

Influence of Parental Education on Nuptial Behavior: An analysis of Hindu Community in India

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Abstract

This study examines how the Hindu community, which has a long history of arranged marriages rooted in caste endogamy, has responded to popular schemas of developmental idealism (role of education in changing societal norm is one of them). The paper analyzes the often-cited argument that education substantially influences the process of spouse selection. The nationally representative (n=10,486) data of the second round of the Indian Human Development Survey (2011-2012) was analyzed to generate findings which suggested higher age at marriage and highly educated brides tend to arrange their own marriages. Exposure to education, and the fact parents are increasingly seeking the consent of their daughters in choosing their future husband play a role here. Specifically, multivariate analysis shows parents' (particularly the mother of the bride) education plays a part in their willingness to obtain consent of their daughter in selecting their future spouse. This culminates either in self-choice marriages or jointly arranged marriages. Findings also showed the education level of bride is not significantly associated with their choice of mate.

Keywords

Hindu community; arranged marriages; caste; education; self-choice marriages

Introduction

Modernization and development in Asia have led to the behavior of families undergoing substantial changes - within the broader framework of societal changes (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). There is a noticeable shift towards greater autonomy of prospective brides and grooms in their spouse selection. The proponents of modernization and developmental idealism posited that in developing countries, industrialization, greater education and career opportunities, greater economic independence among the youth, fragmentation of the joint family system, autonomous living arrangements and increased space to mingle with people of different religions, castes and communities, have transformed the mate selection process among the Hindu community in India (Thornton, 2001). This is in sharp contrast to norms of the past where families would choose a mate for their daughter within the confines of ethnicity, religion, caste, social and economic boundaries. In most of the cases, newlywed couples would meet and interact with each other only after marriage. However, this kind of arrangement has increasingly been replaced by love marriages, love cum arranged marriages, and hybridized pattern of marriage, namely a blend of both traditional arranged marriages and western norms of mate selection (Aldridge, 1973; Allendorf, 2013; Buttenheim, 2009; Allendorf & Pandian, 2016; Caldwell, Caldwell, Caldwell & Pieris, 1998; Thornton, 2001).

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Historically, arranged marriages rooted in caste and religious endogamy were quite common. Such marriages are founded on intra-caste, intra-religion, intra-community and inter-village alliances. Though the religious values attached to marriages of daughter differed across religions, two aspects remained intact religious endogamy and the father's right to marry off their pre-puberty daughter without her permission.

Literature Review

Discourse on family change

The shift in family behavior and its customary practices have been of long-standing interest among social scientists and demographers who have noted demographic transitions in the local and global contexts. The second demographic transition saw a shift in the value and culture system and a change in the marriage institution. While the first demographic transition emphasized on economic growth and material aspirations as the driving forces of change in demographic attributes of the population, the second saw the shift towards acknowledging one's private needs and desires as well as realizing one's own role in decision making (Nauck & Tabuchi, 2012; Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015). In a similar fashion, Thornton (2001) suggested the influence of Western ideas and model of development on third world countries. This is known as developmental idealism and which points to modern societies as being good and attainable and which are centered on people's wealth, wellbeing and happiness. A modern society is founded on modern family norms, such as autonomous marriages, nuclear family structures, small families, individual freedom, greater women's rights and higher educational achievements. It adopts a humanistic and right based approach to development, while advocating for individual freedom, consent and gender equality (Thornton, 2001). Later studies are an extension of the developmental idealism which assert the dynamic nature of societies and their progression from tradition to modernity (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). People living in different part of the world have responded to modernity and developmental idealism differently. Developmental idealism has shaped communities and individual behaviors, and it is also used to explain changes in family behavior. However, the diffusion of these ideas of development and their pathways differ from one geographical and cultural landscape to another (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2008; Thornton, 2001). Expansion of educational opportunities and the influence of mass media, underpinned by developmental idealism, is designed explicitly to disseminate ideas and information. They also play a substantial role in family transformation and social change (Ghimire, Axinn, Yabiku, & Thornton, 2006). Greater educational opportunities alone account for most of the family changes. The mass media has also played a substantial role in diffusing developmental idealism in the Non-European world. The national and international TV programs now can be accessed in remote parts of the world. These have led to changes in the modern family structure, greater individualism, greater autonomy in marriages, and promoted changes through informal networks¹ (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016; Ghimire et al., 2006; Nauck & Tabuchi, 2012).

