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Attitudes towards Marriage among the Students of Higher Learning in West Bengal
An Empirical Approach

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This article examines the attitudes of students towards marriage in the 21st century. It also focuses on attitudes towards a wide range of marriage related issues like dowry, caste and love marriage. The Factor Analysis suggests that the young generation prefer spouses with well-paying jobs. Any type of marriage, love or arranged, is acceptable to them. According to them the success of marriage does not depend on astrological prediction, but on the couple's mutual understanding, co-operation and trust. They give less importance to the 'caste' of a spouse.

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INTRODUCTION

In India, marriage is considered as one of the most important events in one's life. It is regarded as the socially accepted union of a man and woman for their conjugal happiness, co-operation and for their role in the procreation and rearing of children. In a broader sense, marriage paves the way for the union of two families. Nowadays, decisions regarding marriage especially among the educated are taken by the concerned boy and girl and the parents generally organise the wedding ceremony.

In India, it is customary for an individual to marry within their religion, caste and sub caste. Traditionally, parents and relatives select a prospective bride or groom from a pool of eligible adults who are mostly from a similar socioeconomic, cultural and educational background (Majumdar, 1978). The parents may depend on matrimonial advertisements of leading

newspapers, matrimonial sites and their social associates. Before the engagement is announced to friends and relatives, many Hindu families consult an astrologer to ensure the compatibility of the prospective marital partners. After a preliminary selection by the parents, the would-be couple may meet, talk over the phone and parents may arrange a special meeting for the couple. After a few meetings and interactive sessions the couple convey their decision to the parents about the prospective spouse (Hamon and Ingoldsby, 2003). If it is favourable, parents and relatives of both sides organise the marriage ceremony after formal discussion. If it is not favourable, the message is conveyed to the boy/girl's parents with delicate politeness. The whole process starts again, that is, picking up the next choice from the pool.

In India, as a result of globalisation, rapid social changes are noticeable in the institution of marriage especially in arranged marriages. Even school children in their early teens are involved in some sort of love affairs and discuss such matters without any inhibitions. The friendships developed in school, often break-up due to spatial and temporal change of partners; most of them concentrate in trying to choose their area of interest for further studies. Although some of them try to maintain their friendships even after their school life, there is no statistical evidence to show how many of them get married to their school friends. In college, they may develop new friendships. Some of them get married during their college days while others may find new partners at their work place or through social interaction outside the work place. A significant number of children and adults move out of their parental households for higher education or employment. The new interactions in college and work place change their attitudes, personality and concept of social values.

Literature Review

Marriage is not considered as an individual affair among the wider section of Indian society, but rather a bond between two families (Bhagat, 2002). It is predominantly controlled by caste and religion. Almost all Indian children especially girls are brought up with the expectation that their parents will arrange their marriages. Arranged marriages are becoming flexible and adaptable as they are based on contemporary practical and realistic factors (Vasudev, 2004). The situation is now changing very rapidly from parentally controlled arranged marriages to love marriages (Caldwell, Reddy and Caldwell, 1983; Thornton, Chang and Yang, 1994). A significant number of young people, especially college and university

educated people, choose their spouses. A study (Jejeeboy and Halli, 2005) conducted in Tamil Nadu reports that a considerable percentage of young women played an active role in determining the timing of their marriage and choice of their spouse. Another study (Medora, Larson and Dave, 2000) stated that the majority of Indian marriages are still arranged, even among the educated middle class population of modern India. Majority of Indian youth are diffident about their experience, knowledge or wisdom to select a prospective spouse. It is assumed that parents have knowledge and wisdom to make a choice best suited for their child. In arranged marriages, there are many factors to be considered and the potential partner is carefully screened to ensure compatibility. Family ideals, values, and background as well as social, educational and economic status are assessed to ensure that they are compatible (Hamon and Ingoldsby, 2003; Mullatti, 1995). Parents take the help of matrimonial advertisements in leading newspapers and also social associates to choose a desirable spouse. It is observed that they would like to choose a mate for their son or daughter from their associates or through their references believing that the latter would not recommend someone who is incompatible.

Though living in the twenty first century, the Indian Hindu families go by endogamous marriages. One can see it during spouse selection in an arranged marriage. This can also be observed in the classified advertisement sections of the newspapers. In the rural areas, the observance of the caste system in arranging marriages is much stronger as compared to the cities (Hamon and Ingoldsby, 2003). To marry outside of one's caste and religion is often considered as taboo. Still in the case of love marriages, though caste does not play any big role, religion plays a significant role. However, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, legalised inter-religious and inter-caste marriages (Mullatti, 1995).

