                     |
|                   |                 | S | .864      | .896    | .873             | .885                   | .830                     |
|                   | Master          | M | 3.37      | 2.36    | 2.71             | 2.66                   | 3.70                     |
|                   |                 | S | .843      | .865    | .841             | .831                   | .789                     |
|                   | PhD             | M | 3.44      | 2.38    | 2.71             | 2.68                   | 3.85                     |
|                   |                 | S | .883      | .879    | .787             | .848                   | .776                     |
| Employment        | Unemployed      | M | 3.24      | 2.31    | 2.67             | 2.59                   | 3.71                     |
|                   |                 | S | .866      | .812    | .813             | .777                   | .738                     |
|                   | Employed        | M | 3.70      | 2.47    | 2.78             | 2.81                   | 3.84                     |
|                   |                 | S | .754      | .964    | .834             | .923                   | .868                     |
| Age               | Less than 25    | M | 3.13      | 2.35    | 2.81             | 2.68                   | 3.63                     |
|                   |                 | S | .860      | .865    | .826             | .771                   | .669                     |
|                   | 25-less than 30 | M | 3.45      | 2.30    | 2.50             | 2.57                   | 3.72                     |
|                   |                 | S | .831      | .824    | .786             | .870                   | .887                     |
|                   | 30 and above    | M | 3.76      | 2.47    | 2.80             | 2.76                   | 3.98                     |
|                   |                 | S | .739      | .926    | .819             | .890                   | .792                     |

Table (6) above shows differences between the means of the respondents' estimations of family communication patterns due to the variables of gender, age, educational level, and

(un)employment. A four-way multiple variance analysis was used to determine the statistical significance of the differences. The findings are displayed in Table (7) below:

Table (7): Multiple four-way analysis of variance of the participants' responses to communication patterns due to the variables of gender, age, educational level, and employment status

| Source of Variance | Pattern                  | Sum of squares | Degrees of freedom | Means of squares | F value | Statistical significance |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| Sex                | Placating                | .069           | 1                  | .069             | .107    | .744                     |
|                    | Blaming                  | .302           | 1                  | .302             | .397    | .529                     |
|                    | Being Irrelevant         | 1.939          | 1                  | 1.939            | 2.973   | .086                     |
|                    | Being super-reasonable   | .225           | 1                  | .225             | .324    | .570                     |
|                    | Being congruent/balanced | 1.606          | 1                  | 1.606            | 2.669   | .104                     |
| Educational Level  | Placating                | 5.150          | 1                  | 5.150            | 7.937   | .005*                    |
|                    | Blaming                  | .003           | 1                  | .003             | .004    | .952                     |
|                    | Being Irrelevant         | .637           | 1                  | .637             | .976    | .324                     |
|                    | Being super-reasonable   | .007           | 1                  | .007             | .009    | .922                     |
|                    | Being congruent/balanced | .002           | 1                  | .002             | .003    | .960                     |
| Employment Status  | Placating                | 4.182          | 1                  | 4.182            | 6.445   | .012*                    |
|                    | Blaming                  | .949           | 1                  | .949             | 1.249   | .265                     |
|                    | Being Irrelevant         | 1.351          | 1                  | 1.351            | 2.071   | .151                     |
|                    | Being super-reasonable   | 3.076          | 1                  | 3.076            | 4.434   | .036*                    |
|                    | Being congruent/balanced | .210           | 1                  | .210             | .349    | .555                     |
| Age                | Placating                | 10.687         | 2                  | 5.343            | 8.235   | .000*                    |
|                    | Blaming                  | .712           | 2                  | .356             | .468    | .627                     |
|                    | Being Irrelevant         | 7.209          | 2                  | 3.605            | 5.527   | .004*                    |
|                    | Being super-reasonable   | 1.299          | 2                  | .649             | .936    | .394                     |
|                    | Being congruent/balanced | 3.822          | 2                  | 1.911            | 3.175   | .043*                    |
| Error/Deviation    | Placating                | 161.561        | 249                | .649             |         |                          |
|                    | Blaming                  | 189.302        | 249                | .760             |         |                          |
|                    | Being Irrelevant         | 162.382        | 249                | .652             |         |                          |



| Source of Variance | Pattern                  | Sum of squares | Degrees of freedom | Means of squares | F value | Statistical significance |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|---------|--------------------------|
|                    | Being super-reasonable   | 172.742        | 249                | .694             |         |                          |
|                    | Being congruent/balanced | 149.867        | 249                | .602             |         |                          |
| Total/Sum          | Placating                | 186.276        | 254                |                  |         |                          |
|                    | Blaming                  | 191.563        | 254                |                  |         |                          |
|                    | Being Irrelevant         | 171.005        | 254                |                  |         |                          |
|                    | Being super-reasonable   | 177.359        | 254                |                  |         |                          |
|                    | Being congruent/balanced | 156.857        | 254                |                  |         |                          |

The figure in Table (7) above suggests no statistically significant difference in the study respondents' estimations of family communication patterns due to the gender variable. This result might be attributed to the fact that the respondents of both sexes had relatively similar cultural backgrounds, values, beliefs, and social expectations. It could also be attributed to changes in the family structure and the dynamics of the relationships between its members. Hence, there have been changes in social roles, such as the rise in female enrollment in higher education and the increase in the plea for gender equality. These factors made communication patterns for both sexes look alike in this sociocultural context.