¹ Informal networks include peer groups, social media and everyday personal interactions.

Parental education on behavior towards marriage

There have been plenty of studies and debates on the role of parental education in influencing mid-life decisions and partnering behavior of the youth in western countries. (Arends-Toth & Vijver, 2009). The findings suggested children with highly educated parents were inclined towards more liberal and individualistic values (Hitlin, 2006). A study conducted in Italy found that the higher education of the mother is associated with greater likelihood for non-marital cohabitation, unlike in Bulgaria where the reverse effect was observed (Schroder, 2006; Hoem & Kostova, 2008). Additionally, children with highly educated parents grow up in a relatively wealthier environment. Hence, a high consumption home environment sets high financial aspirations for their children too, which leads to postponement of marital union (Easterlin, 1980). Further, children of highly educated parents tend to pursue a high level of education which often leads to postponement of marriage and a greater decision-making power in the marriage (Blossfeld & Huinink, 1991; Raymore, Barber & Eccles, 2001).

Shift in process of mate selection

New researches on family behavior have been shaped by the theory of modernization and an inclination towards western family norms. The practice of arranged marriages is gradually shifting towards love marriages, inter-caste marriages and spouse selection behavior (Corwin, 1977; Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015). However, this is not prevalent and seen among population with certain characteristics (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). While the bride's consent and choice have been included along with parent's choice, she does not have complete control over spouse selection. In fact, in Indian family settings, the youths attempt strike a balance between traditional patterns of arranged marriages and new dynamics of self-chosen marriages based on pre-marital love. Though pre-marital dating is becoming quite common in urban India, the union is still not independent of parents' desires. Furthermore, the boundaries of arranged marriages appear to be broadening, with the inclusion of novel hybridized practices of marriages. There are two types of hybridized marriage: first, where the parents appear to encourage their children to search for a desired partner, provided they meet the chosen partner for approval. It is expected that these pre-marital romantic dates will help the couple to understand each other, fall in love and which will lead to happier unions, under the umbrella of customary arrangement. The second type is where the young individuals meet, fall in love and understand each other as future partners, approach their parents, marry if approval is granted, or terminate the relationship if it is not accepted by the parents (Jauregui & McGuinness, 2003; Netting, 2010; Saroja, 1999). It is noteworthy the intergenerational custom of marriage and spouse selection remains intact during this transition.

Inter-caste marriages as a sign of loosening caste system

Inter-caste marriages are an important element of caste-structured society which aims to preserve caste hierarchy and patriarchal lineage by ensuring reproduction within intra-caste and formal sexual union (Jauregui & McGuinness, 2003; Netting, 2010; Goli, Singh & Sekher, 2013; Yadav, 2009; Upadhyay & Gupta, 2013). Caste endogamy provides the foundation to prevail, reinforce and sustain the edifice of caste-based society in South Asia (Saroja, 1999; Vijayalaxmi & Saroja, 1992). Therefore, inter-caste marriages (especially among Hindus rooted in a rigid caste system) have broad implications for social change and the establishment of social equality in India, where inter-caste marriages are not easily accepted. For instance, in some parts of the country, such as Haryana and Punjab, the Khap Panchayat monitors all

marriages and punishes those couples and families who marry out of their caste and religion (Aengst, 2014; Yadav, 2009; Jejeebhoy & Halli, 2005). These draconian social laws have culminated in the killing of many couples who dared to marry outside their caste. This phenomenon, termed 'honor killings', has captured wide media attention (Chowdhry, 2007; Kolenda, 1987; Mody, 2008; Mody, 2002). In Nepal, different caste categories are assigned for children of inter-caste married couples and they have to bear a lot of social stigmas (Ghimire et al., 2006). In majority of the cases, inter-caste married couples face social boycott. Studies showed the percentage of inter-caste marriages has increased 4% in 1981 to 6% in 2005 and inter-religious marriages from 1.6 in 1981 to 2.7% in 2005 (Goli, Singh & Sekher, 2013).

