



Challenges in selection of life partner among Muslims in Kashmir, J&K India

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Abstract

The question as to whether Selection of life partner is a challenge especially to unmarried male and females, who are about to age, is yet to be answered satisfactorily. This study seeks to find out common challenges faced by unmarried males and females in Kashmir, state Jammu and Kashmir factors responsible and the effects these have on them. The study utilized the survey design with sample consisting of 600 newly married males and females, 300 males and 300 from females purposively selected from three districts on the basis of their income group (A) below 7000 per month (B) 7001 to 25000 (C) 250001 and above, 200 samples were taken from each income group, 100 samples had taken from males and 100 samples had taken from females. 98.33 percent male respondents face unemployment challenge falling in income group (B), 62.66 percent male respondents face poverty as challenge falling in income group (A), 61 percent male respondents lying in income group (C) on another hand 76.66 percent of female respondents face physical beauty as challenge falling in income group (C), 59 percent female face poverty as challenge lying in income group (A), 60 percent female face family status as challenge falling income (b) and these have the greatest effect on their general life.

Keywords: challenges in selection of life partner, spouse, mate

Introduction

The selection of life partner is going through lot of changes. It is being modernized. We have some examples. The work of go-betweens being done by Social network, cell phones, in colleges and University through its matrimonial columns, So this is how selection of life partners are taking new dimensions. The women who once had completely no say as for as the life partner selection was concerned is now an important part of it. Selecting a life partner is very much a culturally defined process. The rules governing selection vary widely from society to society and are often complex. How would you go about selecting a life partner? Where would you begin? What criteria would you use? Would you take the views and wishes of your relatives and friends into consideration? When we look around the world to see how other societies deal with these questions it is clear that love and sexual compatibility are not always the basis for selecting a spouse. However, when romantic love is an important criterion physical beauty is frequently a key factor. Age, body shape, personal adornment and especially facial appearance are usually the focus. It is clear that concepts of beauty are not universal. Some traditional societies of Africa and the South Pacific define large, plump bodies as being attractive,

especially for men (Barbara Ryan, 2004). Moller (1997) Personality, education, wealth and other individual characteristics also are important in life partner selection criteria in many societies. In fact they may be far more important than physical beauty. The parents of young contemporary women seeking a husband in Indian urban areas commonly place an advertisement in newspapers. These advertisements prominently mention the potential bride's college degrees, caste and implied potential for paying a large dowry. Various traditions exist in our culture with regard to the selection of life partner. Generally it is an arranged marriage, where the selection is the responsibility of the parents and guardians. Based on Brown (2009), selection of life partner is one of the most important and faithful choices of both men and women. The possibility of happiness is low in marriage without considering the related significant factors. Based on Abdullah, Li & David (2011) couples cannot be really happy when they do not understand each other. Life partner selection has never been dismissed from the society and social conditions (Brown, 2009; Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, & Larsen, 2001). Many studies indicate that selecting a mate is one of the most important decisions that individuals make in their lifetime.

Findings of the Study and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of the male respondents with regard to their Challenges and problems in Selection of life partner

Responses	Challenge		Not challenge		Total	
	M	%age	M	%age	M	%age
Un-employment	295	98.33	05	1.66	300	100.0
Poverty	188	62.66	112	37.33	300	100.0
Family status	183	61.0	117	39.0	300	100.0

Proper Match	176	58.66	124	41.33	300	100.0
Housing-condition	165	55.0	135	45.0	300	100.0
Wealth	245	81.66	55	18.33	300	100.0
Physical beauty	28	9.33	272	90.66	300	100.0

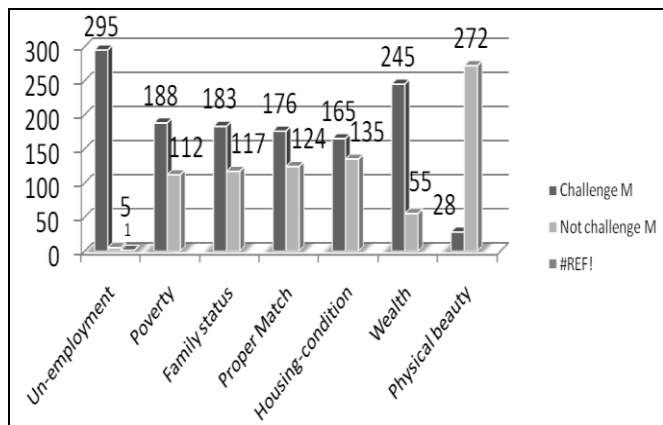


Fig 1

Table 2: Distribution of the female respondents with regard to their Challenges and problems in Selection of life partner

