

# **An analysis of the expected marriage and love age and its influencing factors of undergraduate students in Shandong — a case study of Yantai campus of China Agricultural University**

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**Abstract:** The correct development concept of college students plays an important role in the construction and development of our country in the future. As an important part of their values, the concept of love and marriage directly affects the marriage status of contemporary youth and even the development and stability of the country in the future decades. This paper analyzes the current situation of College Students' expectation of marriage and love in Yantai University from various perspectives. The influencing factors of College Students' marriage age expectations come from students themselves, families, schools and society. The influencing factors of students themselves are: gender, personal personality, personal psychology, personal preferences, personal planning, etc.; family influencing factors include: family economic level, family education concept, parents' expectation, parents' attitude, whether they are only children, etc.; school influencing factors include Yantai Research Institute of China Agricultural University provides courses and related activities for the education of students' views on marriage and love, ethics, outlook on life, etc.; social factors include: social mainstream ideological trend, traditional marriage concept, foreign cultural impact, peer influence, social activities, etc.

## **1. Introduction**

As the core population factor in the process of marriage, marriage age has become one of the most concerned issues in the field of demography and marriage and family research[1]. Age matching model determines the scale, structure and squeezed population of potential marriage partners in the marriage market, which is regarded as an important factor in many studies focusing on marriage market and marriage squeeze. In addition, the age at first marriage and the age difference between couples are often closely related to economic, social and cultural backgrounds, and their dynamic changes reflect the mate selection norms and social and cultural changes in a certain time and space[2]. Youth's marriage expectation is a kind of psychological expectation of love and marriage behavior and its result that will be put into practice in the process of youth's continuing socialization[3]. Although the existing research shows that the ideal marriage age is often inconsistent with the actual marriage age, it is undeniable that college students' wishes and expectations in marriage age still have an important influence on their actual marriage age.

For the subject of college students' expected age of marriage and love, scholars at home and abroad have obtained consistent results in some universal studies, such as people's wide acceptance of late marriage, but different ideas in other aspects, with certain differences. For example, under the influence of social culture, foreign marriage and love atmosphere is more open. Professor Feng Xiaotian in China has investigated and studied the marriage expectation and practice of the working youth in cities, but there are few empirical investigations and analyses on the marriage age expectation of undergraduates in academic circles. Therefore, more empirical investigations are needed to compare and analyze them, so as to expand and enrich the research in this field. Taking a

university as an example, this study deeply analyzes the influencing factors of undergraduates' marriage expectation age.

## **2. Introduction to Yantai Research Institute of China Agricultural University**

Since 2007, Yantai Research Institute of China Agricultural University has only recruited a group of undergraduate students for Shandong, and the quality of students has increased year by year. At present, Yantai Campus has three grades: sophomore, junior and senior, with a total of about 1,000 students, with a male-to-female ratio of 3:7. There are some differences in the male-to-female ratio between different grades and different majors. At present, Yantai Research Institute of China Agricultural University only recruits a group of undergraduate students in Shandong Province, all of whom come from all parts of Shandong Province. However, Shandong Province has a large population and fierce competition in college entrance examination. Therefore, students have a tradition of listening carefully and studying hard, and their overall listening habits are relatively good. After graduating from undergraduate courses, students generally have a variety of choices such as insurance research, postgraduate study, work, public examination and going abroad. The high insurance research rate has also prompted students to listen carefully and improve their grades.

China Agricultural University attaches great importance to the mental health education of college students. College Students' Mental Health is a compulsory course, which requires 2 credits in the undergraduate professional training program. The course content includes the education of college students' concept of marriage and love. In addition, the school has set up the Psychological Quality Education Center of China Agricultural University for students who need help and psychological counseling to consult. Every year, the school also holds "5.25 Psychological Festival" and "12.5 Psychological Festival" activities, in order to promote college students to form healthy and upward psychology and three views.

## **3. College students' marriage expectation age status**

This survey takes undergraduates from grade 2017 to grade 2019 as objects, focuses on the age expectation of marriage and love of college students, and mainly distributes online questionnaires, supplemented by interviews and inquiries, aiming at investigating the young students' views on marriage and love in the new era, and comparing their differences with previous studies.