Objectives

Previous literature has focused on inter-caste and mixed marriages among the general population in India. Motivated by these studies, the present study examines the influence of the 'parents' and bride's educational status on the bride's autonomy in spouse selection among the Hindu community in India. The Hindus account for 9.80% of India's total population (Registrar General, 2011). The Hindu community maintains a strict social system of caste endogamy, the practice of arranged marriages as decided by their parents. The present study examines the role of education of young women and their parents in the former's spouse selection and inter-caste marriages.

Methods

Data and analysis

Our quantitative analysis is based on the nationally representative data obtained from the Indian Human Development Survey II (2nd round), 2011-12 which interviewed 10,412 married Hindu women. The study limited its sample size to 8,027 women who were married after 1985. The survey asked the women about their active participation in choice of their spouses, their pre-marital duration of acquaintanceship with their prospective husbands, their interaction with them before the marriage was fixed, whether they came from the same caste, whether their husbands were blood related, their education level as well as that of their father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law and husband. The question posed was: 'Whom do you choose to be your husband?' The responses were categorized as, a) self-choice marriage if the respondent herself chooses the partner, b) consent of both respondent and family if both the respondent and parents were involved in the spouse selection process or in case the respondent's consent did not involve 'parents only/relative only'. Another question was on the pre-marital acquaintanceship with husband: How long had you known your husband before you married him? The responses were classified in following categories, a) met on wedding/gauna day only, b) less than one month, c) more than a month but less than a year, d) more than a year, and e) since childhood. The last two responses were merged into one category, namely having 'known each other for more than a year'. The respondents were also asked about her interaction with her husband before marriage, 'Before the marriage was fixed, did you get a chance to interact with him?'. The responses were classified into the following categories, a) met him, b) talked to him on phone, c) saw his photograph, and d) sent email and chatted online.

Dependent and independent variables

Based on studies on the shift in marriage behavior in India (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016; Goli, Singh & Sekher, 2013), the current study considered a proxy indicator of “autonomy in marriage decision” as the dependent variable. Keeping in mind the sample questionnaire where the women were asked about their retrospective marriage behavior, the responses regarding the brides’ involvement in the decision of spouse selection have been classified as, a) “self-chosen” (*respondent herself*), b) “jointly decided” (*parents and respondent both*), c) “no say” (*parents only*). Indicators, such as inter-caste marriage (0=no, 1=yes) and blood related marriage (0=no, 1=yes) have also been considered to understand the extent of “marriages outside caste boundaries” among women hailing from different backgrounds.

The IHDS-2 survey also provided information regarding the education level of the respondents and her parents. The study considers educational attainment of the respondent, her parents, father-in-law, mother-in-law and husband as explanatory variables, coded as “Not Educated=0”, “Up to Secondary Level=1”, “Highly Educated=2”. Similarly, the other variables of the respondents are used as covariates: *marriage cohort* (1985-1994=0, 1995-2004=1, 2005-2012=2); *women’s age at marriage* (less than 19 years=0, 20-24 years=1, 25-29 years=2, more than 30 years=3); *age of women* (15-19=0, 20-24=1, 25-29=2, 30-35=3, 35 and above=4); *caste* (*Brahmin*=0, *other general castes*=1, *other non-general castes*=2, *schedule tribes*=3); *area of residence* (*metro urban*=0, *non-metro urban*=1, *rural*=2); *length of pre-marital acquaintanceship with husband* (*met on wedding day*=0, *less than a month*=1, *more than a month but less than a year*=2, *more than a year*=3). The study assumes these variables influence the marriage behavior of the respondents.

The analysis has used bivariate frequency distribution to understand the variation of marriage behavior across the respondents. Multinomial logistic regression was used to analyze the role of education in influencing spousal selection of the respondents and their parents. It also provides the relative risk ratios (RRRs) of choosing “self-decided” and “jointly decided” marriages over marriages solely arranged by parents. The relative risk ratios (RRRs) are ratio of two probabilities, whereas, odds ratio (OR) is the ratio of odds of an event in the treatment group to the odds of an event in the control group.

