



Original Article

Investigating and comparing positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors of girls and boys with their emotional partner during periods of engagement (acquaintance), official engagement, and post-marriage

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Abstract

Introduction: The present study investigated and compared positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors with emotional partner during three periods of engagement, official engagement, and post-marriage.

Materials and Methods: The population of this cross-sectional study comprised all girls and boys in Hamadan city-Iran, who were within their period of engagement, official engagement, or post-marriage in 2021. One-hundred fifty individuals (50 cases in each period) were selected through a convenient stratified sampling method. They responded to the researcher-made scale of verbal and non-verbal behaviors. Data analyzed by t-test, one-way analysis of variance, LSD post hoc test, and SPSS software version 25.

Results: The results of the one-way variance analysis indicated that positive verbal ($P < 0.001$, $F = 128.045$) and non-verbal ($P < 0.001$, $F = 46.416$) behaviors changed significantly in all three periods. The results also demonstrated significant changes in the positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors of both boys (verbal: $P < 0.001$, $F = 66.39$, non-verbal: $P < 0.001$, $F = 20.106$) and girls (verbal: $P < 0.001$, $F = 59.88$, non-verbal: $P < 0.001$, $F = 31.48$) during the periods. Also, the positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors experience a downward trend in both sexes as the relationship moves from engagement to marriage. The results showed that there seems to be no significant difference between boys and girls in verbal and non-verbal behaviors (verbal: $P > 0.001$, $t = 231$, non-verbal: $P > 0.001$, $t = -184$).

Conclusion: According to the results, it seems that verbal and non-verbal behaviors are more positive during the engagement period, and they decrease as the relationship moves toward marriage.

Keywords: Couples, Marriage, Non-verbal behavior, Relationship, Verbal behavior

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Introduction

Communication is an inseparable part of human life. People communicate in various

ways to express their thoughts, emotions, knowledge, skills, and ideas (1). This ability is considered as the basis for all human

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interactions. Communication is the process of sending and receiving a message which requires at least two individuals who impact each other and be affected by each other. Constructing and preserving close links and communications with others is humankind's foundational and rudimentary motivation (2). Communication plays a significant role in helping couples to solidify or increase their relations (3). On this basis, communicating within marriage is vital to the success of marriage (4). A marital relationship is a process in which the spouses interact with their emotions and thoughts, whether by the use of words (verbally) or by listening, pausing, and showing facial expressions (non-verbally) (5). There is a significant relationship between communicative skills and marital satisfaction. These skills include the abilities of both sides to share and investigate all perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and ideas to reach an exact understanding of what happens, which in turn is conducted to facilitate marital progress, alignment, and satisfaction (6). Communication is crucial in marriage. There is a positive relationship between marital relations and family stability (7). So, positive verbal and non-verbal communication skills have significant effects on marital stability (8). When couples are satisfied with their relationship, they are happier and healthier. But when the relationship between couples is neutral, their well-being faces danger, such as increased mortality and increased symptoms of depression and anxiety (9). Over the years, weak and ineffective communication between couples has greatly impacted family growth (10), and it is believed that the quality of communication between spouses can influence their satisfaction with their relationships (11).

On the other hand, weak communications can deteriorate bonds and cause hatred and a lack of trust (12). In addition, communication has been given attention as the life texture to have a successful marital relationship. In this regard, no marriage can form without communication. Communication has healing power for broken hearts, and it confirms love and emotions toward the partners (13).

Communication is the beginning of each relationship, and people must make communication to continue their lives; however, the way to make communication is of much greater importance (14). Communication is a complex and continuous process of sharing messages through sending, receiving, and

interpreting information (15). There are different ways by which couples can communicate, which can be generally divided into two groups: verbal and non-verbal (such as eye contact, hints, and behavior) (4). Verbal communication includes language, while non-verbal communication is founded on gestures, recommendations, and actions (16).