The practice of dowry is common in most parts of India, which is becoming an increasingly onerous burden on the bride's family. Anti-dowry laws exist, but are largely ignored and a bride's treatment in her matrimonial home is often affected by the value of dowry she brings to her in-laws. The practice of dowry widely varies from community to community and from state to state. It is fading out, but very slowly among the educated families. Dowry is uncommon in love marriages.

Whether it is the case of arranged or love marriages, prospective grooms and brides expect their spouse to be employed, as a 'single income' is not sufficient to run a family smoothly. A study by Stevans, Puchtell, Ryu and Mortimer (1992) found that 99 percent of the girls wanted to work

after marriage and 85 percent of the boys expected that their wives would continue to work after getting married.

Objectives of the Study

After globalisation, an increasing number of young boys and girls are joining universities and colleges, and entering into varied professions which were unthinkable even a few years ago. The awareness about education, economic and technical development, social change, industrialisation, disintegration of joint families and availability of more job opportunities have given the young generation more freedom and economic independence. It has also changed the attitudes of this generation towards marriage. The present study aims to investigate:

- The expectations of young students from marriage and this objective is achieved by Factor Analysis.

- Variation in attitudes if any among young boys and girls towards different factors/components derived from Factor Analysis and it was tested by ANOVA analysis.

- Attitudes towards caste and love marriage among the young boys and girls and variation of their attitudes were tested by chi-square analysis.

- Attitudes towards dowry among the girl's student and it was calculated by percentage only.

METHODOLOGY

The data was randomly collected from the students who were studying at the under graduate and post graduate levels of four different private engineering and management colleges in Kolkata metropolitan area and the West Bengal University of Technology. The sample consisted of 273 boys and 163 girls. Out of the 500 questionnaires distributed, 436 were measured complete and used for analysis. Socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, area of study and residence of the students that may have an impact on student's attitude towards marriage were considered in this research.

The data for the socio-demographic variables was obtained directly from the first part of the questionnaire. The second part of the questionnaire contained thirteen questions which were used to find out the attitudes of the young generation towards marriage. To find out which factors influenced them more, and also to examine the correlation between variables, Factor Analysis was carried out. A series of analyses of variance (ANOVA) were

performed to investigate the relationship/s between demographic variables and the components derived from Factor Analysis.

In the second part of the questionnaire, two specific questions (Tables 4 and 5) covering the concerns of modern time 'love marriage' and 'spouse's caste were also asked separately to both boys and girls and three specific questions (Table 6) on 'dowry' and 'job' were asked only to girls. Chi-square test was used to test the hypothesis regarding the opinion of boys and girls about love marriage and spouse's caste. Percentage was calculated to find out the opinion of girls regarding dowry and jobs.

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The percentage of boys was more than that of the girls (62.84 percent and 37.16 percent respectively). Majority of the students (80.28 percent) were in the age group of 18–22 years. Again majority of the students came from different branches of Engineering (77.29 percent). About one third of the students came from rural areas.

Table 1: Respondents' Characteristics and Background

Characteristics	Sample	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	274	62.84
	Female	162	37.16
Age	18-22	350	80.28
	22-26	76	17.43
	>26	10	2.29
Course Pursuing	Engineering	337	77.29
	MBA	50	11.47
	BBA	49	11.24
Residence	Urban area	332	76.15
	Rural area	104	23.85

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Choosing the right marriage partner in life is not an easy job. In Europe and America, they generally choose their spouse after co-habitation. Even then a significant number of such unions end up in divorce. Indian society does not see cohabitation as a an acceptable practice. The parents allow their wards the right to choose their spouse to some extent. Status and caste conscious families are yet to accept it.

To find out the attitudes towards marriage, thirteen statements (Table-2) on a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree were considered. To find out the smaller set of components/factors, Factor Analysis was carried out. In order to establish the strength of the factor analysis, the reliability and validity of the obtained reduction was established by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test and Bartlett's test of sphericity. In the analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO = 0.603) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were (Chi-square = 685.712, $p < 0.000$) significant, which justified the factor analysis (Chawla and Sondhi, 2011; Hair and others, 1998). Regarding the Eigen values of all the components, the variance explained by each component and the cumulative variance were calculated. As stated by Malhotra (2007) those components with Eigen values greater than one are retained. The present study indicates that only six components have Eigen values greater than one, and together contribute 55.734 percent of the total variance. The first component accounts for 14.04 percent of variance while the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth account for 10.302 percent, 9.304 percent, 8.30 percent, 7.335 percent and 6.453 percent, respectively. The remaining components are not significant.

