Influence of Women’s Economic Empowerment on their Agency in Mate Selection Process

*A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the*

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in

Economics (Honours)

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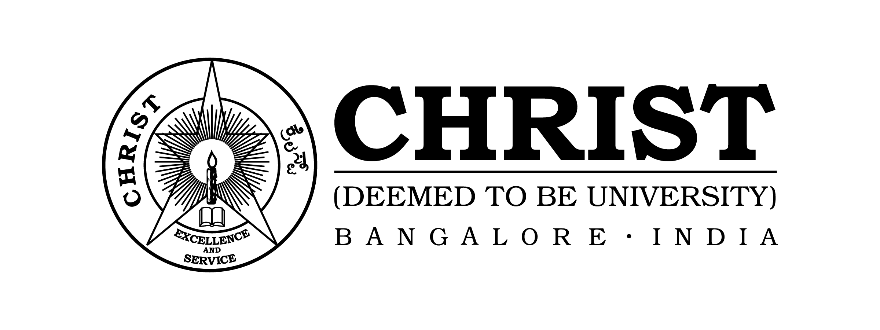
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BENGALURU, INDIA

March 2020

**DECLARATION**

I Ananda Barua hereby declare that the dissertation, entitled Influence of Women’s Economic Empowerment on their Agency in Mate Selection Process is a record of original research work undertaken by me for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts inEconomics Honours. I have completed this study under the supervision of Dr. Manasi Dash, Assistant Professor**,** Department of Economics.

I also declare that this dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other title. I hereby confirm the originality of the work and that there is no plagiarism in any part of the dissertation.

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This is to certify that the dissertation submitted by Ananda Barua (Reg. No. 1733406) titled ‘Influence of Women’s Economic Empowerment on their Agency in Mate Selection Process’ is a record of research work done by him/her during the academic year 2019-2020 under my/our supervision in partial fulfillment for the award of Bachelor of Arts in Economics Honours.

This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other title. I hereby confirm the originality of the work and that there is no plagiarism in any part of the dissertation.

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**ABSTRACT**

With growing modernisation in urban India, it is evident that women’s economic empowerment is on the rise. This study attempts to question whether women’s economic empowerment has an impact on their agency in Mate Selection Process. The economic empowerment of women is measured in terms of number of years of education, employment, income earned, value of property owned, decision-making ability at home and association with outside organisation. The agency is measured through a composite value of approaching an intermediary, courtship with the husband and the final decision to select the mate. Furthermore, the agency is attempted to be studied by triangulating the various themes identified through the interview process. Using ordinal logistic regression model after collecting a primary data from 120 respondents, it was found that only the ‘value of property owned’, in the year cohort of 1980 to 2000, has significant negative impact on the agency in mate selection. For the income cohorts, number of years of education was observed to be significant in lower middle income group, income earned and value of property owned has significant impact on the agency in middle income group and for the upper middle income group, value of property, number of years of education and decision-making ability at home had significant impact on agency. Withal, ‘family support’ tends to enhance the ability of women to have more ‘agency’ in marriage. Despite the popular imagery of modernisation indicating individualism, there is still a deep rooted preference for parental-arranged marriages.

*Keywords*: Modernisation, Economic Empowerment, Agency

**CHAPTER I**

**INTRODUCTION**

* 1. **Need for the Study**

“I came to India believing that Indians do have quite an amount of insights into marriage and love. However, to my dismay, I found that most often an invisible thread of love and friendship that was to be found between husbands and wives was non-existent, as if they were totally unconnected (Bumiller, 1991, p.43).”

Elisabeth Bumiller, a reporter for the Washington Post, during her trips to India discovered a fascinating picture of India, which was full of paradoxes and complexities. She penned her idea of India and its women in a book known as “May you be the mother of a hundred sons” (Bumiller, 1991). Like Bumiller, the new generation too is constantly perplexed by the double standards of Indian families, where though the countenance from outside seems to be modern, the inner countenance is deeply rooted in the traditions. With this backdrop in mind, the study attempts to question the impact of a woman’s economic empowerment on her agency in selecting a spouse.

Studies suggest that the number of women who had not completed primary education has declined over the years from 60% in 1990 to 36% in 2010. Similarly, the proportion of women who have studied upto secondary education has increased from 16% to 33%. These figures are reflective of the fact that women are constantly attaining higher capabilities with changing times. According to the Census data, the age of marriage has risen from 16.8 years in 1960 to 20.2 years in 2001 (Kashyap et al., 2015). This increasing trend indicates that there must be some effect of education on the incremental age of marriage. Moreover, with changing times, one could observe a rising trend in employment status of women from 9.3% in 1981 to 16.5% in 2012 (Official Registrar Commission, India, 2017). Such trends suggest that women are becoming increasingly empowered with every year passing by. In such a scenario, it might be presumed that women are similarly forging strongly in exercising their rights and selecting their own spouse. However, in a study conducted by Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS), it was revealed that less than 5% women in India enjoy primary role in mate selection (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). The existence of such wild contradictions in the existing studies drives us to research into the existing status of women in mate selection process. Besides, it would be of keen interest to know the factors that are influencing women’s status in mate selection process.

Although several studies have explored the impact of education, socio-demographic factors and cultural factors on the decision making capacity for mate selection, there has hardly been any study done on the influence of economic factors on agency in mate selection process (Shrestha, 2012; Ghimire et al., 2006; South et al., 2016). The agency is mostly denoted to the final decision making capacity in mate selection in several studies, while in some studies the duration of courtship is also taken into account when considering agency. However, agency in terms of various criteria such as approaching an intermediary, courtship with the spouse and decision to select the mate has not been examined compositely, which would be the focus of this study. Likewise, the ethnographic studies on marriage are mostly dealing with modernity, self-choice and intermediation in marriage (Donner, 2016; Mukhopadhyay, 2012). This study aims to identify various facets of women’s empowerment and the agency mate selection process.

* 1. **Design of the Study**

The research begins with the literature review, which would be discussed in the next chapter. This would be followed by the ‘theoretical framework’ that would be dealt in the third chapter. The fourth chapter would entail profile of the study area and discuss the socio-economic and cultural factors of the target research area. This chapter would be followed by the methodology chapter, which would highlight the quantitative and qualitative approaches to the research. The sixth chapter would be devoted to analysis, further divided into two sections based on the objectives. Lastly, the chapter seven would summarise and conclude the research.

**CHAPTER II**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

* 1. **Breaking Existing Norms of Arranged Marriages**

Marriage in India is considered a sacred ritual, validated and sanctified by the parents and community. As per the holy Hindu priests, it is a means to reach the end, which is love, and not the other way round (Mody, 2002). In the words of Dinesh Chandra Sen (1866-1939),

“In this country a blind-providence joins the hands of a mute pair who promise fidelity, often without knowing each other” (Majumdar, 2003, p. 136).

Marriage, arranged by parents, usually adheres to the caste and community lines and permits limited autonomy to the marrying couples regarding choosing their spouse. Love or self-arranged marriage, on the contrary, ignores the obligation to marry within the caste or community and quite often leads to substantial departures from the social norms. In other words, love-marriage allows more individual compatibility, whereas arranged-marriage caters to social compatibility (Mody, 2002).

This does not mean that marriages were totally non-negotiable between children and parents in an arranged marriage. Moreover, social historians have, recently, challenged the very perception about arranged-marriage, child marriage and sati practice being void of choice and agency among parties. According to them, there has been a hegemonic textualisation over the nineteenth century about the oppressive condition of women in marriage. This completely ignores the choice and consent possessed by women in the case of marriage, dowry or unhappy marital relationships, which were exercised through elopement, wage labour or voicing against injustice (Mukhopadhyay, 2012). In fact, the revolution towards legalising ‘self-choice’ marriages hit the Indian society long back in 1872, when the reformers like Keshub Chandra Sen, forged their way in to pass the “Brahma Marriage Act”, proposing the grant of marriage certificates to couples, who are above the legal age of marriage and are willing to marry each other. The bill faced many criticisms and had to be refined subsequently. Paradoxically, after Independence, the Nehru Government re-enacted this civil marriage bill, naming it ‘Special Marriage Act 1954’, amidst enormous opposition. The age of marriage for boys was raised to 21 years from 18 years and for girls 18 years from 14 years. Besides this, the declaration of renunciation of faith was omitted from the bill, allowing for two adults to be legally married irrespective of their faith (Mody, 2002).

* 1. **Modernising Arranged Marriages**

Even though “love or self-arranged marriages” are associated with Modernisation and Westernisation, they are still looked upon with contention by the parents and elders in a typical Indian family. ‘Love’ is at times seen a major distraction, danger and threat to the family values, especially for young women, by parents and society at large. In a society, where patrilocality remains the norm, love marriages are felt as indignation to parental authority. An ethnographic study conducted in Kolkata by Henrike Donner, revealed how parents, in general, described love not as *‘prem’*, associated with lust and desire, but in terms of *‘bhalobasa’*, a mutual egalitarian relationship associated with popular devotional cults, which is developed post marriage between the couple, keeping intact the traditional family values and being aware of their responsibilities (Donner, 2016).

When the burden of accomplishing a successful marriage falls completely on parents, the role of intermediaries becomes pivotal for searching the right spouse. Traditional matchmakers like the genealogists (*ghataks*) or astrologers functioned within the community to find appropriate matches for alliances, based on caste and community lines. With rapid urbanisation and increase in modern technology, there is advent of various forms of other matchmaking institutions like the matrimonial newspaper ads, marriage bureaus and matrimonial websites, which are often more accessible to the youngsters than their parents, providing greater scope for pre-marital courtship and autonomy in spouse selection. These new practices allow for “arranged love marriages” to take place, which involves both parental as well as self choice. Moreover, young unmarried men and women, who desire courtship and falling in love before marriage, strongly disapprove marrying without parental consent. In a study conducted by ‘School of Women’s Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata’ between 2007 and 2009, it was found that 336 (80%) women, out of the 420 unmarried women surveyed, wanted an arranged marriage (Mukhopadhyay, 2012).

Back in 1964, when Cora Vreede-de Stuers conducted a study in Jaipur among the University female students, the responses were quite similar to the results of the recent study in Kolkata. About 64% of the students felt arranged marriage to be the best solution, while only 16% thought that marriage decisions must rest with the person concerned. The reasons being, their total dependence on their parents for such decisions and their unwillingness to make any decision that would be risky and uncertain. However, half of 64% girls were also in favour of pre-marital courtship and children’s consent in marriage. Furthermore, Stuers found that most young girls were prevented from any social interaction with the other gender. Even in co-educational institutions, both sexes were constantly segregated, allowing for no opportunity for mingling with each other. In such situation, one would readily accept their parent’s choice and comply with their decisions (Stuers, 1969).

* 1. **Changing Trends in Marriage**

As per the Modernisation theory, developing countries must slowly move towards self-choice marriages from arranged marriage. The theory is quite appropriate for the countries like, China, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Togo, Japan and so on. According to the Japanese data, the percentage of women who had arranged marriages has fallen from 60% in the late 1950s to around zero in the early 2000s. Similarly, Togo has experienced a steady fall in arranged marriages among women from 46% around 1960s to 24% in 1980s. However, in the case of India, arranged marriages have not declined much from 1970s to 2000s. Rather it has shifted to semi-arranged marriages from 1970s to 2000s. The 2005 Indian Human Development Survey revealed that only 5% of women surveyed had “primary” role in mate selection. The Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS) was conducted in two phases- first in 2004-05 and second in 2011-12. The numbers of women interviewed in the phases were 46,010 between the age group of 15-49. The survey revealed that self-arranged marriages have doubled from 3% in the 1970s to 6% in the 2000s. Interestingly, around 47% of women decided their husband jointly with their parents in 1970s. The percentage of women who met their husband only on the wedding day declined from 74% in 1970s to 64% in the 2000s. Looking at specific region it was found that North India experienced highest arranged marriages of around 72% in 1970s, while the South and the Northeast India had substantially low parental arranged marriages of around 15% in 1970s, decreased to 7.5% in 2000s. The Eastern India experienced 3% of self-arranged marriages in 1970s, which subsequently increased to 12% in 2000s. While the rural residents had most of the arranged marriages around 53% in 1970s, reduced to 36% in 2000s, the metro-urban residents encountered 26% arranged marriages in 1970s which fell to 14% in 2000s (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016).

There is a common notion prevailing in the minds of the people about the drastic change in marriage forms from parental-arranged marriages in the past to love and elopement in the present. In a study conducted in Pariwarbasti, a village located in the Darjeeling Hills, Allendorf found that most people, in their conversation, spoke of how elopement and love marriages have become a trend in the current era. It was believed that the influence of education, television and Bollywood movies has led to this shift. He also found certain common characteristics of arranged and love marriages, spelled by the people in the locality. For instance, love marriages are about elopement, intercaste/ inter-religious unions, no parental consent and cohabitation before marriage, while arranged marriages meant boy’s family first approaching girl’s family, love after marriage, family’s consent, within the caste and religion, traditional, ceremonious, cohabitation after marriage and so on. It was also commonly believed that love marriages are inherently good, but endangers women’s relationship with the in-laws and the natal family, while arranged marriages are prestigious and honourable and keeps the family happy (Allendorf, 2013).

* 1. **Factors Influencing Mate Selection**

On the lines of Modernisation theory, the Chitwan Valley Family Study, Nepal, estimated that the effects of schooling, employment before marriage, non-family living before marriage and non-family residential movement are statistically significant on the participation in mate selection process. The agency in mate selection also increases due to media exposure and participation in a youth club. Even age is an important factor. One-year delay in marriage increases the agency in mate selection process by 8% (Ghimire et al., 2006). In a similar study in Chitwan Valley, Nepal by Shrestha, the results showed that the less proximate the school is from home, the more say the woman will have in mate selection. Similarly, she found that while father’s education is inversely related to women’s say in marriage, individuals’ education enables women to postpone their marriage further but it hardly impacts their agency in mate selection. Besides, a declining trend in the age of marriage and more say in mate choice have been experienced among different age cohorts. When it comes to caste and ethnicity, women of lower caste have more say in mate selection and marry a little later compared to the upper caste women (Shrestha, 2012).

Research on the impact of socio-demographic factors on women’s participation in mate selection process shows that sex ratio is significantly inversely related to women’s say in marriage. This means that higher the men in a locality lower the agency a woman possess in selecting her own mate. On the contrary, lower sex ratio of men over women escalates the duration of courtship before marriage. Education too plays an important role in increasing the courtship period before marriage (South et al., 2016).

Despite rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and increase in adoption of Western culture, India predominantly remains a joint or extended family system, where sometimes three generations live together. In such circumstances, marriage is considered a union of families, not merely individuals. Parents would want a daughter-in-law, who minimizes conflicts at home and ensures that the authority of the family remains with the elders. Furthermore, if the preferences of both parents and children are same, then there are more chances of an arranged marriage. In most cases, there exists a dichotomy between parent’s and children’s expectations. Parents often expect their daughter-in-law to be homely, while the son expects his wife to be a working and a modern lady. When it comes to women, those who live in a joint family set-up are more likely to have an arranged marriage. However, college-educated and working women are more likely to have self-arranged marriage, inspite of parental disapproval. The medium of matchmaking too differs between children and parents. Parents are prone to search for an appropriate match within the caste and community through relatives or genealogists, while children usually look for potential partners form school, work place or through friends or social media and online matrimonial websites etc (Mathur, 2008).

The findings of a study in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, by Ravi Prakash and Abhishek Singh (2014) reveal that there is a shift in the criteria for mate selection among women. The valuation of attributes like ‘economic stability and similarity’, ‘ambitiousness’ and ‘caste’ have decreased and the valuation of attributes like ‘intelligence’, ‘good health’, ‘social popularity’ and ‘similarity in the educational background’ have increased over the period among women for selecting their mates. There is also a rise in inter-caste marriages in the recent past. Women are now increasingly marrying outside their ‘caste’ and sometimes even ‘religion’ to satisfy their criteria of an apt spouse of their stature, which they fail to find within their caste. Such self-arranged marriages have implications not only on their agency in marital life but also on the age of marriage (Prakash & Singh, 2014).