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication in marriage is considered greatly beneficial and allows an individual to transfer a wide range of experiences using their language. Verbal communication includes using language (16) and requires using words, vocabulary, numbers, and signs (17). In addition, verbal communication is described as the phonetic elements of humans or the arbitrary graphic demonstration of these voices in writing, which are systematically and normally used within society to make communication using speech (18). Verbal communication can have therapeutic effects on married people. It can help them frankly express their tendency to share their thoughts and feelings, as well as their decisions related to marriage. The disability of couples in making verbal communication makes it impossible for them to break dead ends. Couples become disappointed as they find themselves needing help in making communication. Therefore, verbal communication is regarded as a useful instrument to resolve conflict in marriage (4). Verbal communication can have important positive and negative effects on human life, and it has the potential to improve or digress the way of someone's life since human life is bound to communication (19). Verbal communication is the instrument by which couples show their love to each other (18).

For instance, we can refer to many couples' emotional experiences, including verbal expressions of emotional and cognitive experiences. The oral statement which leads to marriage is often the question labeled 'Will you marry me?' verbal admiration such as 'You look beautiful/handsome.' or 'I admire everything about you.' Verbal appreciation of the spouse includes saying 'Thank you.', 'You are the best' and verbal certainty contains statements such as 'I still love you unlike all the other possibilities', 'I will be forever yours', 'You are my heartbeat', 'I need you.', and expressing sorrow by saying 'I'm sorry' or 'Please forgive me.' (4).

Non-verbal Communication

Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and instructors define non-verbal or body language as communication without words, including evident behaviors such as facial expressions, eye contact, touching, and pitch (1). The clothes we choose to wear, our hairstyle, and our nails all have a role in our non-verbal communication (20). In other words, non-verbal communication is founded on facial expressions, hints, and behaviors (16), approximately 0.65% of communication. Non-verbal communication is the process of sending and receiving non-verbal messages through facial expressions, touching, codes, eye contact, hints, body movements, and pitch, and it encompasses the expression of all auditory, visual, tactile, and chemical signs (21). In general, non-verbal signs make interpersonal relationships meaningful (22). For a long period, language was the only immediate matter to cross the mind when it came to discussing human communications, while non-verbal communications are highly neglected. Non-verbal communication has a key role in the learning process (23).

Most of non-verbal communication occurs subconsciously. People need to be aware that non-verbal movements, in addition to verbal communication, convey a strong message. Body language, eye contact, physical appearance, and pitch give the audience meaningful information. In comparison with verbal communication, non-verbal communication is highly reliable and effective because it supports verbal communication (24).

All non-verbal behaviors, such as how someone looks at us, send strong messages, and, in terms of emotions, they transfer the feelings of passion, trust, and tendency to preserve the relationship as long as the feelings of hatred and reluctance (25). One of the important steps in making effective non-verbal communication with others is the concentration of the agent on the pitch while speaking because this aspect can convey a considerable range of information in terms of willingness, reluctance, or even anger. The voice pitch when people are speaking impacts the quality of the responsiveness of others because one can use their pitch to emphasize the thought they are trying to convey (26). Eye contact is one of the most common and powerful non-verbal communication signs. Based on the situational context, eyes can induce feelings of love, weariness, hatred, fear, and feud. Eyes play a central role in the non-verbal

transfer of many interpersonal attitudes and emotions (25). In other words, non-verbal communication points to 'body language'. In non-verbal expression, people communicate via body language, eye movements, touching, space (standing, sitting, close to or far from each other), and odor (17). Non-verbal behaviors (e.g., postures, facial expressions, and gestures) can convey individuals' attitudes and emotions; in many cases, these movements can be even more effective than verbal messages (27). In marriage, expressing love through non-verbal signs is far more emotional and believable than verbal expressions. For instance, if your spouse says, "I love you." with a presentation on their face that can make you think they are lying, which message will you believe? Unfortunately, making a false belief toward a non-verbal expression of emotions and thoughts is not so difficult. Couples tend to see their behaviors differently from how their spouse might see them. Thus, couples witness more negative non-verbal behaviors than positive ones. For example, a man might make an impression of his wife's facial expression at home in which his wife does not welcome him when he arrives home. Therefore, non-verbal communications have a greater and more direct relationship with emotions than words (4). Non-verbal behaviors such as touching, eye contact, use of space, and smiling decrease with increasing duration of marriage (28). At the same time, non-verbal communication is a powerful tool that helps people to communicate with others and improve their life span (14).