Responses	Challenge		Not challenge		Total	
	F	%age	F	%age	F	%age
Dowry	104	34.67	196	65.33	300	100.0
Un-employment	99	33.0	201	67.0	300	100.0
Poverty	178	59.33	122	40.66	300	100.0
Family status	181	60.33	119	39.66	300	100.0
Proper Match	170	56.66	130	43.33	300	100.0
Housing condition	168	56.0	132	44.0	300	100.0
Wealth	218	72.66	82	27.33	300	100.0
Physical beauty	230	76.66	70	23.33	300	100.0

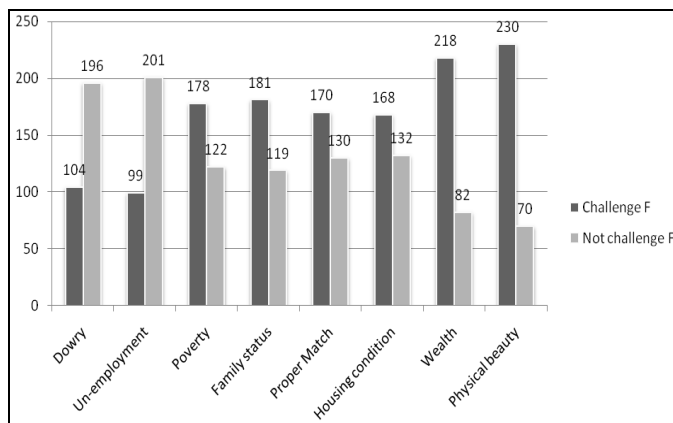


Fig 2

The table 1 and 2 statistics reveals that 295 i.e. 98.33 of the male respondents identified that unemployment is a challenge before unmarried male in selection of life partner, only 99 i.e. 33.0 percent of the female respondents reported that Unemployment is the most important challenge for the marriageable girls now-a-days. So far as this case which lies in the highest percentage of male respondents among the above choices gives their responses that male partner cannot offer his desirable partner for marriage until he is employment/ economically independent or a business owning,

this ultimately becomes a barrier for him/her, especially for males.

The Jammu and Kashmir state has the highest number of unemployment rate in north India. Around 5.94 lakh youth have registered themselves with the employment department in order to get jobs, a government survey revealed in March this year. 2009 [4]. So the unemployment proves challenge for the marriageable males in the Kashmir.

Poverty is also challenge that is faced in selecting life partner. Here when asking the same issue to the respondents 188 i.e. 62.66 percent of the males, 178 i.e. 59.33 percent of the females said that poverty is the one of the challenge in the selection of a partner. Actually a female partner always wants her husband to be enough responsible in the means of financial strength. Same is the case with the males also, having problems that become a challenge for her/him to marry in the society if he/she is poor. A poor girl is also not valued to be offered or accepted for marriage. Hence poverty is an also challenge.

Family status has a vital role in selection of life partner, in the present age. 183 i.e. 61.0 percent of the male respondents, 181 i.e. 60.33 percent of the female respondents said that if family status is low then choices and selection are being hanged off because of their low family status. Respondents added that if the partner is healthy or belonged to good family background he is supposed to be offered and selected a partner (life-partner) to the other. Those who have low family status, they certainly find the family status a strong challenge in selecting their life partner.

Proper match 176 i.e. 58.66 percent of the male respondents, 170 i.e. 56.66 percent of the female respondents told that one cannot marry until they found their matches properly. It was observed during researcher's study that most of the partners who were getting marriage late or were found unmarried in fact suffered from years in finding their proper matches. So proper match is also challenge in selection of life partner.

