

Relations of Married Couple's Socio-demographic Status with their Parents

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Abstract

This study is about the attributes of different households which together come into the married couple to unite into wedlock. There are studies at the global context about the mate preferences or choice of the would be relatives. However, such studies are very scanty in the Nepalese context. The purpose of the study was to examine the relative closeness of the wife and husband side parental attributes into the household of married couple. A total of seventy of five married couple and their either side parents' socio-economic and demographic information were taken using semi-structured questionnaire. Data were collected in Thakre Rural Municipality, Dhading district of Nepal during February to April of 2022 from the selected respondents using face to face interview. The data were analyzed in terms of frequency, mean and such other descriptive statistics. Finding of the study revealed that the male counterparts were elder in age structures in all three sides while the wife side parents were having better off in terms of structures of houses and landholding sizes. It has further verified that the boys have been able to marry with the girls whose parents have higher economic status than their own parent. This study is helpful in understanding the current pattern of marriage as well as socio-economic attributes brought together by the married couple as carryover from their respective parental houses.

Keywords: couple, wife, husband, parent, marriage

1. Introduction

Marriage is a formal union, social and legal contract between two individuals that unites their lives legally, economically and emotionally. The contractual marriage agreement usually implies that the couple has legal obligations to each other throughout their lives until they decide to

formally divorce. The Hindu society and culture considers marriage to be more than just a simple bond between two individuals; marriage is a bond between several families and a continuity of the family line of descent (Ghimire, 2003). Marriage has in most cases been taken as an indispensable life event

for sexual activity, procreation and family formation. But, in addition to its customary utility, it has been an essential vehicle for socio-economic re-integration. Had marriage not been there, the psychological distance between people of different castes and classes would have been even wider. Marriage has brought together people from different social psychological mentality, economic conditions, cultural rituals, geography, class, caste and ethnicities to create a new family set up. Mate selection is one of the important life event in an individual's life. This event is considered irreversible in south Asian societies where ties of marriage is not easily broken. The selection of mate is thus taken so seriously to match one's social, economic, lifestyles and preferences so that no party would regret after marriage. Generally the parent envisions their offspring better wealth, occupation, resources and prestige than their own. They help the offspring take right decision so that the children would gain happy and prosperous conjugal life. They prefer slightly better socio-economic status of the would be mate so that their later generation will not regress in any aspect of life chances. Conventionally, marriage was within the strict control of the boys' and girls' family and relatives. They would decide who would best fit to whom as their life partner and the either side would accept the decision. The main criteria of selection from the male side was the behavior and appearance of the girl while that from the female side was the wealth of the household, social standing and industriousness of the boy. People always prefer to have marriage within the similar socio-economic strata to avoid potential mismatch in social statuses and conflicts between boy and girl's side after marriage. The most rigid social criteria was within the same caste and religion, but not within the same clan to avoid risk of potential inbreeding and regression of the progenitors.

This study is based on the premise that marriage is one of socio-economic connector. The bride and groom from different class, caste and socio-psychological attitudes are bounded together in a single conjugal life. If there had not been necessity of binding together through this bond which is called marriage, the disparity would be still higher than it is. The people of poor socio-economic class hesitate to interact with the higher, on the other hand people of higher classes do not like to get together with the lower ones. But, through marriage the people come closer physically, emotionally and psychologically. This closeness is one of the connector in society in between hierarchically different people from various geographical territories and even nationalities and religious faiths.

Inter-caste marriage has been perceived as one of the most practical ways to blur caste lines and render them irrelevant. It is also considered as the means of social inclusion as it helps increase inter-caste cooperation and integration between Dalits and non-Dalits (NPC, 2007). There are debates and dissensions among Dalits and non-Dalits scholars regarding the nature and impact of incentives on the inter-caste couple (Biswakarma, 2013).

This study will be focused to assess the extent of socio-economic integration that has created by the conjugal life of the bride and groom of the different socio-economic background. By tracing out each married couple's background in terms of their natal family, the present study would contribute to what extent this social connector (marriage), is contributing for creating a new, unique and interesting family set up. Since Nepalese society is having multitudes of hierarchies in terms of class, caste, religion, rural-urban, geography and other background characteristics like several other south Asian cultures and societies, this study would intend to figure out to

what extent the marriage has contributed to social cohesion. There are several studies carried out in terms of mate selection criteria over the developed, developing and south Asian context. However, there is dearth of scientific investigation on the role of different background of couple in creating a socioeconomic re-integration of people in contributing to develop a new family setup.

In Nepal, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are considered social taboos and are strongly discouraged by the orthodox society. It has promoted marriage within the same socio-economic status. However, in the present times, this social institution has been highly liberalized. The youths not only in the cities but also in the rural remote locations, due to the effect of socio-cultural liberalization and globalization, has been left with the choice and decision to the boys and girls. Along with marriage, other marital relationships like divorces, love marriage, inter-caste marriage, living together before marriage, widow marriages etc. are generally in par with the modern and western societies.