* 1. **Post-Marriage Agency of Women**

Several researches have concluded that increase in self-arranged marriages leads to higher agency after marriage and enables better spousal communication. A close observation of the Indian culture highlights differential agentic rights possessed by women in northern and southern regions of India. Women in the northern and eastern regions have lower agency at their disposal, while the women in south and north-east have higher agency in marriage-related decisions. Furthermore, the study stated that women who select their husband independently are likely to be able to communicate freely with their husbands on matters related to spending money, begetting children and contraception, compared to those, who either had no role in mate selection or had a semi-arranged marriage. However, women who had a semi-arranged marriage are also more likely to be protected from marital violence, than women who had parental-arranged or self-arranged marriages (Jejeebhoy et al., 2013).

**CHAPTER III**

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

* 1. **Modernisation Theory**

The most generally accepted view about the world prior to twentieth century was that it is ‘patriarchal’. Post the Industrialisation era in Europe, many men and some women moved out of their agrarian life into factory work and office life (Adams, 2010). It was believed that along with Modernisation- characterised by industrialisation, proletarianisation and urbanisation, there would be increase in nuclear families, reducing patriarchy and enabling more self-choice in marriages based on love and affection, which are well-suited in urban living and industrial occupation. This modernisation is determined by ‘developmental idealism’, which believes in individual freedom, equality and consent based relationships. Developmental idealism refers to the idea of modern family and modern society. ‘Modern’ here is identified with the Western behaviour. Hence, arranged marriages are classified as traditional, while self-arranged marriages are classified as modern (Allendorf, 2013). The advent of formal schools, mass-media, missionaries and international development aid and so on reinforced the developmental idealism among the world populace. However, Thornton (2005) cautions that the adoption of developmental idealism varies between regions depending on the local contexts. Srinivas identifies *‘Sanskritization’* to be the process through which lower caste/ status individuals emulate the higher caste/ status culture. Hence, in India, the adoption of developmental idealism happens through adopting high caste culture (Allendorf, 2013).

* 1. **Demographic Opportunity Theory**

Demographic Opportunity theory, on the contrary, focuses on sex ratio, age, race and social class in a country as key factors determining autonomy in mate selection. When the number of men hugely exceeds the number of women in a society, men possess superior structural power to constrain women’s familial autonomy and agency. A surplus of men in the marriage market makes parents and other elders in the family locate a prospective spouse for their daughter based on family’s social status and community, reducing the agency of women in choosing their mate. In such situation, parents will have more discretion in mate choice. In contrast, when women are abundant in number and men relatively scarce, parents might find it difficult to select an appropriate spouse and they might postpone selection of the spouse. It might also happen that parents forgo the role of match-making, leaving their daughters with the autonomy of selecting their mate. Similarly, the duration of courtship also depends on the supply of men in the market. If the number of men is relatively greater than the number of women, parents will ultimately arrange the marriage and women will have little opportunity to interact with their husband (South, 2016).

* 1. **Approaches to Mate Selection**

There are two different ways, according to Oppenheimer, of satisfactorily attaining a match. The first is the individualised selection approach where individual select his/her spouse having similar or complementary traits, which they both value (sometimes including their parents). The second is the adaptive socialisation approach where the individual modifies his/her behaviour and traits to adapt to the new environment and mingle with his/her spouse post marriage. The first approach is more prevalent in the developed or modern economies, while the second one is common in traditional societies, such as India (Prakash & Singh, 2013).

One would be willing to marry, if the gain from marriage is greater than remaining single. The gain from marriage is determined by the costs involved in getting married such as, searching for a mate, legal fees and to determine whether the marriage would be worthwhile. The larger the gain relative to costs, the larger is the fraction of persons who marry. The incentive to marry depends more likely on the increase in property income and less likely on the increase in the individual’s wage rate. Gary Becker theorises through his ‘Optimal Sorting Methods’ that in the marriage market both men and women choose mates with whom they can maximise their household output after marriage. Becker further proposes in the “assortative mating approach” that association of likes is optimal if their traits are complementary and association of unlikes is optimal if their traits are substitutes. The different traits of couples would be reinforced generating high value, when their traits are complements than otherwise. This is called “positive assortative mating” (Becker, 1974).

* 1. **Women’s Empowerment**

The term “empowerment” has many connotations, which applies differently in different scenarios. If due cognisance is not given to the context in which a person is said to be empowered, a generalised definition of empowerment would be futile and cannot adequately explain the issue at hand. Hence, one must keep in mind certain pre-conditions, existing in the society, before understanding women’s empowerment. Firstly, the Indian society is largely a patriarchal society with men holding a dominant power in most decisions. Though, the degree of power may differ from one family to another, in most cases, women play a subservient role in making decisions. Secondly, Indian society is stratified into different sections such as caste, class, religion etc. which further specifies the norms or obligations for women. Hence, an attempt to expand the horizon of one’s limited basket of decision making capacity (which is specified by the social norms) to newer spheres is what empowerment means here. According to Kabeer, it is “an expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in the context where this ability was previously denied to them” (Batool et al., 2017). Precisely, the ability of women to enter into the spheres that were conventionally not under women’s reach is empowerment.

Empowerment is attributable to various factors: - psychological, social and economic. These factors act as means to achieve increased empowerment. However, these determinants of empowerment are not necessarily innate. They are rather influenced by the social and cultural capital. Often, the access to certain resources is provided along with some obligations and liabilities (Sanyal, 2014). Therefore, one must do away with the presumption that attainment of some human and cultural capital can alone broaden one’s scope of decision making ability. In the case of women’s empowerment, it often becomes just a stock variable, which is static and not necessarily can transform into a flow variable, enabling increased agency. This study aims to understand this very causality between empowerment and agency.

Undoubtedly, empowerment (especially economic empowerment) provides a medium to women to advance their rights and seek avenues to realize their ambitions. For instance, a woman with the knowledge of reading can engage herself in activities beyond her stipulated roles and at the same time can also use this knowledge for lucrative purposes, such as getting a job for some money. Her economic resource enabled her to add value to her capabilities and contribute in fulfilling her family’s needs. The International Centre for Research on Women defines that “a woman is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions” (Golla et al., 2011). In order for a woman to **succeed and advance economically**, she must not only possess some skills or knowledge, that can help her compete in the market, but also must have an **equal access to economic institutions**. Furthermore, to benefit from the economic activity, that she aims to perform, she must have control over the resources and profits, i.e. the power and agency to make decisions. The additional resources available, intrinsically or extrinsically, to a woman, provide her an identity distinct or detached from her kin’s. Therefore, resources in the form of: - Human Capital (e.g. Education), Financial Capital (e.g. Income), Social Capital (e.g. Association with outside organisation) and Physical Capital (e.g. Property Owned) play an important role in providing a woman a separate identity. However, they do not tell the whole story as the resources mentioned above are all materialistic and explicit of the circumstances in which an individual lives her life. Hence, one has to look towards the ‘norms and institutions’ that are present in the family or surroundings of the individual. These are explained through the extent to which one can make financial decisions at home and the number of years one was employed (Golla et al., 2011). Hence, these key factors are considered to measure women’s economic empowerment in this study.

* + 1. **Independent Variables**

1. **Education: -** Education through formal schooling has immense impact on not just the age of marriage but also on the level of participation in spouse choice. Malhotra (1991) outlines three mechanisms through which education boosts the level of participation in spouse choice. Firstly, education induces a sense of confidence and self-reliance which make the individual more comfortable and better prepared to make decisions regarding their spouse. Secondly, schools (especially secondary schools) provide a venue to individuals to find their potential future partners. It also provides them the exposure to understand varied individuals and determine the kind of personality that suits their character (Shrestha, 2012).
2. **Employment: -** The traditional roles of women are hardly recognised in the society as important and fail to provide women with a separate individual identity. An employed woman can enhance her autonomy in making decisions by participating in economic activities outside her home. She can also delay her marriage by contributing to paid work of any kind. This also instils a sense of self-esteem in her to decide her spouse herself (Batool et al., 2017).
3. **Income: -** Women working for a paid job can enhance their empowerment comparing to those without any paid job. Moreover, an earning woman can contribute to the family expenditure and can assert their financial independence (Riaz & Pervaiz, 2018). Working women posses more bargaining power as they donot have to depend on someone to fulfil their needs (Batool et al., 2017). They can gleefully exercise their rights and authority to enhance their self-confidence.
4. **Property Owned: -** Women, with higher property, are in a position to exercise their ownership and authority over the household property than women possessing lower property. A study conducted by Riaz and Pervaiz (2016) in Pakistan showed that women’s ownership over land and house is positively related to their empowerment. They have access to more resources and can have more say in family matters (Riaz & Pervaiz, 2018). However, this need not be true always in all cases.
5. **Decision-making Ability in Financial Activities at home: -** Decision-making ability for household purchases, especially durable items, plays an important role in determining their autonomy. Decision-making ability also reveals that the family of the individual has bestowed freedom and autonomy to the said individual and hence considers her opinions while undertaking any important purchase.
6. **Association with Outside Organisations: -** Organisations like the youth clubs, committees, and NGOs provide an opportunity to the unmarried youth to increase interaction beyond their fixated social sphere (Ghimire et al., 2006). Participation in such organisations allows them to undertake leadership roles and enables them take decisions for themselves and others. This empowers them as they could obtain a say in matters outside their homes and can voice their choices and rights, as and when required.
   1. **Agency in Mate Selection Process**

As was discussed in the previous section about women’s empowerment, agency is a flow variable. It is determined by the cultural schemas and resources possessed by the individual in a particular social milieu, passed on to the individual through generations within a cultural context. Sewell states that agency varies across social positions of individuals such as gender, wealth, social prestige, class, ethnicity, occupation, generation etc. and also varies within the social positions. Contrasting to the idea of Sewell, Butler opines through his philosophical lens that agency is contingent on the situation experienced by the person and does not necessarily depend on the gender of the person. One keeps improvising one’s practices within a scene of constraint as one has no control over one’s gender (Sanyal, 2014).

Amartya Sen and Naila Kabeer specifically theorize ‘women’s agency’ from a gender and development perspective. On the one hand, Sen talks about the “capabilities approach” to agency, wherein women achieve their capabilities (which are functionings, and beings and doings) depending upon available choices and amenities. Many of their choices are driven by the desire to make their constrained lives more manoeuvrable. On the other hand, Kabeer proposes an “etic approach”, whereby agency takes into consideration all the substantive content of choices and the psychological and socio-cultural motivations underpinning those choices. Kabeer states that at times women’s usage of vocabulary such as choices, to indicate alternative option, might be imaginary and not available in reality. However, according to Kabeer, even the imagination of the possibility of having alternatives reflects critical perspective. Sen emphasises the ‘valueableness’ of choices, which is aimed at evaluating those choices that have an intrinsic relevance for objectively improving the quality of women’s lives and only these choices must be considered as indicative of agency (Sanyal, 2014).

In all the above theoretical perspectives, social norms are viewed as constraining obstacles and agency is an act of critiquing, resisting and overcoming those norms (Sanyal, 2014).

* + 1. **Appositional Approach**

In order to get an aerial perspective of agency, rather than a culturally relativist perspective, this study would understand agency at mate selection through the “appositional approach”. An appositional approach takes into account varied, compound and cross-cultural perspectives of an action (Sanyal, 2014). An action might reflect agency in one context, while in another it might be an imposed responsibility. Hence, context is crucial while defining the agency of an individual within the prescribed social norms. A way of thinking social norms is to view them in terms of social contracts. A contract is a pact between parties that gives each party some rights and simultaneously imposes obligations or restrictions (Sanyal, 2014). It involves offer, agreement and consideration between parties. Hence, women receive certain privileges from the society for complying with the norms. This contract is also enforceable on them with the threat of denouncement of the privileges, if not adhered to, and a breach is at times met with violence (Sanyal, 2014).

* + 1. **Agency Freedom**

Sen distinguishes between agency freedom and well-being freedom whereby agency freedom is relatively a broader concept and encompasses goals and pursuits that a person is free to achieve, irrespective of whether it results in the well-being of the person. Often there can be an inverse relation between agency and well-being, which means, that pursuing agency freedom can, at times, reduce one’s well-being freedom (Sen, 1985). Weber wrote how freedom is increasingly valued despite declining material conditions of life. In the words of Weber: -

“It is pointless to argue about such elementary movements, which give expression to the tremendous and purely psychological magic of **freedom**. In good measure this is a grand illusion, but after all man and so also the farm labourers do not live by bread alone” (Sanyal, 2014, p.48).

Even though it might result in plurality of inferences, (if one were to understand a particular action) one must not ignore completely either of both, i.e. well-being freedom and agency freedom while assessing an action. Only then it would yield us a holistic understanding of the person’s freedom (Sen, 1985).

Agency is connoted as freedom which carries with it the underlying connotations of power and relational negotiations, which are inevitable in attaining and expressing freedom. Hence, a person’s freedom depends upon the power to achieve a chosen result and control over its accomplishment (Sanyal, 2014). “Power” refers to the availability of choices and scope to perform a certain action. It focuses on the individual self and his/her intrinsic ability to perform. Control, on the contrary, refers the authority to get the desire accomplished. It focuses on the extrinsic capability of the person (Sen, 1985). For instance, one has the power to study hard for exam to attain 90% marks, but no control over the results. Thus the capacity to enforce one’s power for attaining some goals is unachievable unless one has the control over the action. However, the question arises as to “how would one gain control, on the first place, over an action that is completely regulated by someone else?” This leads us to realise the necessity of rights for certain cases of agency freedom. Right legitimises one’s ability to decide on certain matters in one’s own personal life and enables general support for that freedom. This immunes people from interference by others and allows for furthering various intrinsic goals. However, one must avert the misuse of rights. If one’s right hinders the well-being of someone else, then that freedom becomes a negative freedom. Hence, the debate of women’s freedom and rights will also have to take into consideration moral obligations associated with an action (Sen, 1985).

* + 1. **Dependent Variables**

In order to objectively measure and understand agency of an unmarried women in spouse choice, three specific criteria were considered in the study.

1. **Approaching an Intermediary: - A**gency in this component would be determined based upon whether the intermediary (like relatives, astrologers, online websites, matrimonial newspapers, genealogists, friends etc.) was approached by the woman herself or her parents alone or both jointly.
2. **Courtship with the husband: -** It refers to whether the woman has met her future partner before marriage. If she had met her future spouse, then was she given the chance to interact with him personally or was accompanied with family members and friends.
3. **Decision to Select the Mate:** - It refers to final decision to make selection in terms of whether the woman had a say in selecting her spouse for marriage.

To get a wholesome picture of the women’s freedom and their situation at the time of marriage, questions regarding their ability to say ‘No’ to marriage and their satisfaction level post marriage were asked. These variables would enable us to triangulate various aspects of women’s agency at mate selection.

**CHAPTER IV**

**PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA**

The data for the study was collected from the Kolkata district in the year 2019-20. Primary data collection technique was used for getting first-hand information from the respondents. The rationale for choosing Kolkata as the target area of the study is to understand the changing trends in marital decisions in the city, which has experienced a lot of changes over the years, especially in terms of women’s empowerment. Kolkata is a historical city inhabiting diverse group of people from different cultures. Hence, knowing its background is extremely important before venturing into analysing the datasets.