An important output from Factor Analysis is the component matrix which contains the co-efficient that expresses the standardised variables in terms of the components. A co-efficient with a large absolute value indicates that the component and the variables are closely related. The co-efficient of the component matrix can be used to interpret the components. The researchers have used rotation method (Variance with Kaiser Normalization) to identify the variables which have a large loading on the same component. Variables with loading less than 0.50 were not considered.

In the study, variables one, two, and three correlate and combine with component one after rotation because of their commonality in nature (Table 2). This component may be labelled as a 'well-paid job'. This means that whether it is an arranged or a love marriage, the young generation prefers that their spouses' draw high salaries. They have realised that a single individual's income is not sufficient to run a family smoothly. They are not very keen on a Government job, which constituted the prime choice even a few years back. This may be because though the Government job is more secure and salary attractive, the opportunities are limited. Component two is related to variables seven, twelve, and thirteen and may be labelled as 'marriage is less attractive'. The increasing rate of divorce, cohabitation,

Table 2: Rotated Component Matrix

Variables	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4	Component 5	Component 6
I prefer my spouse to have a job	0.835					
To run a family smoothly both spouses should have a job	0.737					
I do not care whether it is Govt. or private job, he/she should have a decent salary	0.652					
It does not matter at all whether it is arranged or love marriage, what matters is mutual understanding and co-operation						0.852
It is not necessary that one has to be married			0.637			
It is very difficult to choose the right person in life				0.669		
Rising rate of divorce is reducing the attractiveness of marriage		-0.657				
Trust, mutual understanding and co-operation are necessary for a successful married life				0.737		
In married life, one has to compromise throughout his/her life			0.536			
To live alone throughout life will be boring, monotonous and meaningless			-0.765			

Variables	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4	Component 5	Component 6
Astrology should not play any role in selection of spouse					-0.835	
Do you agree marriage is less important among young generation because premarital sex is becoming increasingly acceptable in modern society		0.691				
Marriage is a gamble		0.604				

Eigen values 2.246 1.648 1.489 1.328 1.174 1.032

% Variance 14.040 10.302 9.304 8.300 7.335 6.453

Cumulative % 14.040 24.342 33.646 41.946 49.281 55.734

Component 1: Well paid job.

Component 2: Marriage is less attractive.

Component 3: Single life is boring & meaningless.

Component 4: Success of Marriage.

Component 5: Role of astrology.

Component 6: Any type of marriage .

*Note:*Extraction Method: Principle Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in three iterations.

pre-marital sex in modern India seems to have an impact in reducing the attractiveness of marriage among young students.

The lack of meaningful employment opportunities among the young generation has also reduced the attractiveness of marriage. Working women have gained economic independence, which has given them substantial courage to go for divorce if they think they can no longer tolerate the mental and physical torture meted out by their husbands and in-laws. Until recently, uneducated and economically dependent women used to tolerate all sorts of pressure given by their husbands and in-laws.

An educated and employed woman today expects mutual respect, co-operation and trust from her spouse. The employment of a married woman does not increase the risk of divorce in a happy marriage. Since the 1970s, cohabitation has increased in European countries and the United States of America, which has resulted in the postponement of marriages among the young generation (Bumpass and Sweet, 1991). Very few couples want to take the responsibility of family and the rearing of children in these countries.

Component three is related with variables five, nine, and ten and may be labelled as 'single life is boring and meaningless'. The young generation is aware that living single could be boring, monotonous and meaningless. Though marriage is losing its attractiveness, very few in India want to remain unmarried. Parents are not going to be around forever to look after their children. On the contrary, Indian society generally expects that the son and his wife will take care of the parents in their old days. One recent study suggests that girls desire to take the responsibility of the parents even after their marriage (Saha and Dey, 2013). But it mainly depends on her husband and his family. In 2010, 35.9 percent of the population of India remained unmarried (Sinha, 2012). The highest number of 'never married' people was reported in Jammu and Kashmir (45.4 percent) against the lowest in Andhra Pradesh (30.4 percent).Besides companionship, unemployment is one of the main reasons why some individuals remain single in Indian society. There is also no social security system in India. If one does not have a proper job and parents are retired with no pension, it is extremely difficult to maintain a comfortable lifestyle.