2. Research Methods

The study was conducted during February to April 2022 in Thakre Rural Municipality of Dhading district. Both quantitative and qualitative information were taken. The quantitative information collected by using semi-structured questionnaire set while the qualitative type of information taken by in-depth interview through checklist. The questionnaire consisted of information regarding the age, age at marriage, number of offspring, type and process of marriage of the respondent couple as well as their parents in both sides (wife and husband). Whatever information were taken of the respondent couple, such information were also taken of the wife side parent and husband side parents. Qualitative checklist was used to take in-depth interview from

selected respondents from among the sampled respondents. A total of 75 ever married couple respondents for quantitative study and a total of 5 respondents for qualitative study were taken for this study. The quantitatively collected data were analyzed using SPSS 22.0 version software in the form of frequency table, mean (average) and range and such descriptive statistics.

3. Major Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the collected data implies the following result in case of marriage of the respondent and their wife and husband side parents. The below are the major findings of the study (data not shown).

- All the respondent couples are local of the Thakre Rural Municipality, Ward no 3, however, for employment and for other reasons, few families are currently out of the rural municipality. Those scattered out of the usual place of residence are living in Bara, Kathmandu, Banepa and other places. The husband side parent are relatively closer to the Thakre-3, but the wife side parent are extended over a wider areas like Chitwan, Kathmandu, Kavre, Nuwakot, Makawanpur, Tanahun, Udaypur etc. It indicates that the girls have come from wider areas to this place after getting married. Hence, marriage has acted well as a geographical connector.
- Marriage within the same caste (intra-caste) is considered norm in Nepalese society and different caste (inter-caste) marriage is strongly discouraged. The proportion of inter-caste marriage has grown recently in the study area but not quite high though. Almost 8 percent of the respondent couple has done inter-caste marriage while all other couple and their parents have performed intra-caste marriages. The proportion

of inter-caste marriages in the parental generation of either side (wife side and husband side parent) were well below...percent.

- The trend of performing love marriage is growing in the study area reaching upto 35 percent of the total marriages. Since the study area is well connected and highly accessible to national headquarter-Kathmandu, the trend of getting united into wedlock by one's own choice of the life partner is high. This trend was quite low in the parental generation of either side.
- It seems that whether love or arrange marriages, the trend of elopement is low. It means that the youths usually make choice of their potential mate, they report the same in the own family and convince the respective parents. Later on they perform marriage on ritual basis. Hence, most marriages even if started from love affair will end up in arrange marriage.
- The caste/ethnic disaggregation of the study population represents almost 45 percent of the Brahmin Chetri, 30 percent Janajatis and 25 percent Dalit's with slight variation in each case of marriage of either side parent. Hence, there is dominance of Brahmin Chetri, followed by Janajatis and Dalits. In case of religious composition of the study population, overwhelming majority are of Hindus, followed by the Buddhist and Christians representing 85 percent, 10 percent and 5 percent respectively.
- The average number of years of marriage of the respondent couple is 11 years, while the average number of years for marriage of both side parents (wife side as well as husband side) is 40 years. The mean age of the husband in married couple as well as in the wife side and husband side parent is more than the female counterparts. This may be due to that Nepalese people prefer to marry with the girl which is younger in age than the husband. This social mentality is carried over from parental generation up to the present time couples.
- The married couples have in an average two offspring while the either side parents have at least 5 offspring on an average. This figure clearly shows the decreasing number of offspring in the successive generations. However, the respondent couple being towards the age of 30 years both on an average, can have other offspring if they have not done family planning already (information regarding family planning was not taken though).
- Corollary to the above finding, the proportion of couple following the social ritual for engaging in marriage has reduced with consequent rise of the elopement. Elopement occurs when the couples agree to tie the nuptial knots but the parent would not permit them to engage in marriage, and then they perform marriage even without the consent of the parents, which is on rise these days. This may be due to that rural community is still dominated by the traditional marriage system that promotes homogeneity between bride and groom side.
- The average mean age of the married couple is 29 years for the wife and 32 years for the husband. The mean age of wife side mother is 58 years while the wife side father is 61 years. On the other hand, the completed mean age of the husband side mother is 59 years and husband side father is 62 years.
- The average age at marriage of the respondent couple is 18 years for wife

and 21 years for the husband, while the age at side marriage of both mothers was 16 years and both side father was 18 years.

- The built in structure of the residence (house) which is one of the basic socio-economic indicator has connection with the married couple more to the wife side parent while the husband side parent live more in the Kacchi houses. It further verifies the fact that the boys would like to marry with the girl whose parents have higher economic status than their own parent.
- Size of acreage (landholding size) is another socio-economic indicator which indicates that the wife side parents are having more landholding size consequently higher economic status than the husband side parent. In case of Nepal, the bride side as well as groom side parent would prefer the would be keen having higher economic status than their own. However, the bride side parent might have done trade-off of the economic status of the

groom side parent for the education, employment and potentiality of the boy.

4. Conclusion

This study was carried out by taking a sample size of 75 married couple and their either side parent (wife side and husband side) which has facilitated comparison of marriage trend in between generations. It witnessed that rural community is growing more generous towards the love marriages but the inter-caste marriage is still more restricted. It sounds that more of the geographical combination by the marriage has been done rather than in terms of other social, caste and religious combination. While analyzing the household wealth of the all three sides (married couple, wife side and husband side parents) indicates that the boys have got marriage with the girl whose parents' economic status is better than their own parents. The influence of economic condition of the parent in low is also reflected in the economic situation of the married couple by having better household wealth in terms of landholding sizes and kind of houses.

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