* 1. **About Kolkata District**
     1. **History of Kolkata District**

The name Kolkata was amended from Calcutta, which remained the official name of the city until 2001. The city’s nomenclature has evolved over the years. In the late seventeenth century, the British landed in the banks of river Hooghly and found three villages surrounding the river. One of them was “Kolikata”, which went on to become a major colonial hub in India and the rest of the two were ‘Sutanuti’ and ‘Gobindpur’. There are several theories proposing the etymology of Kolikata (in colloquial Bengali), one of them is the derivation of the name from ‘Kalikhetro’, meaning “Field of the Goddess Kali”. Alternatively, it is opined that the nomenclature has been originated from the words ‘Khal’ meaning canal and ‘kata’ meaning “dug”, therefore referring to “digging a canal”. One could also find the mention of Kolkata as “Khas Mahal” in Ain-E-Akbari written by Abdul Fazal, long back in the Mughal era (Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal, 2011).

After the arrival of Job Charnock near Mohantuni’s Ghat in 24th August, 1690, the city of Calcutta took birth. The East India Company started creating its strong hold in the region steadily between 1698 and 1757. In the meanwhile, Subedar Murshid Quli Jafar Khan of Bengal refused to allow expansion of British trade and thus the conflict began. Siraj-ud-daula, the Nawab of Bengal, got enraged at the fortification of lands by the British in Bengal and captured the Fort William from the British. This siege of Kolkata is known as the “Black Hole” episode. In January 1757, Robert Clive and Col. Watson recaptured the territory, which subsequently led to the “Battle of Plassey”. Through bribery and treachery, the British won the battle and by 1772, the city was declared as the Headquarter of the Calcutta Presidency, which was followed by the abolition of the Nawab system by 1793. Between 1797 and 1805, the city grew rapidly in terms of its public architecture under the Governor General of India, Richard Wellesley (Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal, 2011).

It is said that the Bengal Renaissance began with the Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1775-1833) and continued until the death of Rabindranath Tagore in 1941. Some of the superstitions and traditions such as sati, infanticide, polygamy, child marriage, dowry, and untouchability, etc. were challenged by the reformers like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee during this era. Tagore’s contribution to the Bengal’s renaissance movement and literature is immemorable and immense. His collection of short poems “Gitanjali” won the ‘Nobel Prize for Literature’ in 1913 for the first time in India (Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal, 2011).

In 1905, Calcutta witnessed the protests against the partition of Bengal and the boycott of British goods through the Swadeshi Movement. In 1911, the capital of British India was moved to New Delhi from Calcutta. In the later years, Calcutta saw the revolutionary movements of Indian Independence, the destructions of the World War II, the Bengal famines and the partition of India. On the 15th of August, 1947, Shri Prafulla Chandra Ghosh took oath as the first Chief Minister of West Bengal in the Independent India. West Bengal was the only state, after Independence, with the longest serving democratically elected communist government i.e. CPI (Marxist) since 1977 till 2011 (Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal, 2011).

* + 1. **Location**

Kolkata is located in the eastern part of Hooghly River and is surrounded by the North Twenty Four Paraganas in the north and east, South Twenty Four Paraganas in the south and Haora district in the west. Kolkata is mostly an urbanised district in West Bengal, extending upto Joka in the south and Barackpore in the north. It has a hot and humid climate with seasonal outburst of monsoons. The average rainfall is about 64 inches (1,655 mm). The summers are usually sultry, while the winters are cold and misty with the temperature falling down to as much as 8 during December and January (Guha & Singh, 2019).

* + 1. **Demographics of the District**

The population of the Kolkata district, as per 2011 census, is 44,96,694. The female population account to 21,39,928, which has increased by 3.24% from 2001. The sex ratio was estimated to be 908 per 1000 male population. The percentage of literate people is 86.31% in the city and for female population, it is 84.06%. There are 141 wards in Kolkata district and the total area of the district is 185.00 sq km (Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal, 2011). However, the area of the district has widened over the years since 2011. The total working population accounts to be 39.93% of which 17.91% is the female working population. In terms of religion-wise population, Hindus account the highest number with a population percentage of 76.51%, while Muslims account upto 20.60% and Buddhists account upto 0.11% of the total population (Census 2011, n.d.).

The percentage of population in West Bengal between the age group of 15-59 years accounts to be 69.70% in the urban areas, out of which 70.60% are females as per the 2017 data. The percentage of females in the urban areas in the age group of 60 and above years is 10.30% (WestBengalStat, 2017).

* + 1. **Culture**

Much of the Bengali culture could be unravelled through the Bengali literature. The novels, short stories, poems, songs and plays written by Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Bankim Chandra Chattapadhyay, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and so on, replicate the dynamism of the Bengali culture and society. Though Bengali society is mostly a patriarchal one, it is experiencing considerable diminution in the recent years. The women reformers in Bengal like Swarnakumari Devi, Kadambani Ganguli and Chandramukhi Bose and so on initiated girl’s education in Bengal and opened up a whole lot of scope for the future generation to venture into. This also reduced the number of child marriages subsequently (Majumdar, 2003).

However, the struggles for equal rights have continued till date. One would find it quite ironic that in a land where Goddesses like Durga and Kali are celebrated with great pump and joy, evils of dowry violence and domestic abuse happen simultaneously against women. In a typical Bengali family, women’s role is still perceived as a home maker and in many ways she is restricted from exercising her independence in decisions beyond the limits prescribed by her family members. Such constrained life of a woman was very well portrayed in some acclaimed Bengali movies like ‘Parama’ by Aparna Sen (Famous Bengali film actress and Director) in 1982 and ‘Dahan’ in 1997 by Rituparno Ghosh (Bengali Film Director).

**CHAPTER V**

**METHODOLOGY**

* 1. **Data Collection Technique**

The sample size, estimated for the study, is 120 at 10% level of confidence. This was calculated from the 21 lakh female population (excluding girls below 18 years), as per the 2011 census. The techniques used to collect data were “Convenient and Snowball Sampling Methods”, whereby the data was collected by the researcher from familiar residents and they were further asked either to direct the researcher to any potential respondent or to forward the questionnaire to any potential respondent, in their knowledge. The data was collected during October, 2019 till January 2020, for approximately 4 months. The researcher also used online medium of data collection by circulating “Google Forms”. The potential respondents, in the study, included only married/ widowed/ divorced women above the age of 18 years in order to understand their agency in spouse choice that they experienced personally. This would give a real trend in mate selection in Kolkata.

* 1. **Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to find the answer to the question: - “Does Women’s Economic Empowerment has an impact on their agency in mate selection process?”

In order to answer the question, the study has taken the aid of two objectives: -

1. To find out the impact of economic empowerment of women on their agency mate selection process among different age cohorts and across different strata of society.
2. To identify and analyse the variables that influence economic empowerment and agency in mate selection process of a woman.
   1. **Measuring Women’s Economic Empowerment**

As discussed in the third chapter, women’s economic empowerment has been measured, using six parameters which include: - 1. Number of Years of Education; 2. Number of Years of Employment; 3. Income Earned; 4. Value of property owned; 5. Decision making ability in Financial Activities at home; 5. Association with outside organisations.

Accordingly, the respondents were asked about their educational qualification before marriage. The educational qualification was then converted into the number of years of education. Pre-primary schooling was not considered while counting the number of years of education as it hardly makes any difference in their empowerment. This implies that the schooling from first standard onwards was taken into account for estimating number of years of education. The “illiterates” were assigned ‘zero’ for this variable, as they never went to school or college. The “literates without schooling” were assigned number ‘1’ for this variable, implying that the women who know to read and write have the knowledge equivalent to a first standard kid.

The respondents were next questioned about their employment status prior to marriage, which includes not only formal jobs but also self employment such as taking home tuitions etc. The women were further asked about the number of years of employment and the monthly income earned from the employment. To get an idea of the kind of employment performed by women, they were asked about the nature of work performed.

Further, women were questioned regarding their association with any outside organisation apart from the place of work (such as clubs, committees, NGOs, groups, associations, think tanks etc.) as a proxy for decision-making ability outside home. This question was a close-ended one with binary options in terms of ‘Yes/ No’. If the respondent said ‘Yes’, she was assigned ‘1’, but if the respondent said ‘No’, she was assigned ‘0’. The respondent was consequently asked to specify the name of the organisation(s) (if she mentioned ‘Yes’), in order to find out the kind of organisation she was part of. To measure the decision-making ability at home, the respondent was asked whether she had the capability to voice her opinions when durable items were bought. The respondents were asked to choose an option from five criteria measuring the extent of decision making ability in financial activities at home which include: - 1- Never, 2- Rarely, 3- Sometimes, 4- Often, 5- Always.

Similarly, to identify the value of property owned before marriage, the respondents were asked about the ownership attained on a list of durable items (such as land, house, vehicles, pet animals, furniture, modern gadgets and so on), for which they had to answer in terms of ‘Yes/ No’. They were simultaneously asked the quantity of the property owned and the place where those properties were located. Thereafter, the worth of each item of the property was determined, based on the current prices prevailing in the market of the respective places, which were summed up to obtain a single value of property owned.

In order to identify the factors influencing women’s empowerment (beyond the specific variables considered in the study), an open-ended question was posed to the respondents asking ‘whether they faced any constraints while making decisions regarding choice of career or going outside with friends, etc. compared to their brothers or any other man’. They had to answer in terms of ‘Yes/ No’, and then substantiate the reason for their choice of option.

* 1. **Measuring Agency in Mate Selection Process**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, agency in mate selection is divided into three components, which include: - 1. Approaching an Intermediary; 2. Courtship with the future spouse and; 3. Decision to select the mate.

Approaching an ‘Intermediary’ refers here not only to seeking information for an apt candidate from family relatives, astrologer, genealogist, marriage bureaus, online marriage sites, friends etc. but also initiating the process of spouse search. The respondents were asked- “who was the first one to approach an intermediary?’. The respondents were asked to choose an option from the following: -

1. My Parents Only without my consent
2. My Parents Only with my consent
3. Both of us (me and my parents) jointly
4. I alone

In case the girl or her family or both had prior information of a prospective candidate and decided to approach him directly for the marriage, the first person to initiate the proposal would be taken into consideration.

The second component was “Courtship before marriage with the future spouse”, implying a meeting between the future spouses. The respondents were questioned whether they have ever met their future spouse in person before the day of marriage, for which they had to select an option from the four options given below: -

1. Never Met
2. Met along with family member(s)
3. Met along with friend(s)
4. Met alone

The third component was “Decision to Select the Mate”, which refers to the final decision of selecting the husband. The respondents were asked- “who finally decided your spouse?” They were asked to answer by choosing an option from the options given below: -

1. My Parents only without my consent
2. My Parents only with my consent
3. Both of us (me and parents) jointly
4. I alone

The options in the three above components are ‘ordinal’ in nature, whereby the answers were coded with the numbers (1-4), 1 representing the lowest agency and 4 representing the highest.

However, to understand the agency possessed by women in selecting spouse from a multi-dimensional perspective, few open-ended questions were asked. The respondents were asked whether they had the ability to say ‘No’ for marrying their selected spouse, which was answered in terms of ‘Yes/No’. They were further asked the reason for their answer. They were also asked whether they had any aspirations or dreams of their future spouse and the extent to which their aspirations/ dreams have come true. Finally, a question about their opinion with respect to the kind of marriage (Parental-arranged, Semi-arranged or Self-arranged marriage) they find better was asked. This would help us in identifying the respondent’s stance on marriage and their conscience of a better way of marriage, which they would have realised in retrospect, opening up varied ideologies and perspectives prevailing in the society.

* 1. **Pathways to Data Analysis**

According to the first objective, this study attempts to find the impact of women’s economic empowerment in their agency in mate selection process across different ages and income strata. Thus, the analysis would be divided into two parts: - 1. Year wise Cohort analysis and 2. Income wise Analysis.

In the year-wise analysis, the data would be divided into three age cohorts of different time periods, which are given as follows: -

1. 1949 – 1979;
2. 1980 – 2000;
3. 2001 – 2018.

The age cohorts show the years of marriage of women, which is divided into three phases. These phases reflect the transition towards modernisation with respect to women’s human capital (education and employment). If one were to look at the trajectory of women’s human capital development since Independence, one would find that in the first phase girl’s enrolment in schools increased and literacy rates experienced a drastic growth compared to the pre-independence era. The percentage of female literates rose from 7.95% in 1951 to 24.82% in 1981 (Pandey, 1987). Thus, the first phase indicates a time period of marginal change in women’s status from being illiterate and dependent to one, who is literate and self-dependent. With the advent of 1980s during the second phase, the Government Policies focused on liberalisation and privatisation, enabling more jobs for women. The share of women’s employment increased from 9.3% in 1981 to 13.6% in 1999. This was followed by the phase of services sector expansion and IT sector growth. The employment rate jumped from 14.5% in 2001 to 16.5% in 2012, but then fell down to 9.8% in 2014 (Indiastat, n.d.). Therefore, the above divisions reflect modernisation in varied ways and would assist us in interpreting the trend of mate selection process over the years.

The income-wise division[[1]](#footnote-2) reflects the income distribution among different economic classes. The income divisions are as follows: -

1. Below Rs. 21,000
2. Rs. 21,000 to Rs. 42,000
3. Rs 42,000 and above.

The above income-wise division of economic classes is according to the Pew Research Centre’s income division for developing countries. The first income category represents lower middle income group, followed by the middle income group and subsequently the third category represents the upper middle income group (Kochhar, 2015).

* + 1. **Analytical Strategy for Quantitative Data**

As the study aims to analyse the impact of women’s economic empowerment on their agency in mate selection process across age and income groups, it is feasible to use “Ordinal Logistic Regression Model”. The dependent variable in “Ordinal (Ordered) Logistic Regression model” is ordinal or ranked categorical in nature and the independent variables could be a combination of both continuous and categorical variables. Therefore, the dependent variable would be ‘Agency in Mate Selection’, which would be calculated by assigning equal weights to the parameters of agency and summing them up to attain 4 ranks representing ordinal increase in agency. Since all the parameters of agency holds equal importance, i.e., approaching the intermediary, courtship before marriage and decision to select the mate, equal weight of 1/3 (0.34) has been assigned to each of the parameters. As the response within each of the parameters is also categorical, the product of weights and ranked category in all the parameters would be summed up to attain a single value of agency. For instance, if a respondent mentions 1 for approaching an intermediary, 3 for courtship and 4 for decision to mate selection, the total agency would be 1(1/3) + 3(1/3) + 4(1/3) = 2.66, which is rounded up to 3.

Hence, the agency is divided into 4 ranked categories: -

1. Parental-Arranged Marriage without consent
2. Parental-Arranged Marriage with consent
3. Semi-Arranged Marriage
4. Self-Arranged Marriage.

These categories are ordinal in nature representing that a shift towards higher value would enhance the agency of the individual. The regression model would be performed for each of the income categories and year-wise cohorts. The model used for the analysis is: -

Agency (Li) = βo + β1 (educ) + β2 (employ) + β3 (income) + β4 (property) + β5 (decision) + β6 (association) + *u*i

Where ‘educ’ refers to the number of years of education; ‘emply’ refers to the number of years of employment before marriage; ‘income’ refers to the income earned; ‘property’ refers to the value of property owned before marriage; ‘decision’ refers to the decision making ability for financial activities at home; and ‘association’ refers to the association with outside organisations. The data analysis would be performed by using STATA software.

* + 1. **Analytical Strategy for Qualitative Data**

The descriptive answers obtained from the open-ended questions, as mentioned in the section 3.8, would be analysed using the “Coding” technique, whereby common themes would be identified from varied responses and suitable codes would be assigned to each of them (Elliot, 2018). These ‘codes’ would encompass varied social and cultural phenomena that the women have opined while narrating their personal stories of marriage to the researcher. In the course of analysis, these codes would be defined and compared to understand the context of the decision making capacity. Furthermore, in case a specific response adds value to the argument, it would be explicitly mentioned. The codes would be viewed and triangulated from an appositional perspective in order to conclude their soundness in being essential determinants of agency.