Component four is associated with variables six and eight and may be labelled as 'success of married life'. In married life, one accepts a new person in his/her life and it changes the course of an individual's lifestyle. Maturity, trust, mutual understanding and co-operation from each other

are the roots of a successful married life. A socio-demographic report (Taylor, Funk and Clark, 2007) found that 93 percent of their respondents mentioned 'faithfulness' as a very important factor in a successful marriage. And also, majority of the respondents mentioned adequate income, good housing, shared religious beliefs and tastes and interest in common areas as important for a successful marriage.

Component five is related to only variable eleven, that is, 'role of astrology' in marriage. In most Hindu arranged marriages, astrology plays a very significant role in the selection of a spouse. Parents generally consult an astrologer before announcing a couple's engagement. There is no statistical evidence to prove that the forecasts are accurate. As evidenced by the Factor Analysis, most youngsters stated that astrology should not play any role in the selection of a spouse.

Component six is also associated with variable four only, with a very high loading and may be labelled as 'any type of marriage'. Both love marriages and arranged marriages are acceptable to the younger generation. Arranged marriage in India is a very old practice, while love marriage is very recent. In arranged marriage, two different personalities start living together just after their marriage. Conflict may arise, but they believe that co-operation, mutual understanding and trust are the pivot of a successful marriage.

Effect of Demographic Variables on Components: ANOVA Analysis

A series of analyses of variance (one-way ANOVAs) was performed to investigate the relationship between demographical variables and the components derived from Factor analysis. Demographical variables such as gender and residential areas were considered in the analysis. It was presumed that the attitudes of boys and girls born and brought up in urban areas will significantly vary from the boys and girls who are born and brought up in rural areas. The age was not considered because age difference of the students was very minimal, that is, eight years only. Similarly, the area of study was not considered as there were very few students pursuing postgraduate studies. A one-way ANOVA analysis allows us to test whether several means are equal across one variable and this is done by analysing the variance. In the study boys and girls living in urban and rural areas differed significantly in their opinion about 'well-paid job' and 'single life is boring and meaningless'. They also differed significantly in their opinion about 'marriage is less attractive'. However,

residential areas did not seem to play any significant role to influence them. These results are reported in Table 3. On the contrary, boys and girls did not differ significantly in their opinion about 'success of married life', 'role of astrology' and 'any type of marriage' irrespective of their residential areas.

In the context of 'well-paid job', working women desire their potential mates to have higher income as compared to what they earn themselves (Buunk, Dijkstra, Fetchenhauer and Kenrick, 2002). A few other studies (Townsend and Roberts, 1993; Goode, 1996; Nakosteen and Zimmer, 2001) also suggest that women place more importance on socioeconomic status and earnings of their spouse than their male counterparts. Remaining unmarried is more acceptable for men than it is for women in Indian society. A research finding (Dykstra and Poortman, 2008) suggests that high salaried women and low-salaried men are more likely to remain single. This finding also suggests that the relationship between economic resources and permanent singlehood trend has not changed much over time. Nowadays, in urban areas, less qualified, less attractive and unemployed women have minimum chance to get married whereas in rural areas a woman with good health, irrespective of her physical attractiveness, has a fair chance to get married. Again in the context of 'marriage is less attractive', young boys in India are losing their interest in marriage due to the modern day practice of 'living together' without marital responsibility and also due to increasing rate of divorce. However, in Indian society, marriage is very important for girls, as it gives them an opportunity to have their own family. Marriage is considered to be the ultimate solution towards economic stability for uneducated and unemployed women in Indian society.

Table 3: Demographic Variables and its Relationship with the Components

Variables	Well-paid Job Mean F P	Marriage is less attractive Mean F P	Single life is boring & meaningless Mean F P
Gender			
Male	11.48 12.12** 1.83E-23	9.94 4.71* 0.031	8.49 14.52** 0.0002
Female	13.88	9.91	7.72
Residence			
Urban	12.59 11.32** 0.0008	9.57 0.239 0.625	8.05 3.73* 0.054
Rural	11.65	9.43	8.52

*Significant at .05 level; **Significant at .01 level

Attitudes towards Love Marriage and Caste of the Spouse

In reply to a question 'I can't think of marrying an unknown person', majority of the boys (45.09+23.64= 68.73 percent) and girls (72.84+16.67= 89.51 percent) mentioned that they do not like to marry an unknown person (Table 4). But in reality all the marriages are not love marriages. In India, only 20 percent enter into love marriages (Banerjee, Duflo, Ghatak and Lafortune, 2009). Eighty percent of marriages are either 'arranged' or 'semi-arranged' marriages.