Physical beauty, 230 i.e. 76.66 percent of the female respondents accepted that the physical beauty of girl is most important criteria of boys thus it clear that if a girl is not beautiful she may face challenge in selection of life partner, 28 i.e. 9.33 percent of the males respondents said that it is challenge only for girls in selection of life partner. According to Abdullah Mohammed Badahdah (2005) found during his research study women preferred economic secure partner and men find physically attractiveness in the would-be spouse.

Dowry, 104 i.e. 34.67 percent of the female respondents represents that dowry is challenge in rural Kashmir regarding the selection of life partners. But it was common in urban Kashmir like in other big cities of the country but today among people there is awareness about bad consequences of dowry so, dowry is not given too much stress in Kashmir.

Majority of the male respondents 165 i.e. 55 percent, 168 i.e. 56 percent of the female respondents separately unveiled the housing problem. They reported that if any male or female's housing condition is not good he/she face problem on the

selection of life partner, because it is taking into consideration in case of selection of life partner.

245 i.e. 81.66 percent of the male respondents and 218 i.e. 72.66 percent of the female respondents reported that financially insecure person face problems in selection of life partner. Because Kashmiri marriages are becoming too expansive, one has to prepare 30 multi course dishes on marriage day, huge amount of dower, exchange of gifts, things taken to in laws home etc. one need to lot of money for it.

Overall, we can say that in our society there are factors which create difficulties in selecting proper matches for Marriage. Marriage is now-a-days hectic process due to so many changes as given below.

Changes in Selection of life partner

In spite of this change, we find that the child is still so conditioned as not to think in terms of his own rights, his own pleasures, his own status and his own privacy etc, but to think in terms of family. However, whatever change has taken place in the relations between parents and children, it has some sociological implications. One, the process of socialization of children has been affected. Two, competence and ability of individual now determines individual's career more than the family interest. Three, because of the freedom enjoyed, children today get more incentive for work and opportunity for achieving their aspirations. The husband and wife are no more two extremes as one used to 'rule' other but are like friends. Wife differently has a say to indulge in the matters of family. We find change in the relationship of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Both the parties make selection very carefully and the newly-married girls too are willing to make adjustment to ensure the success of their marriage. Change in age of marriage, freedom in selection of life partner, and change in attitude towards marriage have also affected the family system. Researches indicate that children do not obey parental authority nor perceive the oldest male as the main person in decision-making. The freedom in selection of life partner has promoted inter-caste marriage which in turn has affected the relationship structure in the family. Such changes and many others have, definitely, given rise to number of problem in the institution of marriage. Kashmir is very rich in culture. It is an amalgam of different cultures, languages and societies. Marriage is considered very sacramental by all religions here. Among Muslims in Kashmir, the institution of marriage enjoys a special position. It has the approval of both religion and culture and a 'no' to it can create some sort of misunderstanding among the masses towards that particular person. The Kashmiri marriage is full of rituals and practices. It has its unique pattern of selection of life partner and the marriage process, which is full of rituals, exchange of gifts and other ceremonies. Along with this the problems and issues are in a very long list. The problem of dowry, late marriage, and the emergence of nuclear family set-up can create lot many other problems. The rural Kashmir has bay and large remained unaffected from the outside influence. But, the urban Kashmir, especially the major city of Kashmir, i.e. Srinagar, has responded positively to foreign influence because of the tourism, the impact of Hindu marriage system as also other influences have made the Kashmir urban marriage a unique form in its own way. Researcher has

reported that lot of studies has been done outside Kashmir on marriage and selection of life partner, but in Kashmir selection of life partner and marriage field is completely unexplored. It is in this context that the present study has been taken in hand to study this institution deeply and widely.

Review of Literature

Buss (1994) the study reveals that men report a higher relevance of physical attractiveness while women prefer men that are wealthy and physically strong.

O'Neil (2006) explained that education is an important factor in selecting life partner's choice in many societies.

MALIKI Agnes Ebi (Nigeria 2005) In Niger Delta University during his research study sought to identify the main Finding of the study indicated that students consider character as the most important factor in their selection of life partner choice

Westman (1999) posited that financial success level was the most important variable sought by university student in potential marriage partner People value socio-economic status as a means to predict one's ability to provide for their young ones. The ability and willingness to provide their resources are traits that have been correlated with high male value. Human males can and do provide a range of resources for the female before, during and after she has produced an offspring. This can include food, shelter, and protection from other males. Females would have evolve preferences for males who had good financial prospects, were older than themselves, had higher social status, and who displayed hardworking and industrious characters as these are clear signs of resources acquisition (Mamasan, 2005).