**CHAPTER VI**

**FACTS AND FINDINGS**

* 1. **Year-wise Cohort Descriptive Statistics** 
     1. **Demographics of the Respondents in the Year-wise Cohort**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the respondents have been divided into year wise and income wise categories. The first section in this chapter describes the demographics of three year cohorts: - 1949 to 79, 1980 to 2000 and 2001 to 2008. The demographics are given in table 6.1.

In the first cohort, the total number of respondents is 19, who mostly (78.9%) hail from Maheshtala, which is located in the south-west Kolkata. Among the 19 respondents, 9 women (47.4%) were married, while the rest of them (52.6%) were widowed. The sample included large number of Buddhist respondents accounting upto 73.7% (14 respondents), who largely occupy parts of south-west Kolkata. The number of Hindu respondents is 5 (26.3%), belonging to Hindu communities such as Mahishya (5.3%) and Panra Kuti (5.3%) and so on. All the respondents had Bengali as their mother tongue.

In the second year cohort, the women, who were married between 1980 till 2000, were taken into consideration for the analysis. Out of the 57 total respondents in the group, 55 (96.5%) were married and the rest 2 (3.5%) were widowed. 34 respondents belonged to Buddhist religion, 21 practised Hinduism, 1 was a Muslim and 1 followed Brahmo ideology. The respondents following Buddhism belonged to the communities of Barua (33 respondents) and Choudhury (1 respondent), while the respondents from Hindu religion belonged to various communities such as Baishya (1 respondent), Jhuma (1 respondent), Kayastha (1 respondent), Panra (1 respondent), Maheshwari (1 respondent), Brahmin (1 respondent) and the rest (15 respondents) belonged to other communities (who were reluctant to specify the community names). The one from Islam religion belonged to Shek community and the other from Brahmo religion had no community. While 56 respondents spoke Bengali as their mother tongue, only 1 respondent had Hindi as her mother tongue. The respondents hailed from various parts of Kolkata district such as Maheshtala (31 respondents), Jadavpur (3 respondents), Uluberia (2 respondents), Budge Budge (2 respondents), Central Kolkata (3 respondents), Sonarpur (2 respondents) and many more.

The third year cohort has respondents, who got married between 2001 till 2018. Interestingly, all 44 respondents in the age cohort were married. 23 respondents (52.3%) were Hindus and the rest 21 respondents (47.7%) belonged to Buddhism. While all the 21 Buddhist respondents belonged to Barua community, among the Hindu respondents, 1 belonged to Baishya community, 1 belonged to Tati community, 3 belonged to Mahishya community, 1 belonged to Marathi community (post marriage) and the rest 17 respondents did not mention about their community backgrounds. There were 43 Bengali speaking respondents and a single Hindi speaking one. The respondents hailed from various parts of Kolkata including places in south of Kolkata such as Maheshtala (54.6%), Budge Budge (18.2%), Bakrahat (4.5%), Ballygunge (4.6%), Shyampur (6.8%) and places in north of Kolkata such as Haridevar (2.3%) and Shyamnagar (6.8%) and so on. The above details are shown in the table 6.1 below: -

|  |
| --- |
| Table 6.1: Year-wise Demographics of Respondents |
| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | S.No. | Components | Frequency 1 | Frequency 2 | Frequency 3 | |  |  | **Year Cohort 1949-79 (N=19)** | **Year Cohort 1980-2000 (N=57)** | **Year Cohort 2001-2018 (N=44)** | |  | **Marital Status** |  |  |  | | 1. | Married | 9 (47.4%) | 55 (96.5%) | 44 (100%) | | 2. | Widowed | 10 (52.6%) | 2 (3.5%) | - | |  | **Religion** |  |  |  | | 1. | Buddhism | 14 (73.7%) | 34 (59.6%) | 21 (47.7%) | | 2. | Hinduism | 5 (26.3%) | 21 (36.8%) | 23 (52.3%) | | 3. | Islam | - | 1 (1.8%) | - | | 4. | Brahmo | - | 1 (1.8%) | - | |  | **Community Name** |  |  |  | | 1. | Baishya | - | 1 (1.8%) | 1 (2.3%) | | 2. | Barua | 14 (73.7%) | 33 (57.9%) | 21 (47.7%) | | 4. | Choudhury | - | 1 (1.8%) | - | | 5. | Hindu | 3 (15.8%) | 15 (26.4%) | 17 (38.7%) | | 6. | Kayastha | - | 1 (1.8%) | - | | 7. | Mahishya | 1 (5.3%) | - | 3 (6.8%) | | 8. | Panra | - | 1 (1.8%) | - | | 9. | Panra Kuti | 1 (5.3%) | - | - | | 10. | Shek | - | 1 (1.8%) | - | | 11. | Tati | - | - | 1 (2.3%) | | 12. | Brahmin | - | 1 (1.8%) |  | | 13. | Marathi | - | - | 1 (2.3%) | | 14. | Brahmo | - | 1 (1.8%) |  | | 15. | Jhuma | - | 1 (1.8%) |  | | 16. | Maheshwari | - | 1 (1.8%) |  | |  | **Mother Tongue** |  |  |  | | 1. | Bengali | 19 (100%) | 56 (98.2%) | 43 (97.7%) | | 2. | Hindi | - | 1 (1.8%) | 1 (2.3%) | |

Source: - Author’s Calculation

Now, some the descriptive statistics related to the age and income of the respondents are given below in table 6.2. On an average the age of marriage was 16 years in the 1949-79 year cohort, while for the year cohort 1980 to 2000, the mean marriage age rose to 20 years and subsequently went up to 22 years in the 2001 to 2018 cohort, reflecting a rising trend in the age of marriage. In all the three cohorts, the current age largely varies with some overlapping values, such as in the cohort 1949-79, the minimum age is 56 and the maximum is 86. The mean current age of respondents in the cohort of 1949-79 is 67 years; for 1980 to 2000 cohort the mean age is 48.70 and for 2001 to 2018 cohort, it is 33 years. Among the three cohorts, the mean income of the cohort 1980 to 2000 is the highest at Rs.47,403.51.

**Table 6.2: - Descriptive Statistics of Age and Income of the Respondents**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Components | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| **Year Cohort 1949-79 (N=19)** |  |  |  |  |
| Present Age | 56 | 86 | 67 | 9.1 |
| Monthly Household Income | 300 | 5,00,000 | 38,436.84 | 1,12,575.8 |
| Age at the time of Marriage | 11 | 23 | 16.26 | 2.845 |
| **Year Cohort 1980-2000 (N=57)** |  |  |  |  |
| Present Age | 37 | 74 | 48.70 | 6.5 |
| Monthly Household Income | 2,000 | 2,80,000 | 47,403.51 | 57,860.3 |
| Age at the time of Marriage | 16 | 38 | 20.84 | 3.707 |
| **Year Cohort 2001-2018 (N=44)** |  |  |  |  |
| Present Age | 25 | 47 | 33.18 | 5.4 |
| Monthly Household Income | 5,000 | 3,50,000 | 38,113.64 | 59,721.1 |
| Age at the time of Marriage | 17 | 35 | 22.75 | 3.564 |

Source: - Author’s Calculation

* + 1. **Descriptive Statistics of the Variables**

The variables, used to define women’s economic empowerment in the study, are summarised through descriptive statistics. On an average the number of years of schooling was 5.34 years during 1949-79 among the respondents, which rose to 11.9 years, i.e. 11th standard, in the cohort 1980-2000 and further rose to 12.18 years, i.e. Higher Secondary, for 2001-18 cohort. In the first cohort, the number of illiterates was 1 and number of literate without schooling was 2. In the first cohort, most of the respondents (68.4%) dropped out of school before completing their tenth standard. The number of respondents who attended college was as low as 1 in the first cohort, which rose to 20 in the second cohort. In the third cohort, 18 respondent attended college of which 1 had completed M.Phil.

In the 1949-79 cohort, only one respondent said that she was employed before marriage for a year, earning an income of Rs. 9,000, while the rest of the respondents had no employment before marriage. In the second cohort, 14 respondents were employed, of whom 3 were employed for 1 year, 4 for 2 years, 2 for 5 years, 1 for 11 years and so on. They earned an average income of Rs. 884.21, wherein the maximum monthly income of Rs. 10,000 was earned by a woman who worked for 6 years before marriage. In the case of the third cohort, the average years of employment before marriage is 1 year, with the mean income of the respondents employed (14 respondents) being Rs. 10,481 per month.

The average value of property owned was Rs. 3.21 crores, for the first cohort, Rs. 1.16 crores for the second cohort and Rs. 2.54 crores for the third cohort. These details have been summarised in table 6.3.

**Table 6.3: - Descriptive Statistics of Continuous Variables**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Mean | Standard Deviation | Mean | Standard Deviation | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|  | **Year Cohort 1949-79** | | **Year Cohort 1980-2000** | | **Year Cohort 2001-2018** | |
| Number of Years of Education | 5.34 | 3.700 | 11.09 | 4.417 | 12.18 | 3.329 |
| Number of Years of Employment | - | - | .86 | 2.004 | 1.48 | 2.654 |
| Monthly Income Earned | - | - | 884.21 | 1,980.241 | 10,481.82 | 45,533.051 |
| Value of Property Owned | 3,21,83,833.74 | 4,80,16,461.451 | 1,16,50,633.98 | 3,92,08,867.055 | 2,54,38,021.27 | 7,52,13,815.685 |

Source: - Author’s Calculation

For the categorical variables, when asked to the respondents of 1949-79 cohort about the extent of decision making ability possessed by them to purchase items at home, 16 of the respondents said that they made no financial decisions related to purchase of items prior to marriage, only 1 (5.3%) respondent said that she rarely made such decisions, while 2 respondents said that they were always involved in such decisions. In the second cohort, 22 respondents (38.6%) stated that they had never made decisions related to financial matter at home. While 14 respondents stated that they had ‘sometimes’ voiced their opinions, 5 respondents (8.8%) mentioned that they had ‘always’ voiced their decisions in such matters. In the third cohort, the number of respondents, who never made decisions regarding purchase of durable items, were 13 (29.5%); who made such decisions ‘sometimes’, were 12 (27.3%); and who always made such decisions, were 10 (22.7%). For association with outside organisations, none had such associations in the first cohort, 4 had associations with organisation such as women’s organisation, Brotochari Club, Boudh Samiti and so on in the second cohort and in the third cohort, 2 (4.5%) had associations with outside organisations. The details of the variables are shown in table 6.4.

**Table 6.4: - Frequencies of Categorical Variables**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Components | Frequency 1 | Frequency 2 | Frequency 3 |
| **Decision Making Ability in Financial Activities at Home** | **Year Cohort 1949-79** | **Year Cohort 1980-2000** | **Year Cohort 2001-2018** |
| 1- Never | 16 (84.2%) | 22 (38.6%) | 13 (29.5%) |
| 2- Rarely | 1 (5.3%) | 8 (14%) | 6 (13.6%) |
| 3- Sometimes | - | 14 (24.6%) | 12 (27.3%) |
| 4- Often | - | 8 (14%) | 3 (6.8%) |
| 5- Always | 2 (10.5%) | 5 (8.8%) | 10 (22.7%) |
| **Association with Outside Organisations** |  |  |  |
| 0- No | 19 (100%) | 53 (93%) | 42 (95.5%) |
| 1- Yes | - | 4 (7%) | 2 (4.5%) |

Source: - Author’s Calculation

Now, looking at the parameters to measure agency, the frequencies under each parameter has been summarised in table 6.5. In the first cohort, 16 (84.2%) respondents were not asked before approaching the intermediary and the rest three said that their consent was taken by their parents before initiating marriage. None of the respondents had approached the intermediary by themselves or along with parents. For the second category, 14 respondents (24.6%) said that their parents approached the intermediary without their consent, 30 respondents (52.6%) opined that their parents approached the intermediary with their consent and 13 respondents (22.8%) said that they approached intermediary or initiated the marriage proposal themselves.

Similarly, for the first cohort 16 respondent never met their future husbands, which declined to 14 (24.6%) in the second cohort and further down to 10 (22.7%) respondents in the third cohort. Only 3 respondents met their future spouse along with family members in the first cohort; likewise 26 respondents (45.6%) met in the second cohort and 15 (34.1%) met in the third cohort. 2 respondents (3.5%) met their husbands along with friends and 15 respondents (26.3%) met their husbands personally in the second cohort. In the third cohort, the number of respondents who met the future spouse along with friends was 1 (2.3%) and the respondents who met alone with the future spouse were 18 (40.9%) in number.

In the first cohort, the final decision to marry the selected spouse was largely taken by parents with 17 respondents stating that no consent was taken from them whatsoever, 1 respondent stated that she had her agreement in mate choice, while only one respondent took the final decision all by herself. In the second and third cohorts, 16 and 8 respondents said that their consent was not taken while spouse selection, respectively. For the second cohort, 21 opined that their consent was taken while mate selection, 10 respondents said that they decided along with their parent and the other 10 said that they solely decided their spouse. For the third cohort, the number of the respondents for all three of the components of decision to select the mate, i.e. parents only with the consent of daughter, both jointly and the respondent alone were 12 respectively. The details are shown in table 6.5 below: -

**Table 6.5: - Frequencies of the Parameters Measuring Agency across year-cohorts**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables measuring Agency in Mate Selection | Frequency 1 | Frequency 2 | Frequency 3 |
| **Approaching Intermediary** | **Year Cohort 1949-79** | **Year Cohort 1980-2000** | **Year Cohort 2001-2018** |
| 1- Parents only without consent | 16 (84.2%) | 14 (24.6%) | 7 (15.9) |
| 2- Parents only with consent | 3 (15.8%) | 30 (52.6%) | 19 (43.2%) |
| 3- Both Jointly | - | - | 4 (9.1%) |
| 4- I alone | - | 13 (22.8%) | 14 (31.8%) |
| **Courtship with the Spouse** |  |  |  |
| 1- Never Met | 16 (84.2%) | 14 (24.6%) | 10 (22.7%) |
| 2- Met along with family members | 3 (15.8%) | 26 (45.6%) | 15 (34.1%) |
| 3- Met along with friends | - | 2 (3.5%) | 1 (2.3%) |
| 4- Met alone | - | 15 (26.3%) | 18 (40.9%) |
| **Decision to Select the Mate** |  |  |  |
| 1- Parents only without consent | 17 (89.5%) | 16 (28.1%) | 8 (18.2%) |
| 2- Parents only with consent | 1 (5.3%) | 21 (36.8%) | 12 (27.3%) |
| 3- Both Jointly | - | 10 (17.5%) | 12 (27.3%) |
| 4- I alone | 1 (5.3%) | 10 (17.5%) | 12 (27.3%) |

Source: - Author’s Calculation

* 1. **Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis for Year-wise Cohorts**

To satisfy the first objective of the study, ordinal logistic regression model was used to see the impact. The results are as follows: -

* + 1. **Year Cohort 1949-79**

The coefficients in the model are majorly insignificant, might be due to a few missing variables such as ‘association with outside organisations’ and ‘Income earned before marriage’. The data also suffers from large variances within the samples. The table 6.6 below mentions the values of the coefficients. All the variables highlight a positive influence on the probability to go for self-arranged marriage. Keeping in mind the time period of analysis, number of years of education increases the odds in favour of self-arranged marriage by 4.5%, while the number of years of employment impacts the probability to increase the agency in mate selection by 765%, which is a huge amount, rise in value of property raises the agency by 99% and decision making ability increase the probability by 47%.

**Table 6.6: - Ordinal Logistic Regression Model (Cohort 1949-1979)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Coefficient (β) | Odds Ratio | Z stat | Standard Error | Marginal Effect |
| **Number of Years of Education** | .044929 | 1.045954 | 0.17 | .2708629 | -.0053068 |
| **Number of Years of Employment** | 2.158041 | 8.654163 | 0.72 | 2.9866 | -.2548981 |
| **Income Earned** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Value of Property Owned** | 8.33 | .9999999 | -0.77 | -5.27 | 1.57e-08 |
| **Decision Making ability at home** | .3892207 | 1.47583 | 0.66 | .5925788 | -.045973 |
| **Association with outside organisations** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Log likelihood** | -11.015405 |  |  |  |  |
| **Pseudo R22** | 0.2985 |  |  |  |  |

*Note: \*p*< 0.1, \*\**p*< 0.05, \*\*\**p*< 0.01, \*\*\*\**p<*0.001

Source: - Author’s Calculation

The R2 is 0.2, which highlights the rise in probability towards self-arranged marriage for change in the odds of the independent variables.