Results

Bivariate analysis

Increasing consent of bride in spouse selection

Table 1 shows the distribution of women’s consent in their spouse selection process by marriage cohort, age of marriage, area of residence, duration of pre-marital acquaintanceship with husband and place of residence. It can be seen the women did not have much say in the choice of their partners when they are married off at a young age. A total of 77% of marriages were solely decided by the parents if the age of the women was less or equal to 19 years. The distribution indicates the older they were, the greater say they had in the choice of their future husbands. Hence, higher age at marriage means there is a greater likelihood of the women’s involvement in the process of their spouse selection.

Looking at the chronological trend of mate selection over time, there has been a decline in arranged marriages and an increase in the selection of the potential partner jointly by the woman and her parents. Similarly, there has been more than a threefold increase in self-choice

marriages between 1985 and 2012. However, the trend of inter-caste marital unions remains negligible. The proportion of women marrying beyond the caste boundaries is higher for younger as well as older brides (age at marriage; less than 19, more than 30), whereas it is relatively lower for women aged between 20-24 and 25-29 years. The percentage of inter-caste marriage unions was doubled when women marry after the age of 30 years, compared with an age of less than 19 years.

Table 1: Percentage distribution (by row) of spouse-choice making, inter-caste marriages, and blood related marriages based on Socio-demographic characteristics of Hindu Women, India, 2012

Background Characteristics	Self-Chosen	Jointly Decided	No-Say	Background Characteristics	Inter caste*	Blood Related*
Marriage Cohort				Marriage Cohort		
1985-1994	2.56	19.93	77.51	1985-1994	8.91	6.63
1995-2004	4.83	22.25	72.92	1995-2004	6.68	10.8
2005-2012	7.43	26	66.57	2005-2012	5.39	9.8
Women Age at Marriage				Women Age at Marriage		
less than 19	4.84	18.55	76.61	less than 19	6.21	10.46
20-24	6.76	27.27	65.98	20-24	4.78	8.83
25-29	6.23	30.01	63.76	25-29	6.53	6.86
more than 30	9.89	30.54	59.57	more than 30	9.58	1.76
Age of Women				Age of Women		
15-19	11.05	18.95	70	15-19	4.71	13.76
20-24	6.61	21.88	71.51	20-24	5.2	12.49
25-30	4.78	22.81	72.41	25-30	4.15	11.9
30-35	4.01	21.09	74.91	30-35	4.42	8.33
35 and above	3.55	19.5	76.95	35 and above	4.36	7.73
Caste				Caste		
Brahmin	5.59	20.26	74.17	Brahmin	4.9	7.9
Other General	7.05	25.93	67.01	Other General	8.21	8.65
Other Non-General	3.68	20.57	75.75	Other Non-General	5.46	10.13
Tribes	15.35	18.64	66	Tribes	5.12	8.12
Area of Residence				Area of Residence		
Metro Urban	6.36	24.01	69.63	Metro Urban	3.75	6.61
Other Urban	5.25	30.12	64.63	Other Urban	5.87	10.98
Rural	5.36	18.51	76.13	Rural	6.08	9.83
Length of Pre-Marital Acquaintanceship				Length of Pre-Marital Acquaintanceship		
Met On wedding day	2.57	16.13	81.3	Met On wedding day	5.54	4.56
Less than a month	6.17	34.11	59.72	Less than a month	5.23	6.77
More than a month but less than a year	7.42	37.93	54.64	More than a month but less than a year	4.29	8.97
More than a year	24.03	27.77	48.2	More than a year	10.75	44.64
Total	5.34	21.21	73.45	Total	5.89	9.81

Source: Author's calculation from IHDS-II survey.

Note: *are dichotomous (Yes =1, N0=0) variables

Urbanization has been considered as one of the important drivers of family change and shift in marriages practices, from arranged marriages to self-choice or jointly arranged marriages, shifting preference from joint family system to nuclear family values and greater voice of women within the household and personal arenas. It appears the number of self-choice marriages are highest for those living in metro urban area (6.36%), while there does not seem to be much difference between those living in non-metro urban and rural areas. However, the exogamous marriage unions are highest in non-metro urban settings and cross-cousin marriages are more common among the rural Hindu community. The longer duration of pre-marital acquaintanceship with the women's future husband is supposed to bring greater

equitability post-marriage. In the Hindu community, among 81% of marriages are arranged, where women meet their husband for the first time on the day of their wedding/gauna. This is in contrast to the 23% self-choice marriages where the couple had more than a year of pre-marital acquaintanceship. Moreover, as the length of acquaintanceship increases, the number of self-choice marital unions rise and the number of arranged marriages plunges (see Table 1).