Although marriage can help find happiness, pleasure, and satisfaction, only some of those involved can receive the benefits of marriage. Marriage is an inseparable part of human existence. Studying marital relationships is vital because investigating the relationship between couples is almost as important as studying the universe. This is because if one is satisfied with their marital relationship, it will be reflected in all aspects of their life (4). On the other hand, several studies have argued that the majority of the challenges between couples in their marital relationships are caused by weak communication. Also, communicative skills and the quality of the relationships between couples are good predictors of marital satisfaction (29). Communication occurs effectively when verbal and non-verbal messages work in alignment (30). One of the most important factors which bring about conflict between couples is

communicative issues and their wrong and dissatisfactory relations. When each spouse makes weak verbal or non-verbal communication, the other one feels they are not understood or heard and offended or neglected (31). Marital relationships are the most fundamental and significant interpersonal relations that provide the foundation for establishing and fostering family relations and raising children (32). A married relationship is the verbal or non-verbal exchange of thoughts and emotions between the spouses, which is considered the family's core. Any disorderliness can be regarded as a serious threat to the family's survival (33). In this regard, it is essential to investigate the positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors expressed by couples over different periods of life. This is largely because a good relationship between couples will enable them to clarify their needs, demands, and interests and express their love, friendship, and kindness. In addition, it will empower them to overcome inevitable family problems and issues. However, lacking a good relationship will deprive couples and families of such functions (5). Besides, the expression of positive thoughts and emotions by couples, either verbally or non-verbally, plays an important constructive role in marital satisfaction, and, on the other hand, a decrease in positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors in couples toward each other will lead to reluctance. Thus, the present study aims to find if there is a difference between boys and girls in their relationship with their emotional partners during the engagement (acquaintance), official engagement, and post-marriage periods in terms of positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors, i.e., is there a difference in the occurrence of positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors during the periods of engagement, official engagement and post-marriage?

Materials and Methods

The statistical population of this cross-sectional study included all girls and boys from Hamadan, Iran, experiencing their engagement, official engagement, or post-marriage periods in 2021. Through the convenient stratified sampling method, 150 individuals were selected, then divided into three sub-groups: 1. Engagement period (50 cases), 2. Official engagement period (50 cases), and 3. Post-marriage period (50 cases). Because the sample size larger than 100 subjects are suitable for survey research and 50

subjects can be statistically used to compare the groups (34), 150 individuals, participated in the research (50 individuals in each group including 25 girls and 25 boys). The inclusion criteria included being in engagement (acquaintance), being in the official engagement period and not living with each other, living with the spouse for 2 to 5 years (post-marriage period), and having a willingness to participate. The exclusion criteria included not having willingness or incomplete questionnaires. Furthermore, the ethical considerations in this study included informed consent, voluntary participation, the right of withdrawal, data confidentiality, and privacy.

Research instruments

A) *The Researcher-Made Scale of Verbal and Non-Verbal Behaviors*: This scale consists of 46 items, including two sub-scales of verbal (28 things) and non-verbal (18 items) behaviors. The participants determine the range of their agreement with each item on a five-point Likert scale (5: always; 4: often; 3: sometimes; 2: hardly ever; and 1: never). Using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the internal consistency of this scale was obtained at 0.90 for the verbal behavior scale and 0.70 for the non-verbal one. The scale was constructed in two steps. In the first step (qualitative part), the theoretical foundations available for positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors were examined (1, 16, 17, 21, 23). Then, according to the theoretical foundations regarding verbal behaviors such as using language, sentences, and words, and those of non-verbal behaviors, including facial expressions, eye contact, touching, pitch, outfit selection, hair and nail style, facial conveyance, and hints, as well as auditory, visual, tactile and chemical signs, seven questions were designed for the interview. The questions were as follows:

