

The Role of Gendered Expectations in Mate Selection in the context of Indian Arranged Marriages

Problem Statement

Studies have shown that patriarchal societies have different roles for men and women in the context of marriage. One such book that talks about these different roles is 'Seeing Like a Feminist' (Menon, 2012) in which the author elaborates on the sexual division of labor in the context of marriage.

The aim of this project is to study and understand the different expectations, experiences and perspectives of undergraduate students at a premier engineering institute on the question of roles for men and women in an arranged marriage and what factors they think influence these roles. Analyzing different perspectives of these participants will help us understand what marriage means to them; it also is a projection of what they desire. Through this study, we will understand not only the desires of the participants but also what they think is expected of them by their parents and other family members. This project will seek to answer the following questions :

- How do perceptions and expectations of an ideal, eligible mate vary for women and men in the context of marriage
- How do these perceptions and expectations compare to those of the previous generation, i.e. parents' generation? Do the parents of the participants have the same expectations, or do they vary? If yes, then in what sense?
- Apart from individual perceptions and expectations, what other factors are involved in deciding upon a mate?

The expectations and assumed roles of men and women in an arranged marriage usually gives more authority to men in making decisions about their families and their life, whereas women usually end up taking care of the families and their entire life revolves around the needs and expectations of their husbands (Menon, 2012; Esteve, García-Román, & Kashyap, 2015). I believe these assumptions of gendered roles are very unfair and this study helps us not only understand what Gen Z thinks about these roles and the expectations of their parents and family members, but also if they are willing to continue with these roles.

Methodology

The online interview conducted for this study will be a structured interview and if needed, follow up questions can be sent via email. The interview will be conducted online via a video call and will be recorded with the consent of the participant. The research subjects in this study will be college going students pursuing engineering and belonging to the age group of 19-21 year olds. They will be informed of our intention to record, and the data collected will be confidential and used in an anonymized manner. The reason we have restricted the study to 20 participants is because we want to conduct an in-depth study, which yields qualitatively meaningful insights. Even though the research subjects participating in this study have almost the same level of educational qualification, I am expecting differences in their opinions because of individuality,

social location, their parents' expectations, family members' expectations and their own desires (Bjorkman, 2005; Hamel & Linabary, 2017).

In this interview, I will be asking them subjective questions, that is, questions that would seek to understand their perspectives and what they think are the external factors, apart from the person themselves, that influence the process of mate selection. Giving them perspective based questions would help them reflect upon their answers and construct and reconstruct their answers based on their analysis. Reflexivity will play a role in the analysis and evaluation of the research process and its outcomes, therefore, qualitative interviewing as a method can help us gain an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants (Hamel & Linabary, 2017). The first few questions will be information based questions and then I would be asking them perspective based questions which will give me an insight into their perceptions about the process of mate selection in the context of arranged marriage. The answers from the interview will help me form conclusions by careful analysis of the participants' views.

Rationale

This study is important for a number of reasons. One, it will tell us about the perceptions and attitudes within our society regarding the traditional views on men and women. I have always thought that these gendered role assumptions usually exist in families with primary education, that is, were not aware of the "progress" the country has made but this does not seem to be the case (Gupta, 1976; Esteve, García-Román, & Kashyap, 2015). The factor I thought was important was "education" and thus awareness, but apparently this is not the only factor involved in the devaluation of women's role.

This project will hold interviews with students belonging to my generation, receiving the same education I am. Therefore with this study, I expect to understand the different views that exist within the same group, which in our case is a college going gen Z group. I believe contrasting views may arise due to different expectations of family, their own desires and experiences. In short, individuality plays a crucial role in forming the perceptions and perspectives of any individual. This study is also important for recognizing whether the "progress" that comes with every generation is really progress or not. Is the change that we are looking for already taking place, or will it take longer than expected? This project seeks to understand the factors involved in forming perspectives of individuals on marriage, especially roles of the husband and wife in an arranged marriage, to see if there is a shift in norms, values, and perceptions, or if these persist in the same or different guise.

Questions

1. What is your age and could you let me know about your pronouns?
2. May I know where are you right now? Is it okay for me to ask you a few personal questions?
3. Is it okay to ask if you are single or seeing someone?(You don't have to tell me who it is).
 - a. Do your parents know about your relationship?
 - i. [If not] Follow up question - How do you want to find your partner?/ Do you want your parents to have a say in who you see?
 1. [If yes] Do you want to elaborate on that?
 - b. Are your parents okay with you finding your own partner?
 - i. Follow up question - Do they have any particular expectations or restrictions?/ Are there any particular qualities they are looking for?
 - ii. What about social factors, is religion important, is there anything else that you think your parents would be concerned about?
4. What about your parents' marriage? Was it an arranged one or a love marriage?
5. What do you think of marriage?
 - a. [Alternative] What do you think about the institution of marriage? Would you do it? Are you planning to get married?
6. Do your parents think marriage is essential?
 - a. [If yes] Follow up question - Is there a particular age by which you think or your parents think you should get married?
7. Who do you think you will be most compatible with?/ What qualities in your partner do you think will ensure a long term relationship?
8. Is it important to you that your parents approve of your partner? Is your marriage a topic of conversation in your house? Do you want to share that?
 - a. [If yes] How do you feel about that?
9. Are there particular expectations [For eg : how often you can meet your friends, work expected to do at home] about how you will prioritize and organize your life when you get married? Do you think your life will be different, and how so?
 - a. Are you thinking about your career and the possible problems that your relationship/marriage is going to pose to your career?
10. What are your parents' aspirations or goals for you?
 - a. Follow up question - If their goals for you are in the following order - career, marriage, happiness - which of these is more important?
11. Do you have a timeline for your goals? Is it okay for you to run me through it once?
 - a. Follow up question - What do your parents think of these goals?