Pre-marital interaction with future spouses

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of other marriage behaviors like the pre-marital length of acquaintanceship. Interestingly, the self-choices marriages tend to have a longer duration of acquaintanceship between the marriage partners (see Figure 2). Similarly, according to the recent marriage cohort 2005-2012 (see Figure 1), the percentage of women who met their husband for the first time on the day of their wedding/gauna plunged significantly, likely due to the increased preference for self-choice or jointly chosen marriages (Figure 2). On the other hand, women meeting their husbands for the first time on the day of the wedding/gauna remains high as their parents decide this solely without the consent of their daughters (see Fig 2).

Figure 1: Percentage of length of pre-marital acquaintanceship by marriage cohort, India 2012

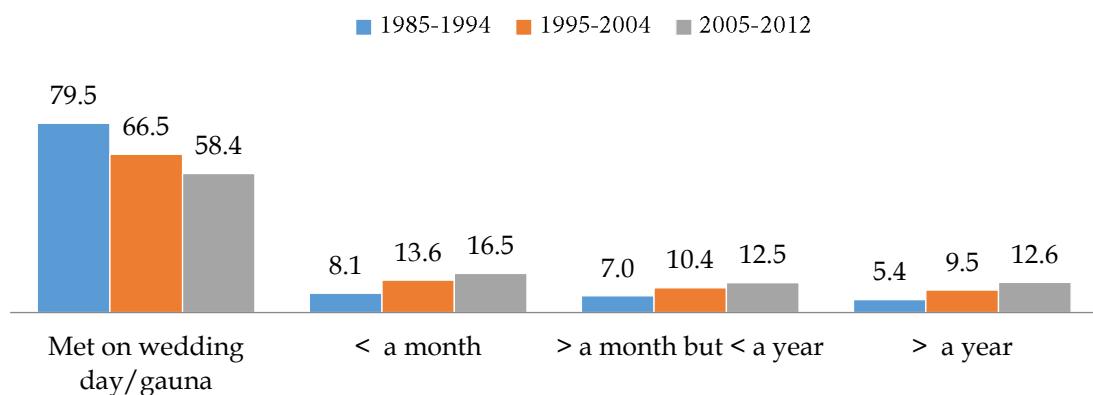
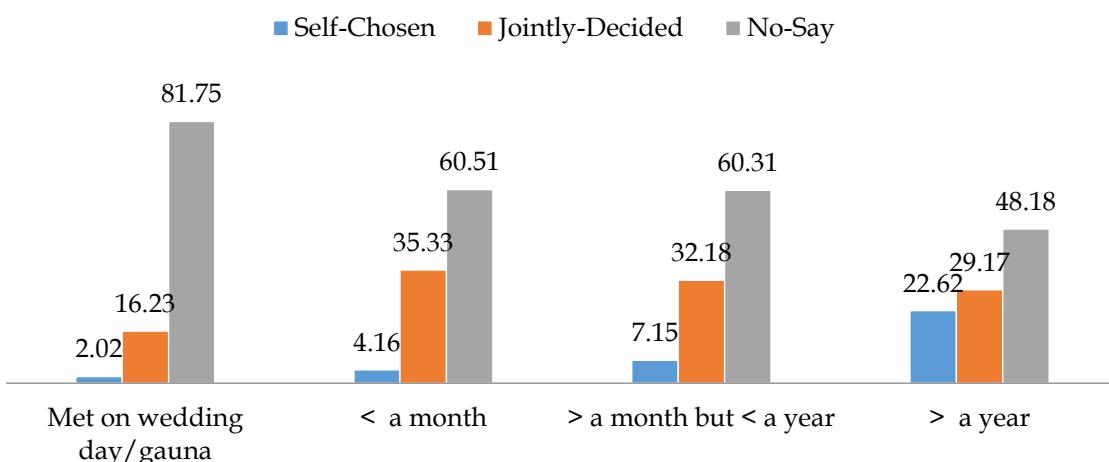