1. We express our gratitude for your participation in this interview. Please introduce yourself (gender, age, education, ethnicity, mention which of the periods of 'engagement', 'official engagement', or 'post-marriage' you are in now).
2. Please tell us how you express your feelings and emotions to your emotional partner.
3. Mention a few examples of positive verbal behaviors you use to express your feelings to your emotional partner (positive words and sentences you express through language).
4. Mention a few examples of positive non-verbal behaviors you use to express your feelings to your emotional partner (expressing interest, passion, and feelings of happiness and

satisfaction through your eyes, body movements, and hints). 5. How do you behave to communicate well with your emotional partner? (Such as pitch of voice, outfit selection, odor, eye contact, touching, expressing gratitude by buying them a present and making them happy); please say them. 6. How can we improve our communication with our emotional partners? 7. Do our verbal and non-verbal behaviors toward our emotional partner impact the quality of marital life? Please explain. In the next step, 20 individuals (10 boys and 10 girls), who were involved in a romantic relationship with their opposite sex, were then interviewed regarding positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors. The number of participants was unclear beforehand, and the interviews continued until data saturation occurred. A criterion to discover saturation is the repetition of previous data in a way that the researcher consistently faces repeated data. For instance, when the researcher repeatedly hears similar sentences and ideas while doing the interviews, they can estimate that data saturation is achieved (35).

The data collected from the interviews were recorded, investigated, and coded using explicit content analysis. The available definitions were defined in the analysis sheets according to the theoretical foundations and then coded in three steps for the data to be analyzed. 1. Open coding (i.e., reading the concepts line by line); 2. Axial coding (i.e., categorizing, clarifying the sub-categories, and forming final categories); 3. Selective coding (integration of notions for the theoretical structure). For instance, the general component of "verbal behavior" was achieved by combining several codes, e.g., 'I love you', 'calling (phone) their partner to know how they are doing', 'joking', 'appreciation', 'calling the emotional partner by words like darling, my love, praising and admiring the appearance of the emotional partner, sending romantic text messages), and the general component of "non-verbal behavior" was obtained through combining codes such as 'paying attention', 'looking in the eyes of the emotional partner', 'touching their emotional partner's hands', 'smiling', 'sitting beside emotional partner', 'making communication through hints', 'showing they are in a great mood by facial expressions', 'spending time on their appearance', 'expressing love by pressing their emotional partner's hands gently' and 'accompanying the emotional partner in their favorite things/works'. After the components were extracted, the Kappa

coefficient was used in order to determine the validity. In this regard, the coding and theme composition of the information obtained from the content analysis of the interviews were given to three professors at Bu-Ali Sina University and a Ph.D. student to express their agreement or disagreement about the coding conducted. The agreement range was obtained at 74% using the Kappa coefficient at a significance level of $P < 0.001$. Following that, based on the coding and theme composition of the information gained from the references investigation, the verbal and non-verbal behaviors questionnaire (46 items) was constructed. As an example, some of the scale items are mentioned: verbal behavior (I call them by words like darling, my love; I have told them a lot of times that they are the best thing that has ever happened in my life; I say I love you to them over and over again), and non-verbal behavior (I look into my emotional partner's eyes when they are talking, I smile as I am listening to my emotional partner speaking, I hold my emotional partner's hand when we are out of home, I buy them a present incidentally). The preliminary form of the constructed scale was performed on 50 individuals of the study population. To conduct an initial examination of the research-made scale in predictive surveys, a sample population of 50 to 60 individuals can be useful (36).

The subjects were asked to read the items carefully and mark any unclear and ambiguous words or phrases in the opposite column. An empty row was left under each item so the respondents could write down their suggested substitute words or phrases. Eventually, after revision of the questionnaire based on the unclear points expressed, the final form was prepared and put into action. Bartlett and KMO tests were used to investigate the possibility of questions being factorized.

Exploratory analysis was used in the factor analysis of the items. Then, the data was analyzed using SPSS 25 software. Descriptive indices, such as the mean and standard deviation, t-test, one-way variance analysis, and LSD post hoc test, were used in data analysis.

Results

Levene's test was used to investigate the homogeneity of variances (Levene's test $P > 0.05$). Also, data distribution normality was examined through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and the hypothesis of normal data distribution in all groups was confirmed ($P > 0.05$).