Table 4: Students' Attitudes towards Love Marriages

Specific Question	Sample	Strongly agree	Fairly agree	Do not know	Fairly disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
I can't think of marrying an unknown person	Boys	124 (45.09)	65 (23.63)	32 (11.64)	32 (11.64)	22 (8.0)	275
	Girls	118 (72.84)	27 (16.67)	9 (5.56)	2 (1.23)	6 (3.70)	162
	Total	242	92	41	34	28	437

$\chi2$ (df=3, N = 437) = 36.07, p > .05

Note: The figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

Two adjacent columns were merged together due to very less frequency (<5) in one cell. So, it became 2x4 cells and the degrees of freedom became three.

Chi-square test was conducted taking the frequency distribution of the sample to test the null hypothesis that boys and girls do not have different opinions regarding marrying an unknown person. The results indicated that there is a significant difference of opinion between boys and girls regarding marrying an unknown person.

Table 5: Students' Attitudes towards Caste of the Spouse

Specific Question	Sample	Strongly agree	Fairly agree	Do not know	Fairly disagree	Strongly disagree	To-tal
I do not bother about the caste of my spouse	Boys	157 (57.09)	67 (24.36)	10 (3.64)	10 (3.64)	31 (11.27)	275
	Girls	64 (39.51)	57 (35.19)	17 (10.49)	20 (12.35)	4 (2.46)	162
	Total	221	124	27	30	35	437

$\chi2$ (df=3, N = 437) = 18.20, p > .05

Note: The figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

In reply to another question regarding the caste of a spouse, about 81.45 percent (57.09+24.36) of boys and 74.70 percent (39.51+35.19) of girls indicated that they were not bothered about the spouse's caste (Table 5). Chi-square test was also conducted to see whether there is any difference of opinion between boys and girls about the caste of their spouse. The results indicate that young boys and girls differ in their opinion about the caste of their spouse, both in love or arranged marriages. It is easy to say 'I do not bother about the caste of my spouse', but it is not so easy to overcome the century old tradition. Caste may not play a significant role in love marriages, but in arranged marriages it still plays a very dominant role in India.

Attitudes towards Dowry and Job

In 2010, 8,391 dowry death related cases were reported across India (Bedi, 2012). The figures vary from state to state. Kolkata, the state capital of West Bengal, where 12 percent of the Indian metropolitan city people live, has only 1.9 percent 'dowry related deaths' (Banerjee and others, 2009). In the study, about 97 percent (93.83+3.09) of women students stated that they were against dowry, and would therefore not marry an individual demanding dowry. The answer to the second question is very interesting. Nearly 31 percent (14.70+16.54) of them are of the opinion that their parents may give them minimum assets, if the bridegroom does not demand anything. However, about 43.56 percent (6.04+37.52) did not agree with this opinion. The remaining 25.20 percent were not sure whether their parents would give them their due share of assets (Table 6). Social norms generally force the girls to keep quiet.

Table 6: Girl Students' Attitudes towards Dowry and Job

Specific Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Fairly disagree	Strongly disagree
I would not marry a guy who demands dowry ir-respective of his degree	93.83%	3.09%	–	–	3.08%
If my spouse does not demand anything from my parents they will give me minimum assets and keep everything for my brother	14.70%	16.54%	25.20%	6.04%	37.52%
I do not intend to leave my job due to child-rearing responsibility	37.04%	28.40%	12.35%	12.35%	9.86%

Majority of the girls (37.04+28.04= 65.08 percent) have mentioned that they would not like to resign from their jobs due to child-rearing responsibilities. In India, where job opportunities are very less, women are very much reluctant to quit their jobs for child rearing and family care responsibilities (Saha, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Globalisation, industrialisation, urbanisation and technological advances have been instrumental in changing family structure, values and lifestyles in India. The present generation has access to better economic opportunities across the country. With higher expenditure on education and professional training, the expectations of parents has also increased manifold. On the contrary, the experience that the young generation gathers while they live outside their parent's home during their schooling and college education and during their professional sojourn influences them to choose their own spouse. Subsequently, emerging avenues of income and employment opportunities affect partner- selecting behaviour considerably.

These days, parent's role in their son's or daughter's marriage has become secondary, especially in urban areas. The youngsters choose their spouse and then request their parents to organise the marriage ceremony. They do not bother to consult an astrologer to know about the future of their marriage. Today's grooms do not bother about the dowry or other related issues for that matter. With changing times, the concept of 'arranged marriage' is fading away from the Indian urban society, although the younger generation is still flexible about accepting an 'arranged marriage'.

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