Figure 2: Percentage of consent of women in spouse selection process by length of pre-marital acquaintanceship, India, 2012



The role of women' and their parents' education (both biological and parents-in-law) in spouse selection and other marriage practices

Educational change alone accounts for most of the family transitions. In addition, increased exposure to mass media and distant living arrangements give individuals a chance to interact with people of different communities and cultures. Economic independence empowers them to shape decisions concerning the personal sphere of life (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016; Ghimire et al., 2006; Nauck & Tabuchi, 2012; Upadhyay & Gupta, 2013). With higher educational attainment, the number of self-choice marriages and the likelihood parents obtaining consent from women for marriages appears to have increased. However, exogamous marriages remain almost constant across the levels of parents' educational attainment (see Table 2). The number of self-choice marriage increased twofold among highly educated women. Similarly, the proportion of marriages solely decided by parents decreased by 7% among women whose fathers were highly educated. The mother's education is influential when it comes to the choice of spouses (solely decided by the women respondents) and exogamous marital unions. The proportion of self-choice marriages and inter-caste marriages (16.37% and 8.53% respectively) are highest among daughters of highly educated mothers. Similarly, the proportion of marriages without the consent of the respondent (parents only) decreased by 20% for daughters of highly educated mothers (see Table 2). In a similar fashion, the role of the mother-in-law also plays a significant role in the spousal choice making process and it is more inclusive. The proportion of self-choice marriages (32.7%) and inter-caste marriages (9.9%) are highest when the mother-in-law is highly educated (see Table 2).

Table 2: Percentage distribution (by row) of spouse choice making, inter-caste and blood related marriages across women's education, parental education, parents in law education among Hindu women, India, 2012

Background Characteristics	Self - Chosen	Jointly Decided	No-Say	Background Characteristics	Inter Caste*	Blood Related*
Women's Education				Women's Education		
No Education	3.31	14.48	82.22	No Education	7.46	10.58
Up to Secondary	6.33	22.69	70.98	Up to Secondary	5.13	8.7
Higher Education	6.67	29.6	63.74	Higher Education	5.18	6.82
Father's Education				Father's Education		
No Education	5.43	18.57	76	No Education	6.47	10.58
Up to Secondary	4.5	24.32	71.18	Up to Secondary	5.31	8.7
Higher Education	7.99	21.19	70.82	Higher Education	5.31	6.82
Mother's Education				Mother's Education		
No Education	4.8	18.07	77.13	No Education	6.04	10.26
Up to Secondary	6.97	30.33	62.7	Up to Secondary	5.38	8.38
Higher Education	16.37	28.23	55.4	Higher Education	8.53	7.62
Father-in-law's Education				Father-in-law's Education		
No Education	4.98	18.63	76.39	No Education	6.63	10.83
Up to Secondary	5.64	23.44	70.93	Up to Secondary	4.9	8.61
Higher Education	7.55	27.99	64.46	Higher Education	6.25	4.64
Mother-in-law's Education				Mother-in-law's Education		
No Education	4.85	19.29	75.86	No Education	5.99	10.47
Up to Secondary	6.9	28.57	64.54	Up to Secondary	5.45	7.33
Higher Education	32.78	12.82	54.4	Higher Education	9.95	6.28
Husband's Education				Husband's Education		
No Education	5.58	15.95	78.48	No Education	7.85	10.18
Up to Secondary	5.07	20.9	74.03	Up to Secondary	6.15	9.99
Higher Education	6.31	24.76	68.93	Higher Education	4	9.5
Total	5.34	21.21	73.45	Total	5.89	9.81

Source: Author's calculation from IHDS-II survey

Note: *are dichotomous variables.