Gage and Hancock (2002) in their study of college students revealed that students of middle class as well as the higher class primarily choose those who are of their own socio-economic status to date or marry. Also the study revealed that those of high socio-economic status have previously preferred those of either the same or lower socio- economic status. It was also found in their data that both males and females prefer those of a relatively equal social class to themselves to those of lower or higher socio-economic classes.

Feingold (1992) posited that women accord more weight than men to socio-economic status, as women prefer marriage partners that will be able to take care of them financially.

Prof. Bashir Ahmad Dabla, 2009, late marriage phenomenon was increasing due to poverty, conflict, illiteracy, modernization impact, health abnormality, customs and traditions, caste consideration, dowry in different shapes, waiting for higher education and jobs, and the lengthy search for a proper match. Five years down the line, nothing has changed. "Our customs are too twisted, even if a groom doesn't demand dowry the small requirements before marriage like minimum gold, copperware, sweet boxes, frequent visits to in-laws and wazwans, eidi, winter wishes, special day wishes, Eid e Qurban wishes and other things take a toll on the families," "And as these customs multiply, the chances of annoying the potential of future or present in-laws are higher with disastrous consequences.

Methodology

Methodology is about method, and method is the vehicle for getting a true representation of social phenomena one is

observing. No method is good or bad in it, its suitability depends upon the problem at hand and the nature of data that has to be collected. The data for the empirical study was collected mainly through interview schedules the study was carried out among both the sexes in the three district of the Kashmir. All the respondents were Muslims. In total, the 600 respondents had taken randomly. This included literates as well as illiterates. The respondents belonged to different socio-economic groups and different areas of the districts as is explained in the following text. Out of total 600 respondents, the researcher took 50 percent (300) males and an equal number (300) of females.

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through interview schedule and questionnaire on the basis of random sampling. The researcher also collected the information about the socio-economic background of the respondent's with the use of techniques and other inputs. The data collected from the various sources was analyzed by the simple relevant statically techniques. The secondary data was also collected from few prominent persons, belonging to Kashmir culture and welfare organizations, in order to know their views and compare or substantiate them with the findings under the study. The data was collected from census and government reports, reports by NGO's and research cells as the background material to develop the context for the study.

Summary

According to study, the hypothesis was found true that was poverty, unemployment, proper match, physical beauty, wealth and family status etc. as a barrier in selecting life-partner. These variables give rise to such social crime which affects the people badly and they indulge in provoking others to entertain such issues.

The institution of marriage has undergone various alterations. Gone are the days when selection of life partner and marriage issue was simple, boys and girls were getting married as soon as they had become mature. A girl was leaving her parental house only taking few gifts from the parental home to her husband's home. Rituals, customs concerned with marriage ceremony were simple and meaningful. But due to modernization and industrialization, society changed wholly and solely, the institution of society become complex in its functioning. Thus the Poverty, unemployment, proper match, physical beauty, wealth and family status etc. as challenging factors in selecting life-partner. These variables give rise to such social crimes which affects the people badly and they indulge in provoking others to entertain such issues while selecting life partner. Unemployment, poverty, family status and Proper Match are the major problems that were found positively taking place in the society in Matrimonial relation.

Consequences

Challenges in selecting a life partner due to lots of reasons such unemployment, family status, poverty and socio-economic status, etc. more and more people tend to have challenge, it brings some negative ill-effects on whole society, like Psychiatric problems, suicides, drug addiction, pre-marital affairs, sex scandals and a spiral in divorces. The study further reveals that the decrease in population at family level,

mental depression, increase in suicide rate, encouragement to immoral activities and pre-marital sex are some of the consequences challenges in selection of life partner. The main cause for "waywardness" in society and inevitably attack its moral fabric. The young age where one swims with wheels and walks with air, and rides with the wind and sleep in the clouds. Hardest to coordinate the living style and habit with each other this is the age of real stress and storm that is why in Islam marriage is considered half-faith completes (eemaan) which prevents the believers from the immodesty and immorality. The multiple reasons and impacts of this social issue need to be identified and disseminated in society. Otherwise society will become Jungle. We have to end it or it will end us.