* + 1. **Year Cohort 1980-2000**

In this model, value of property owned has a significant negative relation with the log odds of agency, keeping other variables constant. This implies that a unit increase in property value would decrease the odds in favour of higher categories of agency. Similar to the previous model, the values of the coefficients such as number of years of education and income earned reflect a positive impact on the odds towards higher agency by 6.01% and 0.02% respectively. On the contrary, variables such as number of years of employment, decision making capacity and association with outside organisation show a negative impact towards the odds in favour of the higher categories of agency.

**Table 6.7: - Ordinal Logistic Regression Model (Cohort 1980-2000)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Coefficient (β) | Odds Ratio | Z stat | Standard Error | Marginal Effect |
| **Number of Years of Education** | .0584231 | 1.060163 | 1.00 | .0619344 | -.0034895 |
| **Number of Years of Employment** | -.067087 | .9351139 | -0.54 | .1159174 | .0040069 |
| **Income Earned** | .0002378 | 1.000238 | 1.51 | .0001571 | -.0000142 |
| **Value of Property Owned** | -9.06\* | 1 | -1.75 | -2.93 | 6.33e-10 |
| **Decision Making ability at home** | -.0891151 | .9147403 | -0.46 | .1759477 | .0053226 |
| **Association with outside organisations** | -1.265948 | .2819718 | -1.47 | .2426067 | .0756118 |
| **Log likelihood** | -112.053 |  |  |  |  |
| **Pseudo R22** | 0.0358 |  |  |  |  |

*Note: \*p*<0.1, \*\**p*< 0.05, \*\*\**p*< 0.01, \*\*\*\**p<*0.001 (Source: - Author’s Calculation)

It is evident from the above table 6.7, that the R2 value of 0.03 is relatively low indicating a slight change in the value of the dependent variable for the change in the independent variables.

* + 1. **Year Cohort 2001-2018**

In the year cohort of 2001-18, the variables that project a positive slope indicating positive relation with the dependent variable are: number of years of education, decision making capacity and association with outside organisation with the magnitude of coefficient being 0.14, 0.13 and 1.81 respectively. This implies that a unit change in number of years of education, decision making capacity and association with outside organisation would affect the odds in favour of achieving a higher category of agency by 16%, 15% and 512% respectively. The variables such as number of years of employment, income earned and value of property owned, on the contrary, shows a negative impact on the odds in favour of self-arranged marriage v/s parental or semi arranged marriage by 84%, 0% and 1% respectively.

**Table 6.8: - Ordinal Logistic Regression Model (Cohort 2001-2018)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Coefficient (β) | Odds Ratio | Z stat | Standard Error | Marginal Effect |
| **Number of Years of Education** | .1486979 | 1.160322 | 1.58 | .0943811 | -.0087574 |
| **Number of Years of Employment** | -.1660777 | .8469804 | -1.61 | .1029651 | .009781 |
| **Income Earned** | -2.94 | 1.000003 | 0.59 | -0.79 | -1.80e-07 |
| **Value of Property Owned** | -0.95 | 1 | 1.52 | -3.7 | -4.74e-10 |
| **Decision Making ability at home** | .1397722 | 1.150012 | 0.65 | .2163173 | -.0082317 |
| **Association with outside organisations** | 1.81296 | 6.128561 | 1.36 | 1.328506 | -.1067725 |
| **Log likelihood** | -83.629558 |  |  |  |  |
| **Pseudo R2[[2]](#footnote-3)** | 0.0558 |  |  |  |  |

*Note:* \**p*< 0.1, \*\**p*< 0.05, \*\*\**p*< 0.01, \*\*\*\**p*< 0.001 (Source: - Author’s Calculation)

Hence, it is understood from the above table 6.8, that R2 is around 0.05, showing a minute impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

* 1. **Income-wise Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents**
     1. **Demographics of the Respondents Across Income Categories**

As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, the data is divided into three income categories based on the Pew Research Centre’s classification of economic classes. The first category of income is from 0 to Rs. 21,000, which is labelled as the ‘lower middle income’ class. The second category refers to the ‘middle income class’ that earns an income above Rs. 21,000 up to Rs. 42,000, followed by the ‘upper middle income’ category that earns an income above Rs. 42,000. In this study, the number of respondents in the first category is 65, followed by 25 belonging to the second category and 30 respondents in the third category.

The respondents belonged to various parts of Kolkata district, especially in the ‘Upper Middle Income” category, wherein some of the respondents hailed from Ballygunge, Jadavpur, Tollygunge, Maheshtala, Budge Budge and so on (places in the South Kolkata), while some belonged to place in the north like Sodepur, Kestopur, Teghoria, Taltal, and Haridevar, and the rest belonged to either east (New Town) or west (such as Satraganchi, Uluberia) or the centre like Baghajatin. Among the ‘Lower Middle Class’, 69.2% belonged to Maheshtala, 18.5% were from Budge Budge, and the rest were from places such as Bakrahat and Sonarpur and so on. Similarly, the ‘middle class’ respondents hailed from Maheshtala, Jadavpur, Sontoshpur, Budge Budge and so on. Now coming to the demographics of the respondents, the number of married women is proportionally higher in ‘upper middle income’ groups with 29 married (96.7%) and 1 widowed (3.3%) compared to 23 married (92%) and 2 widowed (8%) in the middle income group and 56 married (86.2%) and 9 widowed (13.8%) in the lower middle income group. Religion-wise the third category entailed 15 respondents for both Buddhism and Hinduism respectively, the middle class group encompassed of 20 Buddhists, 4 Hindus and a Brahmo respondent and the lower middle class consisted of Hindus (46.2%), a Muslim (1.5%) and Buddhists (52.3%). The Hindu respondent in all three categories belonged to various communities such as Baishya, Kayastha, Mahishya, Panra, Tati, and Maheshwari and so on, while the Buddhist respondents belonged to both Barua or Choudhury community and; the Muslim respondent belonged to Shek community. All the respondents in the first two categories were Bengali speakers, while in the third category there were 2 Hindi speakers. The table 6.9 below clearly mentions these details.

**Table 6.9: - Income-wise demographics of the Respondents**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S.No. | Components | Frequency 1 | Frequency 2 | Frequency 3 |
|  |  | **Lower Middle Income Group (N= 65)** | **Middle Income Group (N= 25)** | **Upper Middle Income Group (N=30)** |
|  | **Marital Status** |  |  |  |
| 1. | Married | 56 (86.2%) | 23 (92%) | 29 (96.7%) |
| 2. | Widowed | 9 (13.8%) | 2 (8%) | 1 (3.3%) |
|  | **Religion** |  |  |  |
| 1. | Buddhism | 34 (52.3%) | 20 (80%) | 15 (50%) |
| 2. | Hinduism | 30 (46.2%) | 4 (16%) | 15 (50%) |
| 3. | Islam | 1 (1.5%) | - | - |
| 4. | Brahmo | - | 1 (4%) | - |
|  | **Community Name** |  |  |  |
| 1. | Baishya | 1 (1.5%) | - | 1 (3.3%) |
| 2. | Barua | 33 (50.8%) | 20 (80%) | 15 (50%) |
| 4. | Choudhury | 1 (1.5%) | - | - |
| 5. | Hindu | 21 | 2 (8%) | 12 (40%) |
| 6. | Kayastha | 1 (1.5%) | - | - |
| 7. | Mahishya | 4 | - | - |
| 8. | Panra | 1 (1.5%) | - | - |
| 9. | Panra Kuti | 1 (1.5%) | - | - |
| 10. | Shek | 1 (1.5%) | - | - |
| 11. | Tati | 1 (1.5%) | - | - |
| 12. | Brahmin | - | 1 (4%) | - |
| 13. | Marathi | - | 1 (4%) | - |
| 14. | Brahmo | - | 1 (4%) | - |
| 15. | Jhuma | - | - | 1 (30%) |
| 16. | Maheshwari | - | - | 1 (30%) |
|  | **Mother Tongue** |  |  |  |
| 1. | Bengali | 65 (100%) | 25 (100%) | 28 (93.3%) |
| 2. | Hindi | - | - | 2 (6.7%) |

Source: - Author’s Calculation

Now coming to the current ages of the respondents, the respondents in the lower income group belong to the age-group of 25-86, with the mean age being 45 years. In the middle income category, the mean age is 44 years, whereby the current ages range from 28 years to 82 years. While in the Upper middle class, the average age is 47 years in the age group of 26-85. The mean monthly income for the lower middle class is Rs. 10, 604, with the minimum income being as low as Rs. 300. The mean monthly income for the middle income group is Rs. 32,800 and for the upper middle income group it is Rs. 1,20,000. The average age of marriage for lower middle class is 19 years, for the middle class is 21 years (which is substantial increase) and for the upper middle class is 22 years. The table below shows the above statistics: -

**Table 6.10: - Descriptive Statistics of Age and Income of the Respondents**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Components | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| **Lower Middle Class** |  |  |  |  |
| Present Age | 25 | 86 | 45.72 | 14.117 |
| Monthly Household Income | 300 | 20,000 | 10,604.62 | 5,499.046 |
| Age at the time of Marriage | 11 | 29 | 19.62 | 3.652 |
| **Middle Class** |  |  |  |  |
| Present Age | 28 | 82 | 44.68 | 13.372 |
| Monthly Household Income | 25,000 | 40,000 | 32,800.00 | 5,172.040 |
| Age at the time of Marriage | 16 | 38 | 21.68 | 5.006 |
| **Upper Middle Class** |  |  |  |  |
| Present Age | 26 | 85 | 47.27 | 11.697 |
| Monthly Household Income | 45,000 | 5,00,000 | 1,20,000.00 | 1,05,086.172 |
| Age at the time of Marriage | 15 | 28 | 22.70 | 3.456 |

Source: - Author’s Calculation

* + 1. **Descriptive Statistics of the Variables**

In the case of the Continuous Variables, it is evident that the lower middle class has low mean years of education of 8 years, which rises subsequently across classes with the upper middle class having mean years of education upto 13 years. The average years of employment are 0 for lower middle class, 1.4 year for middle class and 1.2 years for upper middle class. For the value of property owned, the lower middle class owns on an average Rs. 2.24 crore worth of property, with the lowest value being Rs. 4,799, the middle class owns a mean value of Rs.2.08 crores worth property, and the upper middle class owns an average Rs. 3.20 worth property. The table 6.11 below shows the above statistics: -

**Table 6.11: - Descriptive Statistics of Continuous Variables**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Mean | Standard Deviation | Mean | Standard Deviation | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|  | **Lower Middle Class** | | **Middle Class** | | **Upper Middle Class** | |
| Number of Years of Education | 8.43 | 4.373 | 12.36 | 3.402 | 13.77 | 3.070 |
| Number of Years of Employment | .68 | 2.129 | 1.40 | 2.449 | 1.20 | 1.955 |
| Monthly Income Earned | 836.92 | 2,803.824 | 1,868.00 | 3,151.418 | 13,983.33 | 54,957.426 |
| Value of Property Owned | 2,24,83,273.42 | 64,25,4376.561 | 2,08,58,162.84 | 5,83,94,311.057 | 1,37,32,849.03 | 3,20,28,780.832 |

Source: - Author’s Calculations

The categorical variables, as shown in the table below, reflects that the number of respondents, who never made decisions related to financial activities such as purchase of durable items at home, is higher in lower middle class families (58.5%) compared to middle class (36%) and upper middle class families (13.3%). The number of women with the ability to make financial decision ‘always’ prior to marriage is proportionally higher among the upper middle class (20%) compared to middle class (16%) and lower middle class (10.8%). The number of women having association with outside organisation is higher among the lower middle class (6.2%), while in the case of middle class none of the women had associations with outside organisations and in the case of upper middle class families, only 2 respondent (6.7%) were associated with outside organisations before marriage.

**Table 6.12: - Frequencies of Categorical Variables**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Components | Frequency 1 | Frequency 2 | Frequency 3 |
| **Decision Making Ability in Financial Activities at Home** | **Lower Middle Class** | **Middle Class** | **Upper Middle Class** |
| 1- Never | 38 (58.5%) | 9 (36%) | 4 (13.3%) |
| 2- Rarely | 5 (7.7%) | 4 (16%) | 6 (20%) |
| 3- Sometimes | 12 (18.5%) | 6 (24%) | 8 (26.7%) |
| 4- Often | 3 (4.6%) | 2 (8%) | 6 (20%) |
| 5- Always | 7 (10.8%) | 4 (16%) | 6 (20%) |
| **Association with Outside Organisations** |  |  |  |
| 0- No | 61 (93.8%) | 25 (100%) | 28 (93.3%) |
| 1- Yes | 4 (6.2%) | - | 2 (6.7%) |

Source: - Author’s Calculations

Now coming to the parameters measuring agency, it was found that in the case “Approaching an Intermediary”, the lower middle class respondents had relatively less agency as most of the respondents had either their parents approach the intermediary without their consent (36.9%) or with their consent (36.9%). However, the lower income group also experienced a relatively more number of respondents stating that they alone initiated their marriage (24.6%), compared to 20% for Middle Class and 20% for Upper middle class. In the case of upper middle class, most of the respondents stated that their parent only approached the intermediary for marriage (53.3%) with their consent. This was true even for the middle class as the number of respondents stating that they had their parents approach the intermediary with their consent were 12 (48%). In the case of courtship before marriage, 41.5% of the respondents in the lower middle class said that they never met their husbands before marriage, while for upper middle class and middle class the majority of the respondents, 46.7% and 44% respectively said that they met their husbands before marriage along with their family members. One respondent in all the three classes mentioned that they met their husbands before marriage along with their friends. In the upper middle class, the number of respondents who met their husbands alone were 11 (36.7%), which is proportionally higher than the number of respondent (27.7%) in lower middle class and in the middle class (16%). It is interesting to note that the majority of respondents (43.1%) in the lower middle class had their parents decide their spouse without their consent, while for the middle class the majority (40%) had their parents decide their spouse with their consent and for upper middle class, the majority of the respondents (33.3%) decided their spouse along their parents. The table 6.13 below clearly shows the comparison between the agencies of the three classes: -

**Table 6.13: - Frequencies of the Parameters Measuring Agency across classes**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables measuring Agency in Mate Selection | Frequency 1 | Frequency 2 | Frequency 3 |
| **Approaching Intermediary** | **Lower Middle Class** | **Middle Class** | **Upper Middle Class** |
| 1- Parents only without consent | 24 (36.9%) | 7 (28%) | 6 (20%) |
| 2- Parents only with consent | 24 (36.9%) | 12 (48%) | 16 (53.3%) |
| 3- Both Jointly | 1 (1.5%) | 1 (4%) | 2 (6.7%) |
| 4- I alone | 16 (24.6%) | 5 (20%) | 6 (20%) |
| **Courtship with the Spouse** |  |  |  |
| 1- Never Met | 27 (41.5%) | 9 (36%) | 4 (13.3%) |
| 2- Met along with family members | 19 (29.2%) | 11 (44%) | 14 (46.7%) |
| 3- Met along with friends | 1 (1.5%) | 1 (4%) | 1 (3.3%) |
| 4- Met alone | 18 (27.7%) | 4 (16%) | 11 (36.7%) |
| **Decision to Select the Mate** |  |  |  |
| 1- Parents only without consent | 28 (43.1%) | 6 (24%) | 7 (23.3%) |
| 2- Parents only with consent | 16 (24.6%) | 10 (40%) | 8 (26.7%) |
| 3- Both Jointly | 7 (10.8%) | 5 (20%) | 10 (33.3%) |
| 4- I alone | 14 (21.5%) | 4 (16%) | 5 (16.7%) |

Source: - Author’s Calculation

* 1. **Results of the Ordinal Logistic Regression Model**

In order to understand the impact of the continuous and the categorical variables on the agency in mate selection, ordinal logistic regression model was used, which accounted for the categorical dependent variable. The results of the model are presented as follows: -

* + 1. **Lower Middle Income Class**

The results of the ordinal regression model are given in the table 6.14 below. As shown in the first column, the number of years of education has statistically significant impact on the agency in mate selection. This implies that a unit increase in the number of years of education would increase the odds in favour of self-arranged marriage, compared to parental-arranged or semi-arranged marriages by 23.9%, keeping all other variables constant. In this model, only number of years of education is statistically significant and the rest of the variables are insignificant. One would further obtain that decision making ability and number of years of employment are positively related to the odds in favour of higher category of agency by 4.05% and 7.51% respectively, keeping all other variables constant. Conversely, variables like income earned and association with outside organisations reflect a negative relation, whereby a unit increase in their values decreases the probability of obtaining a higher category of agency.