Multivariate analysis

Table 3 shows the relative risk ratio (of probabilities) of self-choice marriages (by women) or jointly arranged marriages (both parents and women) compared with marriages solely decided by parents across different levels of educational attainment women and parents. It shows the role of women's education, parent's education, education of in-laws and husband education on consent of women in mate selection process while controlling for other variables i.e. Marriage cohort, age at marriage, age of women, caste of women, and area of residence and length of pre-marital acquaintanceship between the prospective bride and groom. Results showed parents' education, age of the bride, caste groups and duration of pre-marital acquaintanceship between the prospective bride and groom were significantly associated with the decision of self-choice marriages. Findings suggest women with a higher level of education are likely to exercise greater choice in terms of their marriage partner. If other variables in the model hold constant, with one unit increase in women's secondary and higher educational attainment, the relative risk for preferring self-decided marriages increase by a factor of 1.15 and 1.24 respectively, compared to parents-only decided marriages. However, the education level of women is significantly associated with jointly-decided marriages (decided by both the parents and the respondents). Interestingly, the relative risk of jointly decided marriages decreases with increasing education level of father, albeit an increase in cases of self-choice marriages. Similarly, the mother's secondary level of education is significantly associated with self-choice and jointly decided marriages. The relative risk of self-choice and jointly-decided marriages increase by the factor of 1.56 and 1.52, respectively, compared with uneducated mothers.

Taking the case of the in-laws educational background and the respondent's consent in spousal selection, the results showed educational attainment of parents-in-law and husband are not significantly associated with spousal selection. Other background factors, such as age and caste of women, are significantly associated with women's autonomy in mate-selection process. The relative risk of self-choice marriages is highest for women aged above 30 at the time of their marriage compared with women aged between 15 and 19; however, this result is not significant. Self-choice marriages are higher among tribal and other general caste women relative to Brahmins. The relative risk of self-choice marriages increased by the factor of 2.32 for tribal and 1.66 for other general caste women, compared with Brahmin women. The duration of pre-marital acquaintanceship with their future husband has a significant bearing on the women's consent in mate-selection process. The duration of pre-marital acquaintanceship is associated with greater probability of self-choice marriages. The relative risk of self-choice marriages increased by factor of 16.05 for women who knew their potential husband for more than a year before marriage compared with women who met their husband on their wedding day.

Table 3: Relative risk ratios for self-choice or jointly decided marriages (parents and women) over parents alone across educational attainment of parents and women among the Hindu community, India 2012.

Base Category: No-Say (Parent only)	Self-Chosen RRRs	Jointly-Decided RRRs
Respondent's Education		
No Education ®		
Up to Secondary	1.15	1.25**
Higher Education	1.244	1.47***
Respondent's Father's Education		
No Education ®		

Base Category: No-Say (Parent only)	Self-Chosen RRRs	Jointly-Decided RRRs
Up to Secondary	.692**	.95
Higher Education	.859	.76*
Respondent's Mother's Education		
No Education ®		
Up to Secondary	1.56**	1.52***
Higher Education	1.58	1.37
Respondent's Father-in-law's Education		
No Education ®		
Up to Secondary	1.177	1.02
Higher Education	1.33	.98
Respondent's Mother-in-law's Education		
No Education ®		
Up to Secondary	1.229	1.07
Higher Education	1.289	.52*
Husband's Education		
No Education ®		
Up to Secondary	1.069	.92
Higher Education	.911	.93
Women's Age at Marriage		
15-19®		
20-24	1.30*	1.13*
25-29	1.381	.97
More than 30	1.40	1.13
Age of Women		
15-19®		
20-24	.61*	1.03
25-29	.39**	1.03
30-35	.32***	.92
35 and Above	.31**	.90
Area of Residence		
Metro Urban ®		
Other Urban	.83	1.29
Rural	.76	.96
Caste		
Brahmin ®		
Other General	1.66*	1.57***
Other Non-General	1.01	1.20
Tribes	2.32**	1.17
Length of Pre-Marital Acquaintanceship		
Met on Wedding day ®		
Less than a Month	2.42***	2.65***
More than a month but less than a year	4.01***	2.252***
More than a year	16.05***	2.73***
Constant	.044***	.120***
No of obs	10,109	
LR chi (54)	1,288.06	
Prob> chi2	0.0000	
Pseudo R2	0.0908	