Conclusion

Different types of challenges were found in selecting of life-partners among Muslims in Kashmir.

1. Majority of the respondents i.e. 94 percent of the female respondents, 42.66 percent of the male respondents preferred, that their life partners should be a government employment.
2. Majority of the respondents i.e. 70.5 percent (out of 600) were preferring the economically sound families of life partners, among them 68.66 (out of 300) percent males and 72.33 percent females were found preferring necessary that family of male and female should be economically sound,
3. Majority of the male respondents i.e. 99.33 percent, 65 percent female respondents preferred their life partner's "character"
4. Majority of the male respondents i.e. 91.66 percent give preference to the physical beauty, but 21 percent of the female respondents preferred physical beauty of males.
5. Majority of the respondents' i.e. 73.33 percent, especially females preferred their life partner's economical independence that will help in their personal marital matters while as 46.66% are males and 100% are females.
6. Majority of the male respondents 98.33 percent (out of 300) "said" Unemployment is the most effective case which has become a challenge for the males in selection of life partner and 33 percent (out of 300) of the female respondents. So far as this case among 600 respondents there are a male which lies in the highest percentage among the challenge variables.
7. Poverty is another challenge that a person faces in the selection of life partner. 62.66 percent of the male respondents and 59.33 percent female respondents said that poverty is the main cause of late marriage and also obstacles in selection of life partner among Muslims in Kashmir.
8. Majority of the respondents preferred family status i.e. 67.17 percent select their life partners higher than their own family status, generally, a person who is going to marry wants the girl/ boy of the same status. If the status of families of two persons is similar, then matching becomes easy and many problems concerned with marriage become solved automatically.

To sum-up I would like to say that there are various hurdles which come before youth in selecting apt partner especially in

Kashmir. Gone are the days when the marriage was affair of only parents but now modernity has changed everything including institution of Marriage. There are also practices which are done in spite of not mentioned in "Sharia" (law). When we talk of Kashmir, there is lack of private sector, 80% peoples economy is based on agriculture which itself depends on availability of irrigation, rains etc. Conflict in Kashmir also creates economic problems among people. Sex ratio has been reduced. Girls find it difficult to find apt life-partner as a huge number of youth were killed in conflict. From our study it appears that both the trends of modernity and tradition are prevalent in the institution of marriage in Kashmir. Psychiatric problems, suicides, drug addiction, pre and extra marital affairs, sex scandals and a spiral in divorces. The study further reveals that the decrease in population at family level, mental depression, increase in suicide rate, encouragement to immoral activities and pre-marital sex are some of the consequences challenges in selection of life-partner.

Recommendation

1. It is recommended that parents most actively be involved in the lives of their children, to guide and lead them properly recognizing their choices, preferences and desires and helping them to arrive at decision that will not lead to regrets and pains later in life.
2. It is also recommended that scholars in the sociology should actively engage studies on the effects of globalization i.e. internet, social media such as face book, Whatsapp to mention these two, to help shape policy making thereby reducing the negative effects on selection of life partners.
3. The new methods of doing things can only be better if contextualized within our cherished traditional and cultural values, to help preserve a generation who are not completely out of tune with our cherished traditional and cultural ways of doing things
4. There is poverty and unemployment in Kashmir. Government should help people to come out from this vicious circle of poverty.
5. Youth should divert from traditional educational system to technical and professional education, which could pave way for their employment opportunities.
6. Marriage is economic as well as social. As long as a youth is not financially secure, nobody will forward his hand for marriage.
7. Role of Media: Public should be made aware about hazardous effects of traditions attached to marriage he like wazawan, dowry which effects their selection prospects.
8. Role of Religious Preachers: They can also play their role by informing the common public about tenets of Islam regarding Selection of life partner and marriage.
9. Role of Prominent Persons in Society: They can also play their role in much influential way.
10. Role of Marriage Cells: They can also help if properly supported by people and Government.
11. Engage (Nikah) but not marriage boys/ girls with their life partners at early age according to marital laws of Islam that may decrease the social crimes.
12. Government should make some financial assistance to

poor and unemployed youth at the time of marriage.

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