The research participants were 150 individuals in Hamadan, Iran, with the mean age of 27.08 ± 3.99 years. In term of gender, the half of the participants were female. Seventy-five individuals (50%) aged from 21 to 38 years. Also, according to the findings obtained, 50 participants were experiencing the engagement (acquaintance), 50 others were in their official engagement period, and 50 others were experiencing their post-marriage life. Regarding ethnicity, 76.7 % were fellow citizens, and 23.3 % were from different cities. An investigation of the education level of boys revealed that 64% had a B.A. degree, 24.7% held an M.A. degree, 4% had a Ph.D. degree, and 7% had a diploma. While, 73.3% of the girls had a B.A. degree, 4% held an M.A. degree, and 23% had a diploma.

In term of the occupational status, 24% of the girls were employed. Also, 9.2% of the boys had an income of under 20 million rials, 26.7% had an income of 20 to 30 million rials, 35.3% made an income of 40 million rials, 17.3% had an income of 50 million rials and 11.3% made over 50 million rials as their income.

The same investigation revealed that 76.7% of the girls did not have an income, 4% of them had an income of under 20 million rials, and 8.7% of them made an income of over 20 million rials. The positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors of three groups of people in their relationship with their emotional partner within three periods of engagement, official engagement, and post-marriage were investigated (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. T-test conducted to make a comparison between boys and girls in terms of verbal and non-verbal behaviours

	Indices	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	df	P
Behaviours	Verbal behaviours	Boys	114.29	13.96	231	147.86	0.817
		Girls	114.81	13.54			
	Non-verbal behaviours	Boys	69.13	10.52	-181	148	0.854
		Girls	68.84	8.88			

Table 2. The descriptive index of the results of the mean and the standard deviation of verbal and non-verbal behaviours in boys and girls in their relationship with their emotional partner in three periods

	Indices	Mean	Standard deviation
Verbal behaviours	Engagement	125.62	6.37
	Official engagement	118.3	6.78
	Post-marriage	99.74	11.04
	Total	114.55	13.71
	Engagement	75.64	10.60
Non-verbal behaviours	Official engagement	70.26	5.71
	Post-marriage	61.06	5.52
	Total	68.98	9.70

Table 3. Comparing verbal and non-verbal behaviours between boys and girls in their relationship with their emotional partner in three periods

Behaviors	Source of change	Sum of Square	df	Mean Squares	F	P
Verbal behaviours	Intergroup	17797.173	2	8898.587	128.045	0.001
	Intragroup	10215.900	147	69.496		
	Total	28013.073	149			
Non-verbal behaviours	Intergroup	5436.013	2	2718.007	46.416	0.001
	Intragroup	8607.960	147	58.558		
	Total	14043.973	149			

The results of the one-way variance analysis (Table 3) indicated that the difference between the periods of engagement (acquaintance), official engagement, and post-marriage in terms of verbal behaviors ($P < 0.001$, $F = 128.045$) and non-verbal behaviors ($P < 0.001$, $F = 46.416$) was statistically significant. The Lowest Significant Difference (LSD) post hoc

test was used to determine the difference between the three periods in terms of verbal and non-verbal behaviors, the results of which are displayed in Table 4.

As seen in Tables 5 and 6, there is a significant difference between boys and girls regarding verbal and non-verbal behaviors within three periods of engagement (acquaintance), official

engagement, and post-marriage. A decrease can also be seen in verbal and non-verbal behaviors in both genders as their relationship moved

from engagement (acquaintance) toward marriage.

Table 4. LSD post hoc test to conduct a binary investigation of verbal and non-verbal behaviours in boys and girls in their relationship with their emotional partner within the three periods

Predictive variable	Periods (1)	Periods (2)	Mean Difference*	Standard Deviation	P
Verbal behaviours	Engagement	Official engagement	7.32	1.67	0.001
		Marriage	25.88	1.67	0.001
	Official engagement	Engagement	-7.32	1.67	0.001
		Marriage	18.56	1.67	0.001
	Post-marriage	Engagement	-25.88	1.67	0.001
		Official engagement	-18.56	1.67	0.001
Non-verbal behaviours	Engagement	Official engagement	5.38	1/53	0.001
		Marriage	14.58	1.53	0.001
	Official engagement	Engagement	-5.38	1.53	0.001
		Marriage	9.2	1.53	0.001
	Post-marriage	Engagement	-14.58	1.53	0.001
		Official engagement	-9.2	1.53	0.001

