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Parents' Attitude Towards Early Marriage of Girls

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ABSTRACT

Early marriage at immature age, results in grave physical effect on the girls and pre-mature child birth. So, it contributes very largely to maternal and infuntile mortality. Four villages were selected at random fron Palanpur taluka and from each villages, ten fathers and ten mothers belonging to selected caste were interviewed. A scale to measure parents' attitude towards early marriage of girls has been developed at M. S. University, Baroda. The scale consisted of 18 attitude statements with equal number of positive and negative statements. The majority of the parents were found to possess favourable attitude towards early marriage of girls. The significant difference was found between the attitude of fathers and mothers. Education, family education, social participation and cosmopoliteness were found to have positive and significant relation with their attitude.

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INTRODUCTION

Daughters in many parts of India mean great pecuniary expense in providing for marriage. This has created a tendency of early marriages of girls among many communities. Early marriage implies cohabitation at an immature age, sometimes even before puberty and practically always immediately on the first signs of puberty, resulting in grave physical effect on the girls and premature child birth. Enquiries conducted in Baroda (1931) show that when marriage of young people is consummated at an early age (boy-16, girl-12 to 13), fairly large percentage of wives die of child birth. Commenting on the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1930, Rathbone observed child marriage have much to do with high death rates. Such deaths are nothing less than deaths on the rack, due to straining of muscles and serious, nerves and tendons in the body's effort to perform a function for which it is too weak, immature and ill-formed. Dr. Megaw observed that, 'one in every ten girl wives is deemed to die in the child birth.'

It is on this ground the present study, "parents" attitude towards early marriage of girls' was conducted with following specific objectives :

(i) To study the personal characteristics of the respondents;

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(ii) To know the parents' attitude towards early marriage of girls, and

(iii) To ascertain the relationship between the personal characteristics of parents and their attitude towards early marriage of girls.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in Banaskantha District of Gujarat State. Palanpur taluka was selected from the district randomly. Early marriage of girls is in practice among two castes. Among these two castes, one caste was selected. A list of the villages where more than half of the population is of selected community was prepared with the help of the District Statistical Officer. From the list, four villages were selected at random and from each villages, ten fathers and ten mothers belonging to the selected caste were interviewed. Thus, final sample was comprised of 80 parents.

A scale to measure parents' attitude towards early marriage of girls developed at M. S. University, Baroda, was used in the present study. The scale consisted of 18 attitude statements with equal number of positive and negative statements. Parents' response to each statement was recorded on three point continum viz., 'Agree', 'Undecided' and 'Disagree'. In case of positive statement, score of 3, 2 and 1 was assigned to the response in the form of 'Agree', 'Undecided' and 'Disagree', respectively. The procedure for negative statement was reverse. Information regarding selected personal characteristics of the parents was collected through structured schedule.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics of the respondents

It can be seen from Table 1 that 37.50 per cent of father respondents were found having primary education and 55 per cent of mother respondents having been illiterate. The illiteracy among fathers was found to be 20 per cent. Middle education was found among 22.50 per cent fathers and 15 per cent mothers. Only 12.50 per cent and 7.50

TABLE 1

Distribution of respondents according to their personal characteristics.

Sr. No.	Characteristics	Category	Father (n=40)		Mother (n=40)		'Z' value
			Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
1.	Education	1 Illiterate	8	20.00	22	—55.00	
		2 Primary	15	37.00	8	20.00	
		3 Middle	9	22.50	6	15.00	2.687**
		4 S. S.C.	5	12.50	3	7.50	
		5 H. S. C.	1	2.50	1	2.50	
		6 College	2	5.00	0	0.00	

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
2.	Family education	1 low (Upto 2)	6	15.00	9	22.50	
		2 Medium (3 to 10)	27	67.50	28	70.00	
		3 High (Above 10)	7	17.50	3	7.50	1.883
3.	Family type	1 Nuclear	23	57.50	20	50.00	
		2 Joint	17	42.50	20	50.00	0.666
4.	Family size	1 Small (Upto 4)	8	20.00	6	15.00	
		2 Medium (5 to 8)	30	75.00	31	77.50	1.905
		3 Large. (Above 8)	2	5.00	3	7.50	
5.	Occupation	1 Labourer	3	7.50	5	12.50	
		2 Only farming	30	75.00	24	60.00	
		3 Farming + Business	3	7.50	10	25.00	0.159
		4 Farming + service	4	10.00	1	2.50	
6.	Family income	1 Low (Upto Rs. 7000)	6	15.00	7	17.50	
		2 Medium (Rs. 7001 to 21000)	24	60.00	32	80.00	2.936**
		3 High (Above Rs. 21000)	10	25.00	1	2.50	
7.	Social participation	1 No participation	4	10.00	12	30.00	
		2 Low (upto 3)	20	50.00	23	57.50	3.071**
		3 High (Above 3)	16	40.00	5	12.50	
8.	Cosmopoliteness	1 Non-cosmopolite	3	7.50	10	25.00	
		2 Low (Upto 3)	20	50.00	23	57.50	2.560**
		3 High (Above 3)	17	42.50	7	17.50	

**Significant at 1 per cent level.

per cent mothers. Only 12.50 per cent and 7.50 per cent fathers and mothers, respectively were found having S.S.C. education. Only one respondent in both the categories was found having passed H.S.C. examination. Family education of majority respondents was found medium. Only 17.50 per cent and 7.50 per cent families of the male and female respondents respectively were found to be highly educated.