In the survey, 35.03% of the respondents have never been in love, 32.12% of the respondents have been in love but are now single, and 32.85% of the respondents are in love. It can be seen that the love situation of undergraduates in Yantai Research Institute is varied, and the number of people in various situations is relatively balanced.

Table.1. Descriptive statistics of undergraduates' expectation of marriage and love age in Yantai Research Institute

Age expectation of marriage and love	average number	median	mode	standard deviation	minimum value	peak value
Lower limit of ideal love age (female)	17.65	18	18	2.852	8	28
Upper age limit of ideal love (female)	29.32	28	28	6.924	19	60
Lower limit of ideal love age (male)	17.64	18	18	3.569	11	28
Upper age limit of ideal love (male)	30.72	29	30	12.823	20	75
Lower limit of ideal marriage age (female)	25.78	26	26	4.683	18	62
Upper limit of ideal marriage age (female)	33.36	32	35	6.610	19	60
Lower limit of ideal marriage age (male)	27.06	26	24	7.121	20	65
Upper limit of ideal marriage age (male)	36.52	33	30	12.572	26	81

### 3.1. Ideal love age

Overall, in the ideal love age, the average minimum age (lower limit) of the ideal love age chosen by the respondents is 17.88, while the average maximum age (upper limit) of the ideal love age is 29.72 (excluding the extreme value). It can be seen that Yantai Research Institute undergraduates have a relatively free and loose age limit in love age, and nearly one third of the respondents fall in love for the purpose of marriage, so on the whole, they are under the pressure of marriage.

### 3.2. Actual first love age

The average age of female college students in this survey is 16.98 years old, which is 0.67 years earlier than the lower limit of the expected age of love, while the average age of male students is 15.96 years old, which is 1.68 years earlier than the expected age of love. Compared with the respondents' ideal love age in the previous question, it is found that the average actual first love age of both boys and girls is much earlier than the average ideal love age. This presents a conclusion consistent with previous studies, that is, the actual love age of unmarried youth is generally earlier than their expected age. Since the average age of freshmen is about 18 years old, that is to say, boys and girls have started to fall in love before entering university on average. The younger age of first love deserves our attention.

### 3.3. Ideal marriage age

The surveyed undergraduates think that the ideal marriage age is 25.78~33.36 years for girls and 27.06~36.52 years for boys, both of which have exceeded the late marriage age stipulated by Chinese laws. In this study, the ideal marriage age of college students is obviously delayed. On the one hand, most college students choose to continue to study for a postgraduate degree after graduation, so in general, graduate students are about 25 years old when they graduate, and then work for 2~4 years before getting married. This phenomenon has become more common; On the other hand, those who work directly after graduation are not in a hurry to get married, and most of them choose to struggle for a few years first. Therefore, it has become the choice of many college students to "start a career" first and then "start a family". In addition, the ideal marriage age of men is generally higher than that of women. At its root, it is still influenced by the traditional concept of "men are big and women are small".

According to professional classification, the ideal marriage age range of public administration undergraduates is 26.09~38.03, marketing undergraduates is 25.71~33.11, aquatic products undergraduates is 24.96~31.71, and facilities undergraduates is 24.68~32.53. Compared with the two pure science majors, namely, aquatic products and facilities, the liberal arts students majoring in public administration and marketing have a later ideal love age. The ideal marriage age of liberal arts students majoring in public administration and marketing is still later than that of undergraduate students majoring in aquatic products and facilities.

On the whole, it shows the characteristics of earlier actual love age and later ideal marriage age, and the trend of younger love and older marriage is obvious.

#### **4. Analysis of influencing factors**

##### **4.1. Personal factors**

###### **4.1.1. Age stage**

Undergraduate students are in the youth stage, and there are a series of differences in the maturity of physiology, psychology, morphology and thought, which make the youth have great differences in their understanding and requirements for marriage and love. College students, whose appearance is becoming perfect, have the conditions for marriage and love in appearance. However, because they have just entered adulthood, their self-psychological balance ability is weak, their self-control ability is poor, and they lack enough understanding of social life, so they are prone to make hasty and frivolous mistakes in marriage and love, and have not yet been able to stand on their own feet, which makes their marriage and love fragile. This age stage or period can be classified as immature, not the best age for marriage and love, but in a "dangerous period".