This finding is partly consistent with the that reported in Salehi et al.'s (2012) study, which has shown no statistically significant difference in the patterns of family communication (dialogue pattern, obedience pattern, and commitment) among students of Islamic Azad University in Tehran due to the gender variable. However, this result is not in line with that obtained by Khatahtbeh (2017), who has attested to a statistically significant difference in the level of family interaction types among students at Yarmouk University in Jordan due to gender in favor of males. Shalabi (2022) has also shown a statistically significant difference in family communication types among university students in Riyadh due to the gender variable favoring males. Likewise, Al-Zboun (2023) has shown a statistically significant difference in dialogue-oriented family communication style among students at Hashemite University in Jordan due to the gender variable favoring males.

The participants' responses on this part of the study show a statistically significant difference in the respondents' estimations in the placating communication pattern due to the educational level variable favoring doctoral students. Again, this finding might be because graduate students face more significant pressure. After all, their higher studies requirements are voluminous. They spend more time and effort to achieve personal, academic, and professional goals – a state of affairs that prompts them to maintain family integrity, foster family relationships, avoid unnecessary conflicts, and not expose themselves to additional pressures that may negatively affect academic distinction.

The respondents' answers to this question also show that there is a statistically significant difference in their estimation of the "Placating" and "super-responsible" communication patterns due to the employment variable in favor of the employed (vis-à-vis the unemployed). This finding may be because employees enrolled in postgraduate studies may face great pressure, have set up priorities differently, and have more explicit goals in life. If this were true, they would focus simultaneously on study and work and avoid family conflicts. They would, therefore, express their agreement more often to avoid adding more pressure on themselves. In addition, some can think strategically in solving problems calmly - a condition that enhances their placating interaction style. A statistically significant difference in the "super-rational" pattern may be attributed to the fact that some employees may face pressures in the work environment that negatively affect their thinking style, personal lives, and behavior/involvement in family

relationships. It causes them to adopt a "super-responsible" communication role in family interactions to deal with these pressures and alleviate their negative impact.

Answers to this question also show a statistically significant difference in the respondents' estimation of family

communication patterns due to the age variable in all communication types except for the blame and super-responsible patterns. Post-hoc comparisons are opted for using the Scheffe method to show statistically significant pairwise differences. Table (8) below displays the findings:

Table (8): Scheffe test results for posthoc comparisons of Placating, being irrelevant, and being balanced communication patterns due to the variable of age

| Pattern                   | Age              | Means | Less than 25 | 25-less than 30 | 30 and above |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>Placating</b>          | Less than 25     | 3.13  |              |                 |              |
|                           | 25- less than 30 | 3.45  | .32*         |                 |              |
|                           | 30-and above     | 3.76  | .63*         | .31             |              |
| <b>Being irrelevant</b>   | Less than 25     | 2.81  |              |                 |              |
|                           | 25- less than 30 | 2.50  | .30*         |                 |              |
|                           | 30-and above     | 2.80  | .01          | .30             |              |
| <b>Congruent/balanced</b> | Less than 25     | 3.63  |              |                 |              |
|                           | 25- less than 30 | 3.72  | .09          |                 |              |
|                           | 30-and above     | 3.98  | .35*         | .26             |              |

\* Statistically significant at (0.05)

Table (8) shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the participants' estimations in the Placating style due to the age variable in favor of the (25-under-30) and (30-and-over) groups. This finding may be attributed to the fact that graduate students face academic-related pressures and have professional goals that they seek to achieve, a state of affairs that stimulates them to push themselves to the limit to avoid conflicts within the family, i.e., they would rather prefer to apologize just to avoid additional stress. Additionally, they might fear the negative consequences of family conflicts (e.g., losing emotional support). Besides, the culture in which those students have grown up is the kind that encourages placating as a means of communication. Also noteworthy is the observation that some students had negative experiences communicating with their families. Such students might choose to apologize instead of communicating effectively with their family members, i.e., they are the kind of people who would choose to cut the story short by not meddling in conflict. This finding differs from that reported in Shalabi's (2022) study, which

showed no statistically significant difference in family communication patterns among university students in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, due to the age variable.

