

Parental Influence on Mate Choice Criteria

Smt.Sandhya S.J.

Research Scholar Dept. of Post graduate studies and research in Sociology, Karnatak University, Dharwad.

Abstract: *In this article, we tried to examine the tendency of parental influence on mating, which is associated with the level of collectivism in a culture. A scale to assess the degree of parental influence on mate selection was administered to 762 respondents at Bagalkot in Karnataka. The respondents mainly college students studying in final year degree in professional and non professional course. Respondents were found to be more conservative on every dependent variable. The perceived influence of parents on mate choices emerged as an influential factor on dependent variables regardless of the respondents culture of origin. Data analysis indicates that parental influence has been an important part of human mating.*

I. Introduction:

Historically, parents play a major role in choosing marriage partners for their children and the custom continues in the world's developing countries today. Parental influence is greatest when the parents have a large stake in which their child marries. Traditionally, marriage has been regarded as an alliance between two families, rather than just between the two individuals. The most extreme form of parental influence is in arranged marriage, in which the bride and groom have no say at all. In some upper caste Hindu marriages, children are betrothed at a very young age and have no choice in the decision. In a less extreme form of arranged marriage, parents may do the match making, but the young people can veto the choice. Some small cultures scattered around the world have social scientists call preferential marriage. In this system the bride or groom is supposed to marry a particular kind of person. eg. a cousin on the mother's or father's side of the family. Mostly parents would prefer arranged marriage for their children for security purpose. This is to ensure a peaceful, successful and comfortable married life for their children.

In contrast to the assumption in recent theory and research of human mating that individuals freely choose mates (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Gangsted &, Simpson, 2000) anthropologist have long noted that in most societies marriage has been at least partly arranged and has been based on a series of familial considerations rather than on the desires of the individuals concerned.

II. Literature review:

Marriage and family texts consistently detail the family's influence on the development of adolescent sexuality, and eventual mate selection, either through elements of homogamy (Laver and Lauer, 1991) or family tradition (Lamanna and Reidmann, 1991). Marriage was regarded primarily as a social arrangement between two families and emphasized family, rather than individual needs (Queen and Halbenstein, 1974) In the united states today, young adults are assumed to make marriage choices freely and individually on the basis of romantic love, In contrast many Asian cultures traditionally regard marriage as the social arrangement that binds two families, so the marriage of children is much too important to leave to them alone (Queen and Holbenstein, 1974). Dominant parental control has been demonstrated as the essential feature of traditional marriage in Asian cultures. Salaff (1973) and Ribao (1986) conclude that free marriages in traditional Asian society are more likely only among the political elite, the geographically mobile, in urban areas, and among the highly educated. Traditional types of marriage and the customs accompanying them still have strength among the masses in the country side, although new ways seems to gradually be taking hold there.

Although arranged marriage has become rarer, it continues to occur in many parts of the world and among many immigrant groups in western societies. Near the end of the 20th century, about half of the marriages of Indian immigrants in the united states were being arranged (Menon, 1989). In a study of second generation South Asian immigrants living in North America, 25 percentage of the participants indicated that their parents would likely arrange their marriage (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Even when not directly arranging the marriage of their children, parents often attempt to influence their children's mate choice by restricting their social interactions (Talbani & Hasonali, 2000), an especially common form of parental influence among immigrant groups in western cultures. Even within cultural groups characterized by free choice mating, parents attempt so exert influence. As observed by Goode (1959), "Parents threaten, Cajole, wheedle, bribe, and persuade their children to "go with the people" during both the early love play and the later courtship phases" Collectivist cultures such as China, India, and Japan have historically been characterized by a high degree of

parental influence on their children’s mate choice (Applbaum, 1995; Riley, 1994; Xie and Combs, 1996) In other collectivist cultures such as Morocco, many young people currently still believe that their parents should select a marriage partner (Davis & Davis ,1995).

Krishnamurthy (1970) found that a majority of respondents in his/her study would like their parents to do mate selection for them and take their consent. In another study by Anand (1965) ,it was found that majority of the respondents preferred to leave mate selection to their parents.

Hypothesis:

The present study is to explore the possible forms of parental control on mating and that would be sensitive to variation in the degree of parental influence within and between cultures. To examine parental influence on mate choice as assessed with our scale in a quiet different culture. And to validate the association between collectivism and perceived parental influence on mate choice.