On the one hand, breaking away from the bitter sea of college entrance examination, after going to college, there will be an unprecedented sense of ease, the repressed sexual consciousness gradually germinates, the economy initially takes care of itself, and the space is relatively free, which has the foundation and possibility of putting love into practice and transforming imagination into action; On the other hand, because of being far away from parents and familiar places, many maladjustments in life make it easy to feel lonely. If a certain opposite sex pays more attention to it, it is easy to fall in love at first sight[4].

###### **4.1.2. Mate selection criteria**

According to the survey, when answering the question "the most important factor to consider when choosing a love object", the top three selected by the respondents are mostly personality, whether they have a common topic/three views and personality, while few students put money and age in the first place. Therefore, we can say that the undergraduates' view of mate selection is still relatively traditional and simple, and the more practical and secular factors such as economic situation or family background are not put in the choice as people imagine.

###### **4.1.3. Love psychology**

When asked about the purpose of falling in love, 27.01% of the students said that they wanted to get married, 12.41% said they wanted to try the feeling of falling in love, 15.33% wanted to find someone to accompany them because they felt lonely, 3.65% chose to fall in love because they were guided by some songs, articles and other people's words, and most of the respondents, 41.61%, said they had not considered it. The future life of college students is still uncertain, and the employment or development direction after graduation is still unknown. Even if they get their true love at this time, they may live far apart after graduation. Therefore, they can understand their love mentality of "not seeking everlasting life, but having it once".

## **4.2. Family factors**

### **4.2.1. Influence of family style**

College students' views on marriage and love are formed in the process of constant socialization. Parents' marriage relationship and family atmosphere have a subtle influence on college students' marriage and love orientation. Parents love each other and their families are harmonious, which will help college students form a positive and healthy marriage and family value orientation, on the contrary, it will have a negative impact on their children's marriage and family value orientation.

### **4.2.2. The influence of whether it is an only child or not**

Compared with non-only children, the proportion of only children in love is slightly higher, probably because only children have always been the only children in the family, lacking partners and being lonely since childhood, but they are cared for and cared for by their families. Therefore, love can not only meet the needs of being close to the opposite sex, but also achieve the purpose of being accompanied by someone to reduce loneliness. At the same time, only children have greater pressure on parents to support, so getting married early is conducive to taking up all kinds of family responsibilities earlier.

### **4.2.3. The impact of urban and rural families**

Influenced by the concept of fertility and living conditions in traditional agricultural society, most rural people, especially the older generation, hope that their children can fall in love as soon as possible after going to college, so as to solve the marital affairs as soon as possible, reduce the risk of marriage and love and ensure the continuity of family blood. Young people born in rural areas may be more susceptible to the influence of traditional marriage and love concepts, family background and social environment, so they tend to get married earlier. In comparison, although the older generation in urban areas can hardly get rid of the influence of traditional concepts completely, their marriage and love concepts should be improved and open. Most parents in urban areas have relatively high education level or there are many examples of parents with high education level around them, and they are more susceptible to the influence of other parents and elders with high education level around them.

## **4.3. School factors**

### **4.3.1. Education management**

The lack of school education management is also an important factor affecting undergraduates' expectation of marriage and love age. Schools play an important role in the formation of college students' values of marriage and love. In 2005, the Regulations on the Administration of Students in Ordinary Colleges and Universities and the Code of Conduct for Students in Colleges and Universities cancelled the mandatory regulations on marriage and love for college students. The National Population and Family Planning Commission and other relevant departments put forward in the "Opinions on Family Planning of Students in Colleges and Universities" that "for married students to legally give birth, schools should not drop out of school on the grounds of their birth", and colleges and universities have turned to acquiescence in marriage and love education for college students. This kind of tolerant policy has caused some problems in management and education in colleges and universities: the lack of management norms in colleges and universities is reflected in the lack of regulatory basis for the emergence and occurrence of problems, which gradually provides convenient conditions for the increase of various problems of students' marriage and love, and also grows.