Note: * = $p < 0.10$; ** = $p < 0.05$; *** = $p < 0.001$

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was aimed at understanding the prenuptial behavior of the Hindu community in India, and to what extent education and other social and demographic characteristics affect the process of spouse selection. The study reveals that the age of the bride at the time of marriage, length of pre-marital acquaintanceship with the potential husband and caste are

important factors in determining a woman's consent in the process of mate selection. The findings from bivariate analysis revealed higher age at time of marriage gives women more autonomy in mate-selection. Results also showed older brides are more likely to transcend caste boundaries in search of their desired partner and that age of women is significantly associated with self-choice marriage compared with parentally chosen marriages. Interestingly, the relative risk ratio of self-chosen marriages decreased with increasing age of women compared with parentally decided marriages. Education has always been considered as a significant indicator of social development. A higher level of education results in greater social and economic exposure and also gives greater voice to women in their decision making. The greater inclusion of women in the process of their mate selection leads to a greater likelihood of equitability in the marriage, which has significant implications for women's post marital well-being as well as their reproductive and sexual health. The present study however suggested the education level of women is not significantly associated with self-choice marriages. The relative risk of jointly-decided marriages increased by the factor of 1.47 for highly educated women compared with those who were not educated. This indicates the educated brides are more likely to take a middle path, and thus, creating a balance between self-chosen and parentally arranged marriage in India. In the Indian context where pre-marital dating is not very prevalent, parentally arranged marriages jointly decided with bride is a new form of accommodating individual choice while preserving traditional parental control in spouse selection process. Further, with changing socio-economic and cultural values due to globalization and western education are mainly responsible for changing the mate-selection process in India. It is evident from multivariate analysis that increased levels of education of the parents are associated with greater inclusion of the bride in the spouse selection process (particularly mother), culminating either in self-choice marriages or jointly arranged marriages. The relative risk of self-chosen marriages increases with increasing education level of father, but this association is not statistically significant. The risk of self-choice marriage and jointly decide marriages are less than 1 which indicate reduced risk of self-choice marriage and jointly decided marriage if the daughter has secondary level of education and highly educated father. Similarly, the mother's secondary level of education is significantly associated with self-choice and jointly-decided marriages. However, the higher education level of mother is not significantly associated with self-choice and jointly-decided marriage. Overall, the analysis indicates the education level of female (bride, mother and mother-in-law) has a significant bearing on the bride's consent in mate selection process. Empirically, greater education of women is associated with increased intra-household autonomy of women, which give them a greater voice and inclusion in the process of decision making. Considering this, educated mothers are privileged to voice their opinion and possess higher intra-household negotiation power for other female members of the household. Other factors like pre-marital acquaintanceship with husband has a significant bearing on inclusion of bride's consent in spouse selection process. The findings of study highlights that the relative risk of self-choice marriage increase by the factor of 16.05 for women who know their potential husband since more than a year. Similarly, the relative risk of self-choice and jointly decided marriage increased with women's increased age at marriage; however, this was only significant among women aged between 20 and 24. The caste of women is another factor which substantially affects the marriage process in India. The findings of suggested that women belonging to other general caste and schedule tribes are more likely to go for self-choice marriages relative to Brahmin women. In India, Brahmins are at the top of hierarchy, hence preserving their caste structure and strict marital norms are necessary within the community. In other caste groups i.e. OBCs², non-Brahmin general and schedule caste are witnessing changing marriage practices under the influence of globalization, education and

² OBC stands for Other Backward caste group, a constitutionally recognized caste category in India.

government effort to abolish caste. The educational attainment of the parents seems ineffective when it comes to cross-caste marriages, indicating the existence of the caste factor in intra-family negotiations during the selection of the spouse (bivariate analysis). Previous studies have established that children of educated parents are in a more advantageous position in terms of wealth, household power structure, life-course opportunities for career building, and most importantly, exercise full or in some cases partial autonomy to decide about their self-choices (Wiik, 2008). Notwithstanding this, the findings of multivariate analysis reveals that it's educational level of parents which has significant bearing on inclusion of brides consent in spouse selection. This scholarly debate on marriage and family issues, namely the shift from parentally arranged marriages to self-chosen marriages is ongoing. Instead, there is an emergence of a new pattern of marriage where the youth of India enjoy greater autonomy in choosing their partner, while simultaneously retaining their loyalty towards their society, community, religion and parents (Netting, 2010; Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). The evidence from the present study shows that in the Hindu community, with increasing inter-generational exposure to education, the consent of the bride in choosing their future husband is increasingly being considered along with their parent's choice. The father's and husband's education need to be explored further in the context of intra-household gender relations

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