**Table 6.14: - Ordinal Logistic Regression Model (Lower Middle Class)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Coefficient (β) | Odds Ratio | Z stat | Standard Error | Marginal Effect |
| **Number of Years of Education** | .215064\*\*\*\* | 1.239941 | 3.36 | .0640152 | -.0326088 |
| **Number of Years of Employment** | .0397438 | 1.040544 | 0.32 | .1240237 | -.0060261 |
| **Income Earned** | -.000031 | .999969 | -0.34 | .0000903 | 4.70e-06 |
| **Value of Property Owned** | -1.12209 | .3255987 | -1.22 | .9171354 | -6.12e-10 |
| **Decision Making ability at home** | .0723688 | 1.075052 | 0.44 | .1654356 | -.0109728 |
| **Association with outside organisations** | -4.96 | 1 | 1.04 | -5.12 | .1701352 |
| **Log likelihood** | -122.00089 |  |  |  |  |
| **Pseudo R22** | 0.0597 |  |  |  |  |

*Note: \*p*< 0.1, \*\**p*< 0.05, \*\*\**p*< 0.01, \*\*\*\**p<*0.001

Source: - Author’s Calculation

The Pseudo R2, unlike the OLS R2, does not reflect the goodness of fit of the model. It only states the probable relation between the independent variable and the dependent variable, which is 0.05, in this case. The likelihood ratio shows the statistical significance of the model at chi-square value of 15 and prob-value of 0.01, which is less than 0.05.

* + 1. **Middle Income Class**

As shown in the table 6.15 below, income earned before marriage and value of property hold statistical significance in the analysis. In a middle class family, a unit increase in income of the daughter is more likely to improve her agency in mate selection by 0.06%, keeping other variables constant. However, in the case of property value, a unit rise or fall in property value will equally likely impact the odds in favour of self-arranged marriage for a woman. Similarly, the variables number of years of employment and the decision making ability at home are inversely related to the odds in favour of higher categories of agency.

**Table 6.15: - Ordinal Logistics Regression Model (Middle Income)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Coefficient (β) | Odds Ratio | Z stat | Standard Error | Marginal Effect |
| **Number of Years of Education** | .2254796 | 1.252923 | 1.50 | .1501386 | -.0269163 |
| **Number of Years of Employment** | -.31099 | .7327212 | -1.63 | .1911368 | .037124 |
| **Income Earned** | .0006735\*\*\* | 1.000674 | 2.76 | .0002441 | -.0000804 |
| **Value of Property Owned** | -9.38\*\* | 1 | -1.99 | -2.06 | 1.65e-09 |
| **Decision Making ability at home** | -.5275415 | .5900538 | -1.37 | .3858552 | .0629745 |
| **Association with outside organisations** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Log likelihood** | -33.821389 |  |  |  |  |
| **Pseudo R22** | 0.1713 |  |  |  |  |

*Note: \*p*< 0.1, \*\**p*< 0.05, \*\*\**p*< 0.01, \*\*\*\**p<*0.001

Source: Author’s Calculation

The model is statistically significant, evident through the prob-value of 0.01 < 0.05 and has an R2 value of 0.17.

* + 1. **Upper Middle Income Class**

Similar to the case of lower middle class, the upper middle class also encounters a significant impact of the deviation in the number of years of education on the odds in favour of self-arranged marriage v/s parental or semi-arranged marriage. Hence, a unit increase in years of education would increase the probability of self-arranged marriage by 74.7%. Likewise, even the decision making ability at home significantly leads to the rise in probability of self-choice in mate selection by 142%. Conversely, the value of property is inversely related to the odds in favour of agency in mate selection.

**Table 6.16: - Ordinal Logistic Regression Model (Upper Middle Class)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | Coefficient (β) | Odds Ratio | Z stat | Standard Error | Marginal Effect |
| **Number of Years of Education** | .5584667\*\* | 1.74799 | 2.42 | .2308245 | -2.50e-06 |
| **Number of Years of Employment** | -.1448124 | .8651846 | -0.61 | .2383986 | 6.48e-07 |
| **Income Earned** | -10.48 | .9999997 | -0.06 | -0.18 | 1.56e-12 |
| **Value of Property Owned** | -17.3\*\* | .9999999 | -2.32 | -3.99 | 4.16e-13 |
| **Decision Making ability at home** | .8844152\*\* | 2.421568 | 2.45 | .3604143 | -3.96e-06 |
| **Association with outside organisations** | 1.57007 | 4.806986 | 0.89 | 1.766366 | -7.02e-06 |
| **Log likelihood** | -52.37818 |  |  |  |  |
| **Pseudo R22** | 0.1820 |  |  |  |  |

*Note: \*p*< 0.1, \*\**p*< 0.05, \*\*\**p*< 0.01, \*\*\*\**p<*0.001

Source: Author’s Calculation

The model is statistically significant as the prob-value is 0.00 < 0.05, which is way too small than the likelihood value of 23.31. The R2 value of 0.18 represents the expected deviation in the dependent variable due to the independent variable.

* 1. **Summarising Descriptive Answers**

As mentioned in the section 3.8, the respondents were asked whether they felt constrained in making decision compared to their male counterparts, 66 respondents (55%) said ‘Yes’, that they did feel such a constraint. The number of respondents who said ‘No’ were 54, which implies that 45% of the respondents did not feel any difference in the treatment given to them compared to their male counterparts. When asked to the respondents whether they had any dreams or aspirations about their future spouse prior to marriage, 77 respondents said that they had such aspirations, while the rest of them said ‘No’ that they did not posses any such dreams and were too occupied with other thoughts. For those who said, that they did perceive such thoughts prior to marriage, a further question was asked about the extent to which they are satisfied with the marriage, to which 35 said that they are ‘completely satisfied’, 22 said that they are ‘Partially satisfied’, 10 were ‘somewhat satisfied’ and the rest (10) were ‘not at all satisfied’. The respondents were also asked whether they had the capacity to say ‘No’ to marrying their selected spouse, 89 mentioned that they could not say so, 28 opined that they did have the ability to say ‘No’, while the rest of the respondents (3) opined that they were not sure about their ability. When the respondents were finally questioned about their preferred marriage style, 46 respondents mentioned ‘Parental-Arranged Marriage’ to be a good one, 35 preferred Self-Arranged Marriage, one respondent felt both semi and self arranged marriage to be good, while the rest (38) mentioned semi-arranged marriage to be better than the other kinds. The analysis chapter elaborates on the responses further.

**CHAPTER VII**

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

This chapter is divided into two sections; the first section discusses the results of the first objective and the second section analyses the responses obtained through the interviews conducted while data collection.

**Objective 1: - To find the impact of “women’s economic empowerment” on their “agency in mate selection process” among different age cohorts and across different strata of society.**

The objective entails classifying the sample into two divisions: -

1. Year wise cohorts
2. Income wise groups
   1. **Year-wise Cohort Analysis**

Year-wise cohort analysis, using ordinal logistic regression, revealed that only the ‘value of property’ owned has significant impact on the agency in mate choice. Furthermore, this significant relation was found only in the year cohort of 1980 to 2000, which ushers us to look for multiple other factors that might have influenced agency in mate selection of a woman in the remaining year cohorts. The result highlights a negative relation between value of property owned and the agency in mate selection, implying that a unit increase in value of property owned would decrease the probability of attaining a higher degree of agency, keeping other factors constant. This might be due to the persistent trial of the parents to maintain their prestige in society. Parents with greater wealth would want to retain their social prestige and restrict their daughter on the choice of spouse they make.

This goes in line with the “Demographic Opportunity Theory”, which states that social status of a person influences his/her choice in mate selection. Similarly, Henrike Donner, through her field work around mid 1990s, encountered that the affluent and middle class families in Kolkata, had deeply rooted conservative ideas of marriage, which subtly but strongly supported parental arranged marriage, despite rapid modernity of the cityscape (Donner, 2016). Hence, the hypothesis that value of property increases women’s empowerment and in turn influences their agency in mate selection has been proved wrong.

* 1. **Income-wise Cohort Analysis**
     1. **Lower Middle Class**

In this sample, only the number of years of education was found to be significant. There exists a positive impact of the number of years of education of women on the probability of achieving a higher degree of agency in mate selection by 24%, keeping all other factors constant. A plausible explanation for this could be that higher educational attainment delays one’s marriage by a few years and enables one to have more ‘say’ than at a younger age. Since, the lower income groups experience greater arranged marriages, as shown in the descriptive statistics on agency in mate selection in the previous chapter 6, additional years of schooling provides women the right to speak for themselves and hence has a positive impact on the agency in mate choice. The results obtained are similar to the results attained in a study by Thornton, Ghimire, Axinn and Yabiku (2006) in Chitwan valley, Nepal, where they found a positive significant impact of educational attainment on individual’s mate choice (Ghimire et al., 2006).

* + 1. **Middle Class**

In the case of middle income class, the variables that had a significant impact on the agency in mate selection are ‘income earned before marriage’ and the ‘value of property owned’. On the one hand, income earned has a positive relation with the odds in favour of attaining higher degree of agency by 0.06%, keeping other factors constant. On the other hand, value of property owned has a negative relation with the odds in favour of attaining higher agency in mate selection, keeping other factors constant.

1. **Income Earned**

In a middle class family, an increase in the earnings of an unmarried woman enhances her financial independence and along with that the capability to take decisions for herself. She could now rely on her income to fulfil her needs and desires, while at the same lessen her dependence on parents for the same. Her resultant increased empowerment would enhance her bargaining power in the marriage market and hence she would want to select her spouse by herself. This argument is also supported by Mathur (2008) in her study on the wife’s attributes in Mumbai, where it was found that income of women has strong correlation with the resources controlled by women and their resulting bargaining power in the marriage market (Mathur, 2008).

1. **Value of Property Owned**

As in the case of the year cohort 1980-2000, value of property is negatively related to the agency in mate selection here as well. A plausible explanation could be that middle class parents are more conscious of their social status in the society and hence would be willing to get an alliance for their daughter, which is at par with their social status. Even Madhurima Mukhopadhyay found in her study in Kolkata that despite rise in the middle class families (which comprises of a mixture of different castes) in the recent past, there is still a preference for the same caste alliances (Mukhopadhyay, 2012). This is reflective of the stringency existing in the society for selecting prospective spouse, who is expected to belong to the same or higher wealth status, thus imposing restrictions on daughters for the choice of mate.

* + 1. **Upper Middle Class**

It was estimated that the number of years of education and decision-making ability at home are significantly positively related to the odds in favour of achieving a higher degree of agency in mate selection by 74.7% and 142% respectively, keeping other variables constant. Conversely, the value of property owned is negatively related to the odds in favour of achieving a higher degree of freedom by 99%, keeping other variables constant.

* + 1. **Number of years of Education**

Since increased education allows women to delay their marriage later, it gives them more agency in taking the initiative to decide their spouse. Moreover, women in the upper middle class families, who have attained a certain educational qualification, would want to marry a candidate with traits at least at par with theirs if not more. Higher educational qualification increases a woman’s value in the marriage market, thus enabling the woman to locate her spouse based on her desired criteria. Study by Prakash and Singh (2013) in Varanasi depicts similar results, wherein level of education significantly increases the level of participation in marriage of women, who try to locate their spouse outside their caste and community if suitable candidate in not available within the community (Prakash & Singh, 2013).

* + 1. **Value of Property Owned**

Since ‘property’ is awarded to the woman by her parents, it has no incremental impact on her empowerment. Hence, in terms of wealth status, women of wealthy families have lower agency. This could be due to parental authority over the wealth, wherein parents become overtly conscious of their status quo. This is also supported by Donner’s field survey in Kolkata, whereby she found that affluent families wanted to keep their social status intact and hence disliked ‘love marriages’ (Donner, 2016).

* + 1. **Decision Making Ability on Financial Activities at Home**

Women who made no decision related to purchase of durable items at home were most probably not consulted for such decisions. Therefore, their authority to make independent decision related to their lives could also have been subdued, especially when it came to marriage. On the contrary, women who were consulted for household purchases had certain authority over decision making process. Therefore, important decisions like marriage were most probably taken after consulting them. Riaz and Pervaiz show in their study that in the upper middle class families in Pakistan, women have significant decision making ability related to household purchases in turn increasing their empowerment (Riaz & Pervaiz, 2018).

While these results show that women’s economic empowerment in terms of education, income, wealth and decision making ability have significant impact on their agency in mate selection, certain other social conditions too have to be analysed in order to get an wholesome picture of women’s circumstances while making marriage decisions.

**Objective 2: - To identify and analyse the factors that influence economic empowerment and agency in mate selection process of a woman.**

In order to understand capabilities attained by women, a question on whether they felt constrained prior to marriage relative to their brothers or any other man of their age was posed. The responses were then coded into different themes, as shown in table 7.1 below. The factors are based on the socio-economic circumstances existing in the lives of women.

**Table 7.1: - Themes on Women’s Empowerment before Marriage**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Was Constrained | Number of Respondents | Was Not Constrained | Number of Respondents |
| Immature | 4 | Self-Standing | 17 |
| Conservative Society | 14 | Parental Liberty | 23 |
| Parental Dominance | 28 | Self-Discretion | 17 |
| Self-Restraint | 4 | Financial Independence | 3 |
| Financial Condition | 2 |  |  |

Source: - Author’s Calculation

* 1. **Factors Influencing Women’s Constraints**
     1. **Immature**

“I was too young before marriage. All my time was spent in playing around with friends. I used to scamper throughout village. Before I could even realise, I was sitting in the marriage pandal, draped in the ‘red sari’.” (Somda Haldar, October 2019)

The very thought of ‘empowerment’ could only hit the mind of a person when she matures and crosses a certain age. The above statement is of Mrs. S. Haldar, a 57 years old lady who works currently as a domestic helper. Unfortunately, many of the respondents, belonging to older generations opined that they were too young when married. It would be futile to expect them to develop a voice seeking for their rights in such a young age, let alone the realisation of the complexities of this dynamic world. Four of the respondents explicitly mentioned about their childish status before marriage, which is the testimony of their child marriage.

* + 1. **Conservative Society**

Conservative society, here, refers to the general mindset of families that usually subdues one gender to another. Mostly among the older interlocutors (14), restrictions on independent movement and limits on free expression of certain demands in their teenage were found to be prevalent. Meena Barua, in her late 50s, recollected,

“We weren’t even let out of our homes. Our mothers pleaded us to lower our voices. We were not allowed to even stand and talk in the courtyard for longer.” (Meena Barua, October 2019)

The repercussions of violating these norms were often costly, at times resulting in violence. Moreover, practice of child marriage is also an inherent characteristic of such a society. However, these incidences could not totally be detached from the metropolitan lives of ours, and the fact that certain degree of conservatism prevails even within us should rather be accepted (with a tinge of salt). Mrs S.G. Nath, who is in her 30s, commented,

“Girls were not treated equally even after providing professional education.” (Sriparna Ghosh Nath, December 2019)

Mrs S.G. Nath has been a resident of Kolkata since her childhood and has still experienced discrimination.