The respondents' answers to this question revealed a statistically significant difference in the participants' estimations of the irrelevant communication role type due to the age variable. The difference was in favor of the group of people who were less than (25) years old. This finding may be explained along the following lines: Postgraduate students under 25 years old tended to focus more on personal and professional development, achieving academic success, and devoting themselves to their hobbies and personal activities. Some may also believe that family problems or conflicts are trivial matters that should be overlooked, which makes them not interested in immersing themselves in family relationships or engaging in family communication. This finding differs from that reported in Shalabi's (2022) study, which showed no statistically significant difference in family communication patterns among

university students in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, due to the age variable.

Answers to this question also showed a statistically significant difference in the respondents' estimations in the balanced type due to the age variable favoring the group of people (30) years and older. This finding may be attributed to the belief that graduate students in this age group should have developed better family communication skills and are thus keen to build healthy and stable relationships within the family as a result of their enhanced lifestyle, advanced academic knowledge, and longer

professional experience, thus reflecting their emotional and social maturity. They appreciate the importance of healthy dialogue in building and fostering family relationships.

Fifth question: Is there a statistically significant correlation between gamophobia and family communication patterns among unmarried Yarmouk University graduate students?

To answer this question, Pearson correlation coefficients were worked out. Table (9) below displays the figures:

Table (9): Pearson correlation coefficients between gamophobia and family communication patterns

| Pattern                  | Total                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Placating                | Correlation coefficient t .153*   |
|                          | Statistical significance .014     |
| Blaming                  | Correlation coefficient t .449**  |
|                          | Statistical significance .000     |
| Being irrelevant         | Correlation coefficient t .518**  |
|                          | Statistical significance .000     |
| Being super-reasonable   | Correlation coefficient t .351**  |
|                          | Statistical significance .000     |
| Being congruent/balanced | Correlation coefficient t -.270** |
|                          | Statistical significance .000     |

\* Statistically significant at (0.05) \*\* Statistically significant at (0.01)

Table (9) reveals a positive, statistically significant correlation between gamophobia and the five patterns of family communication: blaming, placating, being irrelevant, being super-rational, and being balanced. We strongly believe that this finding is logical because the psychological impacts of academic stress, along with the fear of being associated with a life partner, affect family relationships by aggregating negative emotions such as anxiety and anger. Besides, negative previous family experiences also increase the level of gammophobia, and thus the development of unhealthy communication behaviors such as isolation, avoidance, withdrawal, offering apologies, and not participating effectively in family matters. This result is partly consistent with that reported in Cantekin & Kunduraci's (2024) study, which showed that public university students in Turkey who suffer from a

high degree of marriage phobia have a low sense of family belonging. They view their parents' attention and psychological independence as low, too. However, our finding in this respect differs from that reported in Mustaffa et al.'s (2021) study, which has shown that the protective strategy was the most common family communication pattern when discussing marriage matters, thus significantly impacting young people's decision-making regarding marriage in Malaysia.

Answers to this question revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between gamophobia and the balanced family communication style among unmarried graduate students at Yarmouk University. This finding is logical; hence, a balanced family communication pattern is often linked to emotional stability and psychological balance/well-being. It also encourages self-confidence and positive

interaction. Accordingly, individuals who have germophobia adopt the balanced pattern of family communication as a means of dealing with the emotional pressures that may arise as a result of fear of marriage or fear of being committed emotionally. They develop a more remarkable ability to express their feelings and emotional needs within the family, which undoubtedly reduces marriage phobia. This finding is consistent with that reported in Mustafa et al.'s (2012) study, which showed that the protective family communication pattern was the most common when discussing marriage in the family. It had a statistically significant impact on young people's decision-making regarding marriage in Malaysia. Our research findings in this aspect are partly consistent with those reported in Cantekin & Kunduraci's (2024) study, which showed a low level of marriage phobia among students of public universities in Turkey who had a high sense of family belonging/attachment.

## Conclusion

The results of the study reveal a moderate level of gamophobia among Yarmouk University graduate students, with significant variations based on gender and employment status. Females and employed individuals exhibited higher levels of fear related to marriage, likely due to psychological, social, and economic pressures. In addition, the findings also highlight the role of healthy family communication patterns in mitigating these fears, with congruent/balanced communication being the

most common among students. The study suggests that cultural, social, and individual factors significantly influence both the fear of marriage and the patterns of family communication, with implications for addressing these fears through targeted support and counseling programs.

## Recommendations

In light of the findings reported in the article above from our field experimentation, the researchers make the following recommendations as pointers for further future research:

- Organizing lectures, seminars, and workshops to educate unmarried graduate students about the negative effects of gamophobia and to highlight the importance of healthy family communication.
- Illuminating graduate students that unsuccessful marriage stories are not the norm in all matrimonial relationships and that they can benefit from others' experiences in building a successful marital relationship.
- Conducting further studies on gamophobia and family communication patterns on other population samples and incorporating variables that need to be addressed in the current study.
- Designing protective therapeutic counseling programs that contribute to mitigating gamophobia and improving family communication patterns among unmarried graduate students.

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