### **4.3.2. Educational guidance**

In modern colleges and universities, love is the primary criterion of college students' love. Their love is not interfered or influenced by non-love factors such as politics and economy, and there is less so-called "dance academy" psychology in society. Compared with other love affairs in society, love in the ivory tower is less utilitarian and purer. However, college students' marriage and love lacks

positive education guidance. College students' love is the need of physical and mental development, and it can also promote their mental health, but it must be based on true and healthy love. Adolescent college students, whose physical and mental development is not yet mature, have premarital sex and cohabitation, have more and more open sexual concepts in society, and have repeatedly banned prostitution and whoring, which have launched a fierce impact on the campus. Various media have spread inappropriate views on marriage and love to students. It makes them naturally show all kinds of confusion, confusion, sadness, pain, melancholy, despair, etc., which are caused by the failure to correctly handle the love relationship, and many psychological problems can't be resolved and overwhelmed. However, parents and schools turn a blind eye to this problem, and even deliberately avoid it, which is regarded as a "forbidden zone" by educators and unwilling to touch it. It is obviously unrealistic for college students to deal with all kinds of problems in love themselves. College students are eager for pure and beautiful love, and at the same time, they are also eager for helpful guidance on this issue[4].

#### **4.4. Social factors**

##### **4.4.1. Social Thoughts under Social Change**

With the social changes, the generation born after the reform and opening up has some relatively open features in their views on marriage and love. In modern society, people's sexual maturity is ahead of time, and college students themselves have matured physiologically. In addition, influenced by the western open trend of thought, compared with their parents, college students are forming a new attitude of "early love and late marriage". At the same time, influenced by the unhealthy trend of thought in today's society, college students' concept of marriage and love presents diversified characteristics, such as complex motives, weakened moral sense and sense of responsibility, serious utilitarian thoughts, and neglect of spiritual pursuit, etc. It is not uncommon for college students to "rather cry in a BMW than laugh on a bicycle", and the idea of getting something for nothing is becoming more and more serious[5]. In terms of personality ethics, some college students closely relate their love and love standards with money, fame and fortune, and status. Some college students no longer regard marriage as sacred. They care more about "the experience of love process" and downplay future marriage and family concepts, which is one of the reasons why contemporary college students can't go to marriage in love[4].

##### **4.4.2. Social and environmental factors**

Social environment is also an important factor affecting the formation of college students' views on marriage and love. Everyone lives in a big social environment and constantly accepts the suggestion of public opinion. Nowadays, the control of Confucian marriage and family culture is weakened, and western values are invaded. At present, the ethical environment of family marriage in China is in a chaotic state, and the seriousness of marriage is challenged unprecedentedly, and the stability of family is impacted. Under the impact of western values, the public's values are increasingly diversified, money worship and enjoyment grow, right and wrong, good and evil are confused, and the status quo of pursuing Bai Fumei and Gao Fushuai is pushed forward. The change of market economic system has influenced some college students to get quick success and get rich, to be ambitious, to advocate money, and to do things that violate the morality of marriage and love.

##### **4.4.3. Peer factors**

Campus is a place where young people are highly concentrated. They are similar in age, get along day and night, have the same major, share similar interests and have more common language. These factors make it easy for male and female college students to have emotional resonance and germinate the seeds of love[4]. However, after falling in love, many college students began to spend a lot of money in order to give their lovers a better life experience or just not to lose face in front of their lovers, and their monthly consumption surged, and some even borrowed money, regardless of their family's economic situation. Blind comparison and vanity are common in some college students'

couples today. Therefore, schools and parents need to actively guide and standardize their views on marriage and love.

## **5. Conclusion**

Through the above analysis and research on the present situation and existing problems of undergraduates' marriage and love age expectation in Yantai Research Institute of China Agricultural University, it is not difficult to find that personal factors, family factors, school factors and social factors have significant influence on undergraduates' marriage and love age expectation. The higher the educational background, the greater the ideal marriage age of young people, and the lower the ideal marriage age of women than men and non-only children than only children.

Contemporary college students' concept of marriage and love in the period of social transformation reflects the characteristics of taking tradition as the main body and transforming from tradition to modernity. The new concept of marriage and love is still in its formative stage and has not yet been stabilized, so it is a good time for moral education and intervention. Therefore, accepting necessary marriage education courses in advance, learning to mediate various relationships in love and marriage, and dealing with various contradictions and conflicts in marriage can standardize college students' marriage behavior and guide them to make correct value choices, which is not only beneficial to the improvement of individual physical and mental health and happiness, but also can create a good environment for the happy growth of the next generation, thus purifying the unhealthy social atmosphere.

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