* + 1. **Parental Dominance**

Parent, here, refers not only to fathers and mothers but also to elder siblings such as elder brother or to family heads such as grandparents. In quite a number of cases, it was found that parents restricted the decisions of their daughters, hampering their freedom to act as per their own wishes. Madhu Chanda Barua, a 51 year old lady, confessed that her parents were opposed to her watching movies in theatre and were particular about her timings to return back home, which was also the case with most of the interlocutors.

Similarly, Rita Barua recalled,

“My father was so strict that I always felt caged at home in his presence. His enraged red eyes were enough for chasing me off his sight in seconds. We were never consulted for any decisions related to us and were just informed about what needs to be done.” (Rita Barua, October 2019)

Some of the respondents expressed that they had tasted freedom only post their marriage.

* + 1. **Self-Restraint**

Unlike the above case, wherein parents imposed certain restrictions on the actions of their daughter, self-restraint implies one’s own deliberate attempt to limit one’s freedom. Rajashree Saha states that she did feel the constraint but accepted it whole-heartedly for her affection towards her parents. Similarly, Mamata Haldar felt a sense of obligation to follow her mother’s decisions.

* + 1. **Financial Condition**

Financial Condition of an individual also plays an important role in enhancing the capabilities of the individual. A deficiency in finances at home hampers one’s ability to attain other goals as was the case of Rinku Barua Singh,

“I was studying in 9th standard, when my father fell extremely ill. Subsequently, he became bed-ridden and our financial condition deteriorated. We were four siblings and were unable to pay our fees. I, being the eldest, decided to drop out of school, despite my father’s discontent with the decision. Today, I undergo mixed feelings of pride, (when I think of my lawyer brother, engine driver and teacher sisters) as well as grief, when I see myself, a 9th class pass.” (Rinku Barua Singh, November 2019)

Rinku Barua Singh was unable to extend her capabilities alike her younger siblings to fulfil her aspirations. She had to sacrifice her dreams, reducing her empowerment, for the sake of the family. Thus, poor financial condition adds to a woman’s inability to achieve her aspirations and acts as constraint to her well-being.

* 1. **Factors Influencing Women’s Freedom**
     1. **Parental Liberty**

“My parents brought me up with the same rights as would be enjoyed by any boy in the family. They never differentiated between girls and boys and further encouraged me to take up challenging occupations. I developed a sense of self-esteem due to their up-bringing.” (Debjani Barua, October 2019)

The above lines were stated by Debjani Barua in response to the question. Parental liberty holds a pivotal place in enabling one’s freedom. If parents support and trust their daughters in any of their actions, then the daughters get the validation to do the action freely. Parental liberty is associated with the modern and liberal outlook of the parents. Parental liberty requires loosening the hold on their daughter’s actions and bestowing faith in them, while also being protective about her. Adding on, a respondent Prabha Kabra opined that parental liberty would allow for sharing of problems and solutions between parties. In her words,

“Open-mindedness of parents and complete transparency enabled me to do whatever I wanted to do.” (Prabha Kabra, October 2019)

* + 1. **Self-Standing**

Self-standing refers to the abilities developed by an individual to enhance her bargaining power for attaining freedom in decision making. These abilities were developed despite the odds in life. Sraboni Barua, a respondent in her 40s, mentioned about her being good in studies compared to her younger siblings that enabled her to enjoy some liberty from her parents. Conversely, Konika Choudhury experienced self-standing due to the absence of her father. In her words,

“I did not have my father around me to take care of us. Hence, I had to undertake all the household responsibilities.” (Konika Choudhury, October 2019)

Unlike Sraboni’s case, who took the leverage from her parents of her being good in studies, Konika was forced to take up decisions for herself due to her circumstances. In any case, both of them experienced ‘self-standing’ by honing their skills in some or the other field and taking their own decisions.

* + 1. **Self-discretion**

When one takes a call to live their lives with full autonomy, irrespective of the hindrances, then it is called self-discretion. Opposed to the universal view of empowerment as grabbing opportunities to attain higher goals, one could also decide strongly to stay at home, which they consider as their freedom. Mamia Barua explained,

“I prefer staying at home and feel myself extremely free. This is my decision and no one interfered in taking this decision.” (Mamia Barua, October 2019)

Self-discretion also refers to the ability to take actions without any restrictions being imposed. This can also mean forging one’s right to perform an act.

* + 1. **Financial Independence**

Financial Independence provides immense freedom to a person to fulfil their needs and wants. It gives an individual the bargaining power and reduces one’s dependence on someone else. Hence, one could feel empowered by having financial independence, as substantiated by Gita Haldar,

“I was independent as I never had to depend on anyone, including my father for money. I did domestic labour and earned my own money and lived through it.” (Gita Haldar, October 2019)

Gita Haldar was a domestic worker since her childhood and supported her family through her income. On that account, her parents could not force their decisions on her as she could otherwise lead her life independently. Similarly, J. Das Chatterjee said that as she earned her own money she felt herself empowered to some extent. Such instances reinforce the value of financial independence in empowering an individual.

* 1. **Factors Determining Women’s Agency in Mate Selection**

As defined by Sen, agency evinces ‘power’ and ‘control’ over the action. While power refers to one’s intrinsic ability to choose among different alternatives, control is about the authority over the action. To understand the availability of power and control with women during mate selection process, the interlocutors were questioned about their ability to say ‘No’ to marrying their selected spouse, to which they had to answer in terms of ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ and further specify the reason for the same. The responses were thereafter coded into different themes, as shown in table 7.2 below: -

**Table 7.2: - Themes on Women’s Agency in Mate Selection**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Able to Say ‘No’ | Number of Respondents | Unable to say ‘No’ | Number of Respondents |
| Family Support | 3 | Societal Pressure | 17 |
| Self-Sustenance | 8 | Family Pressure | 28 |
| Concerned about the Family Members | 7 | Faith in Family Decision | 7 |
| Future Assurance | 5 | Financial Condition | 10 |
| Abled | 4 | Future Prospects | 25 |

Source: - Author’s Calculation

* + 1. **Women’s ability to say ‘No’**

“I even got beatings for my decisions. But since I was stubborn, they gave in.”

* Madhobi Das, October 2019

“I did not have such rights to speak against the wishes of my parents.”

* Aruna Barua, October 2019

The respondent, who specified that they had the ability to say ‘No’, most likely had the power over their actions. Some of the respondents indicated ‘**family support**’ to be an important aspect of their being able to say ‘No’. The family support could be in the form of parent’s willingness to listen to daughter’s stance, by asking her consent or by relying on her completely. For instance, one of the respondents said,

“I was not happy with my marriage. Some of my relatives did support me, giving me the strength to deny marriage. However, due to my mother’s insistence, I agreed to marry.” (Sraboni Barua, October 2019)

The woman did have the power to decide her future course of action, but lacked complete control over it. She exercised her freedom negatively to fulfil the well-being of her mother.

**Self-sustenance** too has great impact on one’s agency, as reiterated by some respondents. Self-sustenance refers to one’s capacity to decide her next course of action, induced by her human and financial capital. As stated by a respondent,

“I actually did not feel the need to marry as I was already working as a school teacher. However due to my mother’s sudden death, all my family members persuaded me to marry.” (Vishakha Barua, October 2019)

Though she had the power to accomplish her choice, deficiency of ‘family support’ didnot allow her to use her agency freedom positively to attain well-being. Conversely, another respondent narrated the anecdote of her marriage, wherein she worked in a factory and got to know her husband through a friend. Her parents dotted her so much that they did not restrict her from making any decision. Thus, one’s being financially independent or educationally meritorious can be an advantage, as it gives them a say, but cannot be very effective compared to family’s support. However, at times individuals take strong stance for their decisions and fight all odds out that come their way so as to accomplish their goals. Such was the case with Madhobi Das (as stated in the beginning), who went on to fight against her parents to get married to a man, who she liked. Similarly, Bibi Shek, another woman resisted her mother’s pressure of marrying a wealthy man, who was old and mentally unstable. These cases of strong will and resistance overtly challenged parental dominance and attempted to bring control over one’s action. This indicates women’s strong will power to establish her right over her decisions, which is referred here as ‘**abled**’.

In other cases, it was found that women were willing to comply with their parents’ decisions because of their **concern for their family members**, having known that their dissent would completely dissolve the marriage. For instance, a respondent mentioned about her family’s financial conditions,

“My parents were over protective but they valued my opinions. However, I could not deny marriage as my father had made bad business decision and our financial stability was poor. So it was important that I got married off.” (Jayoti Saha, January 2019)

At times, women agreed to marry a prospective candidate when **assured** of their well-mannered husband and courteous in-laws. Moreover, some respondents stated that they liked the man so much that they were eager to get married soon. Hence, they would not have denied either.

* + 1. **Women’s inability to say ‘No’**

The major cause, identified, for women’s inability to say ‘No’ to marry their selected spouse is ‘**societal pressure**’, especially when the women were too young. Early marriage for women acted as a major hindrance to their say. A 65 years old woman told,

“Whatever they said we had to comply by it. My marriage was conducted through village meetings and family connections. I was too young then.” (Chhabi Rani Barua, October 2019)

At a very young age, it is likely that the person would not have attained the requisite bargaining power over their decisions, let alone retaliation. Furthermore, the parents always looked for proposals that matched their social and economic status. A 60 years old woman reiterated this fact,

“They use to see the family first and the candidate next. My father was so strict that I could not even think of saying anything in opposition to his decision.” (Nomita Barua, October 2019)

Intercaste or inter-religious marriages were looked down upon in the social milieu of some of the respondents. The pressure was further escalated when parents forced their daughters into marriages, without gaining their consent. In some families, the parents did not even entertain rejections as was the case with Moimun Barua, a 34 years old woman, who mentioned about her grandmother’s strong dominance in the family that hardly allowed her to voice her disapproval. Likewise, another woman confessed about her dreams of making a career, which was not given sufficient heed by her parents and was forced to marry. Sharmi Ray, a 56 years old lady explained about her disappointments,

“I did not want to be a burden on my parents anymore as I was the youngest and they were eager to marry me off. When they found a man 10 years older to me, I was very unhappy but did not fight back. I quietly accepted what was given to me.” (Sharmi Ray, January 2020)

Though **family pressure,** for many respondents, violated their agency freedom, many also **had utmost faith in family’s decisions**. Their respect towards family and trust on the scrupulous search for a suitable match withheld them from saying ‘no’ to marriage. Sritikona Barua, a woman in her 50s, elucidated further that parents were elders and would only think good for their children. Hence, children should listen to them wholeheartedly. For the others **financial conditions** at home compelled them to accept the proposals that came by. Rinku Barua Singh lamented on her family’s deteriorating condition that forced her to not remain unmarried for long. Moreover she had other siblings at home who had to be educated as well. In order to relieve their parents off their burden, many women sought the route of marriage. Karuna Dey recalled her pathetic family condition as her father was jobless and a drug-addict. Therefore, at the very tumble of a proposal, she agreed to marry. Another respondent shared her story,

“My family’s financial situation at home was pitiful. My mother struggled her day in and day out to bring us up. To relieve her from my burden, I decided to marry. Hence, there was no other alternative but to say ‘Yes’.” (Mamia Barua, October 2019)

Some respondents were enamoured by the characteristics of their prospective husbands to the extent that they were longing to marry them. In these cases, the choice was mostly made unanimously by both parents and the daughter. They were, undoubtedly, willing to marry their selected spouse looking forward to their **future prospects**. Srabonti Bhoumick, who decided to marry a person of her choice, commented,

“You do not have control over your life. Everything is pre-decided in your destiny. I had my destiny.” (Srabonti Bhoumick, October 2019)

Other respondents also spoke about their struggle to make their parents accept their chosen husbands, which at times resulted in breaking filial relationships. These respondents used their agency vehemently to accomplish their well-being. They obviously could not say ‘No’ now.

* 1. **Retrospective View on Marriage**

The interlocutors were finally questioned about their preferred mode of marriage, which would allow us to assess different perspectives on the idea of agency in mate selection. The table 7.3 below shows different themes assigned to different responses to this question. These themes would be analysed separately under each preferred mode of marriage.

**Table 7.3: - Themes on the Preferred Way of Marriage**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Parental Arranged Marriage | Number of Respondents | Semi-Arranged Marriage | Number of Respondents | Self-Arranged Marriage | Number of Respondents |
| Parental Aid | 10 | Prior Knowledge and Compatibility | 15 | Personal Accountability | 3 |
| Parental Knowledge | 9 | Everyone’s View | 14 | Self-determination | 9 |
| Real Love | 8 | No Conflict | 5 | Compatibility | 7 |
| No Family Tension | 5 | Avoids Complete Responsibility | 2 | Personal Choice | 10 |
| Too Naive | 5 |  |  | Personal Freedom | 2 |
| Societal Norms | 5 |  |  |  |  |

Source: - Author’s Calculation

* + 1. **Parental Arranged Marriage**

“If my parents give me married, I can blame them for any discrepancies that might arise. I will not totally be responsible for the conflicts. Besides, I can also share my household tensions with them.” (Gita Haldar, October 2019)

As proposed by Kabeer in his ‘etic’ approach, the vocabulary used by women in their conversations must be viewed through a sharp eye. The above statement was said by Gita Haldar, a 52 years old lady in support of parental arranged marriage. The very possibility of a woman to accuse her parents for marrying her off to a lousy family diminishes, once she abandons her natal family’s home along with her husband and becomes *‘Paraih Beti’* (Non-family daughter).

Parental arranged marriage entails ‘**parental aid**’ and ‘**parental knowledge’.** Parental aid indicates trust accorded on the parents by daughters, expecting their help when a mishap occurs in the marital home. Moreover, since in an arranged marriage parents play a greater role, their blessings are present in the relationship throughout, building the marriage stronger. Such a marriage attains a social recognition as all the family members have consensus for the alliance. Additionally, it saves the women from much vulnerability as described by Anima Barua,

“In an elopement, there are chances that the in-laws would not accept the woman as their daughter-in-law and she might have to return back to her natal family’s home. Even there she might encounter repudiation by parents. At least in our community, we accept our daughters back and look after them but all communities do not. Hence, one must be mindful of such consequences before attempting to enter into love marriage.” (Anima Barua, October 2019)

Anima Barua draws attention to the issue of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, which remain a contentious problem in India till date. In a parental arranged marriage, the couple is protected from such social mortifications, as they mostly align with caste and religious lines. Many respondents felt that parent’s involvement is essential in mate selection as they are far sighted and will only select the right candidate. Parents are way more experienced than the youthful lads and lasses and need to be thanked for their efforts. Rita Barua comments on the parent’s benevolence towards their children,

“Our parents have way higher experience and goodwill for us. They do not want a bad relation for us. It is our destiny that leads us to good or bad relations.” (Rita Barua, October 2019)

Young unmarried women are **too naive** for selecting the right spouse. One respondent believed that love marriage have 90% chance of failure as opposed to just 10% chance of failure for arranged marriages. This is because unlike love marriages, arranged marriages do not get swayed away by the love for the person. Instead, ‘love’ is mostly developed between the couple after marriage which according to many respondents is the **real love**. Ranibala Barua, a woman in her 60s, recounted that in her days marriages were much more sophisticated, with strong hold on spirituality unlike today’s culturally faded but ostentatious marriages.