* At the significance level 99= 0.001% certainty

Table 5. Descriptive index of the mean and the standard deviation of verbal and non-verbal behaviours among boys and girls in their relationship with their emotional partner within the periods

Gender	Indices	Periods	Mean	Standard Deviation
Boys	Verbal Behaviours	Engagement	126.04	6.13
		Official engagement	117.56	5.62
		Marriage	99.28	11.91
		Total	114.29	13.96
		Engagement	77.00	12.91
	Non-verbal Behaviours	Official	68.72	4.49
		Engagement		
		Marriage	61.68	5/69
		Total	69.13	10.52
		Engagement	125.20	6.68
Girls	Verbal Behaviours	Official	119.04	7.82
		engagement		
		Marriage	100.20	10.31
		Total	114.81	13.54
		Engagement	74.28	7.69
	Non-verbal Behaviours	Official	71.80	6.43
		engagement		
		Marriage	60.44	5.39
		Total	68.84	8.88
		Engagement		

Table 6. Comparing verbal and non-verbal behaviours among boys and girls in their relationship with their emotional partner within three periods

Gender	Indices	Source of Change	Sum of Squares	df	Mean	F	P
Boys	Verbal behaviours	Intergroup	9351.3866	2	4675.693	66.39	0.001
		Intragroup	5070.160	72	70.419		
		Total	14421.547	74			
	Non-verbal behaviours	Intergroup	2940.187	2	1470.093	20.106	0.001
		Intragroup	5264.480	72	73.118		
		Total	8204.667	74			
Girls	Verbal behaviours	Intergroup	8482.427	2	4241.213	59.88	0.001
		Intragroup	5098.960	72	70.819		
		Total	13581.387	74			
	Non-verbal behaviours	Intergroup	2722.880	2	1361.440	31.48	0.001
		Intragroup	3113.200	72	43.239		
		Total	5836.080	74			

Discussion

The present study investigated and compared positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors in boys and girls in their relationship with their emotional partners within three periods of engagement (acquaintance), official engagement, and post-marriage in Hamadan, Iran. According to the results, there were significant differences between the mean scores of verbal and non-verbal behaviors in the periods of engagement (acquaintance), official engagement, and post-marriage. In addition, the results of the one-way variance analysis showed that the difference between the periods of engagement (acquaintance), official engagement, and post-marriage in terms of verbal behaviors and non-verbal behaviors was significant. Moreover, the results demonstrated no significant difference between boys and girls in terms of positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors. To explicate the findings of the present study, it can be stated that there is a higher occurrence of both verbal and non-verbal behaviors during the engagement (acquaintance) in comparison with official engagement and post-marriage periods and that there is a decrease in the occurrence of verbal and non-verbal behaviors among individuals in their relationships with their emotional partner in the post-marriage period.

In accordance with this, it can be argued that families experience numerous instances of peaks and valleys during their lifetime development, such as housing problems, unemployment, interference of parents on each side of the spouses, disability in making proper verbal and non-verbal communication which can affect the relationships between each of the family members. These issues can decrease positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors. The drop in positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors by each spouse in the post-marriage period can negatively affect the family environment, marital satisfaction, and child upbringing.

Due to decreased positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors, families may lack marital satisfaction, emotional and legal divorce, lack of family peace, and improper educational conditions in children. Indeed, positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors can enhance the marital quality and increase respect, trust, support, and ethics among couples. In contrast, negative verbal and non-verbal behaviors may deteriorate marital bonds. In this regard, Gonzalez showed that the amount of use of