Nearly 58 per cent fathers and half of the mothers were found to be the members of nuclear family. Nearly two-thirds respondents in both the categories were found to be the members of medium family consisting of 5 to 8 members. Small family was observed in case of 20 per cent fathers and 15 per cent mothers.

The table further reveal that the main family occupation of both the categories of respondents i.e., fathers (75 per cent) and mothers (60 per cent) was farming. The families of 7.50 per cent male respondents and 25 per cent female respondents were found to run their business alongwith farming. Only four male and one female respondent was found to be government servants. Annual family income from different occupations was found medium (Rs. 7001-21000) among both fathers (60 per cent) and mother (80 per cent) respondents. 15 per cent families among male respondents and 17.50 per cent families among female respondents were found earning less than Rs. 7000 per year.

Half of the fathers and 57.50 per cent mothers were found with medium social participation. High social participation was observed among 40 per cent fathers and 12.50 per cent mothers.Ten per cent fathers and 30 per cent mothers were found to be socially inactive. Low cosmopoliteness was observed among 50 per cent fathers and 57.50 per cent mothers. 7.50 per cent fathers and 25 per cent mothers were found to be non-cosmopolite in nature.

The 'Z' value in the table further indicate that fathers and mothers were found to differ significantly with respect to education (2.687), family income (2.936), social participation (3.071) and cosmopoliteness (2.560). So far as family education, family type, family size and occupation was concerned, no significant

TABLE 2

Parents attitude towards early marriage of girls.

Sr. No.	Attitude	Father (n=40)		Mother (n=40)		'Z' value
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
1.	Highly favourable	10	25.00	4	10.00	
2.	Favourable	28	70.00	23	57.50	2.908**
3.	Unfavourable	2	5.00	13	32.50	

** Significant at 1 per cent level.

difference was observed between male and female respondents.

Parent's attitude towards early marriage of girls

The data in this regard are depicted in Table 2. Table visualise that majority of the fathers (70 per cent) and mothers (57.50 per cent) were possessing favourable attitude towards early marriage of girls. Highly favourable attitude was observed among 25 per cent fathers and 10 per cent mothers. It is interesting to note that the percentage of respondents possessing unfavourable attitude was higher among mothers (32.50 per cent) as compared to fathers (5 per cent). This was further supported by the calculated 'Z' value indicating significant difference between the attitude of fathers and mothers. Higher percentage of mothers with unfavourable attitude might be due to the fact that being a women, she might be well aware of the consequences of early marriage.

TABLE 3

Relationship between the personal characteristics of respondents and their attitude towards early marriage of girls.

Sr. No.	*Characteristics*	*Co-efficient of correlation 'r'*	
		Father (n=40)	*Mother (n=40)*
1.	Education	0.3365*	0.6216**
2.	Family education	0.4973**	0.6305**
3.	Family type	0.2004	0.2156
4.	Family size	0.2087	0.0580
5.	Occupation	0.0506	0.0415
6.	Family income	0.2616	0.4345**
7.	Social participation	0.6200**	0.5138**
8.	Cosmopoliteness	0.5197**	0.4091**

* Significant at 5 per cent level.

** Significant at 1 per cent level.

Relational analysis

In order to study the relationship between personal characteristics of parents and their attitude towards early marriage of girls, correlation of coefficeint was calculated. The results are depicted in Table 3.

It coud be observed from the Table that so far as the relationship between personal characteristics of parents and their attitude towards early marriage was concerned, fathers and mothers could not differ much more. Out of the eight characteristics of the parents, four characteristics viz., education, family education, social participation and cosmopoliteness were found to have positive and significant relation with their attitude towards early marriage of girls.

Positive relation between parents' education and their attitude might be due to the fact that education opens the faculty of thoughts which in term makes a person aware of the mental and physical effect on the girls getting early marriage. Social participation was the another variable found establishing positive relationship with parents' attitude towards early marriage of girls. Social participation play an important role in getting acquainted with the customs, norms and beliefs of the other societies and also the consequences of the early marriage. Those who know and understand the consequences will definately be in against of the early marriage. Cosmopoliteness also makes one aware of the other societal norms and customs. Cosmopolite person is frequently visiting the peoples from other societies. He also have an opportunity to observe the life style of urban people. This helps in opening the new vision, and thereby helping them to see the early marriage of girls as social evil. On the other hand family type, family size and occupation of respondents could not establish significant relation with their attitude.

Implications

The present study clearly indicated that majority parents expressed favourable attitude towards early marriage of girls. They need to be made aware of the consequences of early marriage of girls. Early marriage of girls is a social custom in many castes and every body in the caste has to follow it willingly or unwillingly. Creating social awareness and motivating the caste leaders to bring about desirable changes in their present custom is necessary.