These marriages remain intact forever, as their very foundation is laid on the strong family values and involves consensus of both families. This reduces the likelihood of **conflicts at home** and results in lower divorce rates. However, with changing times, the occurrence of such marriages has reduced giving way to other forms of marriages, which are often seen with discord, especially, by the older generation. A respondent, who is 64 years old, went on elaborate marriages of her times,

“In earlier times, the coming of the intended for seeing the girl at home entailed lot of suspense and thrill. The girl’s family would keenly look forward for the decision of the boy, who would either reply ‘I am pleased’ or ‘I’ll see’, wherein the former indicates that the alliance is sure and the latter refers to it being doubtful. This would be followed by a village meeting ‘*Panchala*’, where the elders would decide the next course of action. There were loads of buzz around the marriage ceremony those days. Look now! Everything is lost. Things happen so fast between families that one could not even realise the succeeding event.” (Pratima Barua, October 2019)

**Societal norms** too support the occurrence of arranged marriages, as patrilocality is pre-dominantly the norm and marriages are a community affair. Though much of the marriage customs have changed over the years, the system of patrilocality had hardly seen any difference.

* + 1. **Semi-Arranged Marriage**

In semi-arranged marriages, either the parents select a prospective spouse initially and then enable their daughter to have courtship with him or the woman selects the spouse for her and later informs her parents about it. This form of marriage is gaining popularity among the young generation as women are increasingly becoming educated and economically independent and are looking for like-minded partner who could be sufficiently compatible. Hence, the need for ‘**prior knowledge and compatibility**’ is increasingly realised in the current times. Sraboni Barua, a respondent in her 40s, points out,

“Once the parents get a proposal, the young couples should be allowed to meet and develop a friendly relationship with each other.” (Sraboni Barua, October 2019)

Though the young marriageable girls and boys are looking for greater scope for self-choice, there is a need for interference from parents, which was emphasised by a respondent,

“Though a woman should have freedom of choosing her spouse, some amount of interference from parents is also necessary to see whether the guy along with taking care of my daughter is also capable of taking care of the family, understanding the family in-laws, etc.” (Jayoti Saha, December 2019)

Additionally, the semi-arranged marriage also enjoys the merit of having **everyone’s opinion** and grants both parents and marriageable couple the ‘say’ in marriage. Hence, in such a marriage, couple could follow their own rationale for marriage without compromising on the suggestions from experienced people. Moimun Barua further substantiates,

“At the end of the day, parents have more knowledge and experience than us. They can rightly judge a person, with whom marriage is planned. We at times need to give way for their decisions, but that does not mean that we should not be bestowed with the freedom of getting to know our fiancé. (Moimun Barua, October 2019)

This boils down to the argument that marriage should not be forceful and a complete transparency should be maintained between all parties. A recently married respondent opined that semi-arranged marriage eliminates all doubts and confusions between families and lets the couple to smoothly proceed further with a clear state of mind. Moreover, this form of marriage curbs the demerits of parental arranged marriage, of which dowry is the prominent one. This fact was further iterated by Nomita Barua Choudhury while narrating the story of her daughter’s wedding,

“I arranged my elder daughter’s marriage to a boy from a well-to-do family, who stayed in Bombay. They demanded huge dowry from me. However now-a-days, young girls select their husbands themselves and also spend sufficient duration for courtship. We did not have such an opportunity at our disposal when we were young.” (Nomita Barua Choudhury, October 2019)

With increasing involvement of women in their own marriage and the spread of awareness against some of the devilish practices like dowry, **post marital conflicts** are largely curbed through proper pre-marital negotiations. Likewise, it **avoids complete responsibility** on one party (either the parents or the daughter) for occurrence of any mishap. Thus, it ensues greater understanding between the families, which is pre-requisite for a healthy relationship.

* + 1. **Self-Arranged Marriage**

“I strongly oppose arranged marriages. You only keep crying throughout your life in such alliances. I rather suggest young unmarried couples to go to ‘*Kalighat*’ and get married on their own. However, it also depends on the kind of marriage that is written in your fate.” (Dolly Barua, October 2019)

Unlike the other two forms of marriages, self-arranged marriages are mostly initiated by young unmarried women and men, who want to marry each other without their family’s approval. The above remark was made by Dolly Barua, who preferred love marriage as she too did the same. The *Kalighat* marriages are mostly practised among the lower-class people in Kolkata as a form of elopement. In such marriages, the whole responsibility of maintaining the relationship falls on the shoulders of young couple, which either has minimal or no involvement of parents. If the decision comes out to be wrong, the whole mantle falls on the woman, as she is **personally accountable** for her deeds. Ajanta Sarkar, a lady in her late 50s, adds to the argument,

“A woman knows well who is good for her and would surely take a right decision for herself. Moreover, if she commits a wrong action, she would be completely accountable for that and would not have to blame her parents. At least she would not embark on a life journey where her consent is absent.” (Ajanta Sarkar, October 2019)

There is a concealed reference to ‘freedom’ in the above paragraph. Weber associates extreme importance to the phenomenon of freedom. Self-arranged marriage is also an idea of freedom from being controlled by any external body. It allows the individual to **determine** not only one’s partner but also one’s future course of action. As one of the respondent described,

“You can keep up with your own principles, if you have chosen your own partner; otherwise you need to keep compromising. In an arranged marriage, the couple cannot take their decisions independently.” (Sushmita Barua, October 2019)

Besides, a self-arranged marriage entices better understanding between the husband and the wife, enabling a happy married life. At the same time, one must also be very careful while making decision regarding mate selection, as it is greatly irreversible. Mrs S.G. Nath cautions, in answer to the question,

“It is very important to understand your partner’s good and bad aspects. To me marriage is the biggest investment where you have to invest your time, money, emotions and life. So, better be safe than sorry.” (Sriparna Ghosh Nath, December 2019)

Since such a decision has a huge impact on one’s life, one must ensure that the partner is adequately **compatible**. For which one needs to spend some time and make oneself comfortable with the other person. In support, Usha Gidye assents,

“I don’t understand arranged marriages. How could one marry someone who is completely unknown?” (Usha Gidye, October 2019)

These proponents of self-arranged marriages strongly felt the necessity to uphold their **personal choice**, to the extent that they were ready to battle against all obstacles that might come their way. Bibi Shek fought with her parents to marry the man of her choice. She reasoned,

“My parents could not afford to marry me to a well-to-do family. The proposals they got me did not interest me at all. I decided to marry a man of my choice. He was neither amply moneyed nor tremendously propertied. He only had a few amenities to offer. I was satiated. I always wanted a man who could relish and jaunt around with me. What will I do with dense shrubs and endless *bighas*?” (Bibi Shek, October 2019)

Hence, lack of ‘family support’ led women opt harder ways to accomplish their wants. Some also attributed the reason for this struggle to be the speechlessness of their mothers. In many Indian families, mothers often play a subservient role in decision making and the father always ruled the game. One could rarely find families where mothers negotiated forcefully for their daughter’s life choices. To overcome this handicap, woman had to rise to the occasion more audaciously. However, if the family was liberal enough, this demonic uprising of the woman would largely be unnecessary. Hence, parental support is inevitable for achieving higher agency by a woman.

**CHAPTER VIII**

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

* 1. **Summary**

This study attempted to answer the question of whether women’s economic empowerment has an impact on the agency in mate selection process. In order to obtain the answer to this question, the theories of ‘modernisation’ and ‘demographic opportunity’ were deployed. Through the use of ordinal logistic regression model across different year cohorts, it was derived that only ‘value of property owned’ for the year cohort of 1980 to 2000 has significant negative impact on the agency in mate selection. This was attributed to the occurrence of growing parental consciousness for socio-economic status, which prevented women from taking independent decision for mate selection. Furthermore, for the lower middle income cohort, the number of years of education was found to be significant, which could be due to the incremental independence acquired for delay in marriage induced by additional years of education. In the middle income cohort, the income earned has significant positive impact on agency, which is caused by increased bargaining power that comes with rising financial independence. Value of property too has significant negative impact on the agency for the reason being that majority of middle class population tries to keep itself tied up with its caste and wealth bracket and hence would not be willing to approve independent mate selection by the daughters. Withal, in the case of upper middle income group, number of years of education stands significant in causing positive influence in agency, which was reasoned that higher educational qualification raises a woman’s value in the marriage market hence enabling woman to herself locate her husband who fits her criteria well. Likewise, the value of property owned too holds significant importance in negatively impacting women’s agency, might be due to the consistent efforts by the wealthy individuals to keep their status quo intact. Similarly, decision making capacity entices significant positive causation to agency, highlighting that more say in household purchases makes woman empowered to take decisions related to mate choice.

The thematic analysis revealed that women’s empowerment is immensely influenced by parental liberty, nature of the existing society, financial condition and one’s self discretion. While practices like child marriage severely hinders one’s agency, family’s support enables one to have more discretion in mate selection. Though one’s capacity to sustain through financial means has a strong impact on agency, it also has to be backed by parental support. Often women agree to marry despite their unwillingness, due to either concern about the family members, faith in family decisions or financial conditions at home. In case the woman being in a conservative family has pre-decided her spouse, a bitter battle arises between both parties to ultimately enforce one’s stance over the over. In such a scenario, the woman has to pierce through the constraints and pressures of the society to come out victoriously. This goes with the theory proposed by Kabeer, where social norms act as obstacles to the agency of women, which she has to overcome.

It was estimated that parental arranged marriages still holds preference among the majority of the respondents. The reasons for its support were identified to be parental aid at the time family conflicts, parental knowledge and experience of a better spouse, love post marriage to be the real love and no conflicts between families. Moreover, in such marriages the filial relationships remain intact and there exists a mutual respect and affection for each other. On the contrary, a self-arranged marriage often ends with breaking up of family ties, if the family’s assent is absent in the marriage. However, unlike parental arranged marriages, semi-arranged or self-arranged marriages involve compatibility between the couples and grant permission to the couple to follow their own rationale in their married lives. A semi-arranged marriage, relative to others, provides a platform for all parties to have a say in marriage.

* 1. **Limitations of the Study**

The researcher acknowledges that the study suffers from several limitations. The researcher would attempt to minimise such inaccuracies in future studies.

The data might suffer from biasness, especially data related to income and age, as a few of the respondents were unwilling to state the accurate values. Certain discrepancies might have occurred while calculating the worth of property, which was based on the current market price and behavioural expectations. Data collected through online survey posed the problem of missing information, which had to be later discarded. The researcher is also aware of the technical glitches that have crept in the model due to a rigid definition of the independent variables and non-inclusion of various other categorical and continuous variables. Since voice recording made the interview process uncomfortable, the researcher carried on with handwritten notes, which might have hampered gathering of some valuable information for the analysis. Variables such as association with outside organisation and number of years of employment acquired more ‘No’ responses. The ordinal logistic regression for the year-wise cohort obtained excessive insignificant values, implying ineffectiveness of the variables across year-wise cohort. The variable ‘value of property owned’ does not aptly define women’s economic empowerment, as the properties were bought by the parents or forefathers and distantly adds an intrinsic value to the capabilities of the respondents.

* 1. **Scope of further Research**

The future studies can look into the impact of women’s economic empowerment on the age of marriage. Similarly, one can also study the impact of socio-economic factors on the agency in mate selection for both male and female. Studies on post-marital agency and satisfaction due to pre-marital empowerment could be further ventured into. Likewise, studies on causal effects of ‘post marital empowerment and satisfaction’ on ‘divorce rates’ could be performed. The same research “influence of women’s economic empowerment on their agency in mate selection process” could again be conducted on a larger scale involving a wide sample to gain a better result.

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**APPENDIX**

**INFLUENCE OF WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ON THEIR AGENCY IN MATE SELECTION PROCESS**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**ANANDA BARUA**

**(1733406)**

**B.A. ECONOMICS HONOURS**

**UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF**

**DR. MANASI DASH,**

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,**

**ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE CLUSTER**

**CHRIST (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY),**

**BGR CAMPUS, BENGALURU**

*(This Questionnaire has been prepared to study the “Influence of Women’s Economic Empowerment on the Agency in Mate Selection Process” as part of the Dissertation 2019-20. All the Information provided by the respondent will be used only for the purpose of the study. Utmost care would be taken to keep the details confidential.)*

**Personal Information**

1. **Name :**
2. **Age in years (as of 2019) :**
3. **Marital Status : i. Married**

**ii. Unmarried**

**iii. Divorced/ Separated**

**iv. Widowed**

1. **Monthly Household Income :**
2. **Address :**
3. **Religion :**
4. **Community Name :**
5. **Mother Tongue :**

**Women’s Economic Empowerment**

1. **What was your educational qualification before marriage?**
2. **Were you employed in any place/ organisation before marriage?**

**Yes/ No**

1. **If yes, for how long were you employed before marriage?**
2. **What kind of work did you do for earning an income? (Designation/ Nature of Work)**
3. **How much did you earn in a month before marriage?**
4. **Were you associated with any other association apart from the place of work (like women’s association, NGO, club, committee, group, think tank etc.)?**

**Yes/ No**

**If yes, please specify the name of the association.**

1. **To what extent, did you make decisions for the purchase of Durable items at home like T.V., almirah, computer, bed, car, furniture, etc.?**
2. Never
3. Rarely
4. Sometimes
5. Often
6. Always
7. **Did you have ownership on the following properties before marriage?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Property** | **Owned (Yes/No)** | **How many/ much** | **Which place** |
| 1. **Land** |  |  |  |
| 1. **House** |  |  |  |
| 1. **Vehicles** | | | |
| 1. 2 Wheeler |  |  |  |
| 1. Car |  |  |  |
| 1. Any other   (please specify) |  |  |  |
| 1. **Animals** | | | |
| 1. Cattle |  |  |  |
| 1. Goat(s) |  |  |  |
| 1. Any Other   (please specify) |  |  |  |
| 1. **Furniture** | | | |
| 1. Bed |  |  |  |
| 1. Almirah |  |  |  |
| 1. Sofa Set |  |  |  |
| 1. **Modern Gadgets** | | | |
| 1. Television |  |  |  |
| 1. Computer/ Laptop |  |  |  |
| 1. Phone (Landline/ Mobile) |  |  |  |
| 1. Refrigerator |  |  |  |
| 1. Air Conditioner |  |  |  |
| 1. **Any Other**   **(please specify)** |  |  |  |

1. **Did you find yourself constrained in making decisions (like going out with friends, choosing a career, etc.) comparing to your brother or any other man (before marriage)?**

**Yes/ No**

**If yes, what is the reason for your constraint?**

**If no, what is the reason for your freedom?**

**Agency in Mate Selection**

1. **Year of Marriage: -**
2. **What was your age at the time of marriage?**
3. **Who was the first one to approach an intermediary (like family relative, astrologer, genealogist, marriage bureaus, online marriage sites, friends etc.) for finding an appropriate husband for you?**
4. My Parents Only
5. I alone
6. Both Jointly

**If your parents only approached the intermediary, was your consent taken?**

**Yes/ No**

1. **Did you meet your husband in person before marriage?**
2. Never met
3. Yes, met with family member(s).
4. Yes, met with friend(s).
5. Yes, met alone.
6. **Young women have some aspirations/ dreams of their future husband and the family background of his. Did you have any?**

**Yes/ No**

**If yes, were your aspirations/ dreams fulfilled?**

1. Yes, Completely
2. Partially
3. Somewhat
4. Not at all
5. **Who finally decided your spouse?**
6. My Parents only
7. I alone
8. Both jointly

**If your parents only decided your spouse, was your consent taken?**

**Yes/ No**

1. **Do you think you could have said “No” to marrying your selected spouse?**

**Yes/ No**

**And why?**

1. **What, according to you, is a better way of marriage?**
2. Parental Arranged Marriage
3. Semi-Arranged Marriage
4. Self-Arranged Marriage

**And why?**

1. Income wise division from Pew Research Centre calculated as per World Bank PovocalNet Database [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See Gujarati (2012), Basic Econometrics, p.574. R2 is here is not a Goodness of Fit value. Since the Ordinal Regression Model has truncated dependent variable, the Pseudo R2 is likely to be low. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)