immediate verbal behaviors decreases in couples who were in long-term relationships compared to couples who were in short-term relationships. This research showed that non-verbal behaviors such as touch, eye contact, use of space, smiling, and facial expressions in a romantic and intimate relationship become immediate behaviors after a while. These immediate verbal behaviors are used to show love and interest to the partner. But with a time of living together, the effort to show non-verbal behaviors to express love and affection decreases (28). Also, Vandana and Tripathi showed that the more use of non-verbal behaviors such as eye contact, smiling, and physical touch by couples during their life together, the more satisfaction they will experience in the relationship (14). Moloudi, Shayanmehr, and Ghazayi Niri revealed that communicative skills and the quality of the relationship between spouses can be good predictive factors of marital satisfaction (29). Nwoko showed that the relationship between communicative patterns and marital adjustment that there is a significant positive relationship between verbal communication and adjustment in marriage (6). Another research by Wilson on the perception of spouses of verbal and non-verbal social skills and their effect of them on the satisfaction of relationships in friend-making by couples demonstrated that individuals who are socially skilled or, at least, consider themselves socially skillful are highly likely to be satisfied with their relationship with their spouse and that those individuals who are skilled in expressing their feelings and emotionally sensitive can experience greater satisfaction with their relationship (37). Prinsen and Punyanunt-Carter investigated the difference in non-verbal behaviors and the quality of its change in the different stages of a relationship indicated that non-verbal communication is variable in both genders during different stages. It was also depicted that verbal, non-verbal, and supportive kindness changes over different relationship stages (38).

Also, Nwachukwu observed that effective non-verbal communication can improve marital relationships (39). Bani Asadi and Bagheri studied on the relationship between non-verbal communication and marital adjustment in Iranian couples and concluded there is an increase in the adjustment level of couples by an enhancement in the levels of non-verbal communications (21). Gabriel, Beach, and Bodenmann investigated on depression, marital

satisfaction and the relationship between spouses and gender differences revealed that non-verbal communication increases interpersonal sensitivity and that it is alignment with many aspects of individual and social functioning (40). Carambio argued in research on the awareness of non-verbal communication and the satisfaction with relationships in spouses that there is a rise in the satisfaction with relationships in couples by the increase in their awareness of non-verbal communication (41).

Patterson et al. demonstrated that couples who are more skilled in conveying non-verbal messages and decoding the unspoken messages of their spouse are considerably more satisfied with their relationship, which means a decrease in the likelihood of divorce (42). Kahn conducted a study on the relationship between non-verbal communication and marital satisfaction and revealed that non-verbal communication gives meaning and quality to all verbal communication, i.e., words; therefore, more emphasis is put on particular gestures, facial expressions, and how the words are expressed (43). Gottman et al. studied the distinction between desperate and non-desperate couples. They found that desperate couples have weaker verbal and non-verbal communication and express more negative non-verbal behaviors than non-desperate ones (44). The studies mentioned above have investigated the role of communication (verbal and non-verbal) in marital life through correlation, experimental and casual-comparative methods and revealed the significance of proper communication in improving satisfaction with marital life. Some argue that there is a relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication and marital satisfaction. In addition, some elaborated on the effectiveness of communicative skills on marital adjustment and argued that communicative skills could predict life satisfaction. It is worth mentioning that positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors in boys and girls toward their

emotional partner during the periods of engagement (acquaintance), official engagement, and post-marriage have not been investigated through the developmental method with cross-sectional design in the studies mentioned earlier, which is, however, performed in the present study.

The results of the present study encompass important implications for further research, supporting families, and emphasizing the significance of positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors over different stages of life. This is because couples experience a decrease in positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors by their spouse in the post-marriage period. The present study has some limitedness such as limited study sample to Hamadan city, Iran, and the lack of a norm-referenced scale for verbal and non-verbal behaviors could be pointed. Based on the results, it is recommended that further research be dedicated to investigating couples' positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors during different stages of life through longitudinal developmental methods on greater samples. Tacit theories of Iranian people on how to embolden positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors during various stages of life will be investigated.

Conclusion

The results indicate higher positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors in both genders (boys and girls) within their relationship with their emotional partner during the engagement (acquaintance) period than in further periods, i.e., official engagement and post-marriage. There is a decrease in positive verbal and non-verbal behaviors as the relationship moves from engagement toward the post-marriage period.

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