III. Method:

Participants were 762 under graduates studying in final year (both professional and non professional) degree students from various colleges at Bagalkot, in Karnataka. Data was collected by administering the questionnaire entitled “mate selection preference among college students in Bagalkot”. as partial fulfillment of course requirements. The questionnaire contains a number of items in mating choice included on the desirability of parents consulting their children before making a decision as well as on the desirability of children taking into account their parents wishes.

To explore this issue, compute a set of stable matches that would be predicted to arise from the observed in the set of information collected. Simple percentage was used to analyze the data.

Table 1 : showing the place of carry education of the respondents.

Place of early education	No. of respondents	Percentage
Rural area	211	27.69
Town area	377	49.47
City / Corporation area	174	22.84
Total	762	100.00

About 49.47% of our respondents clearly state that they would completed their early education in town area, it is followed by rural area and city / corporation area in the order, if collapse one and two columns, we find that 77.16% of the respondents in one way or the other they completed their early education other than city/ corporation areas. It might be that the respondents are living in the same region, where there is similarity of tradition, culture, language etc, and possibility of relative residing there.

Table II :Showing the respondents family traditional profession

Profession	No. of respondents	Percentage
Agriculture	320	41.90
Trade/ Business	187	24.54
Artists	9	1.18
Traditional service	12	1.67
Public / private service	187	24.54
Others	47	6.17
Total	762	100.00

It indicates, nearly half the respondents came from Agricultural family. It is followed by “Trade/ Business” and public/ private service in the 2nd order. It is because, the research area is comprised with rural and urban areas.

Table III: showing the respondents planning to marry

Planning to marry	No. of respondents	Percentage
After completion of Degree	82	10.76
After completion of Post graduation	174	22.83
After getting a suitable job	384	50.39
Decision of the parents	122	16.02
Total	762	100.00

Nearly half the respondents would like to marry after getting a suitable job. It is followed by “After completion of post-graduation” and parents decision” in the next order. This is not surprising, it is because of their minatory position, economic independency and individuality. Thus their qualifications generally assure a better job with better remuneration.

Table IV: showing respondents indicating whether the subject of their marriage has been discussed with parents

Discussion with parents about marriage	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes, briefly	202	26.51
Yes, in detail	520	68.24
No	40	5.25
Total	762	100

Thus, if we collapse the columns one and two, most of the respondents preferably discussed about their marriage with their parents. So it is, but natural that parents make their children aware that they have reached the marriageable age by starting discussion about their marriage. It is clear that the responsibility of mate choice for their children in most cases lies with the parents.

Table V: Showing the consideration of the respondents family tradition and culture at the time of mate choice.

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	576	75.59
No	114	14.96
Don't known	72	9.45
Total	762	100.00

Out of the total respondents, 576 (75.59%) respondents have expressed that they do consider family traditions and cultures at the time of mate choice, where as 114 (14.96%) respondents have stated that they do not think about the family tradition and culture and 72 (9.45%) respondents have expressed their ignorance about it. So family tradition and culture becomes a matter of consideration, because if neglected, differences in family tradition might land the couple in marital discard in later life. In view of this background that the respondents more conservative in this aspect.

Table VI : showing the respondents indicating how they plan the select the mate.

Selection of mate through	No. of respondents	Percentage
Find out on my own	124	16.27
Find out a suitable mate by parents	487	63.91
Find out with the help of relatives	37	4.86
Find out with the help of friends	23	3.02
Find out with making love	67	8.79
Find out with the help of media	24	3.15
Total	762	100.00

It indicate that about 487 (63.91%) of our respondents clearly state that they would prefer their parents to do mate choice for them. About 124 (16.27%) of the respondents were given permission by their parents to do their own mate choice, which includes, friendship groups. Classmates, youth-organisation and pray to god. Any way the main responsibility of mate choice lies with their parents. The parents are seen as the authority, their word is considered as final, because they have made countless scarifies for their children and children are made aware of them. Thus we find that the criterion of our respondents regarding mate choice appears as practical and conservative as that of their own parents. Their ideas are mainly influenced by those of their parents and people in their neighbourhood, We presume that, since this relationship is based on traditionalism, values of companionship and common interest, are not much stressed.

IV. Conclusion:

From this study, it is quite clear that parent's role is still predominant in mate choice parental influence is greatest when the parents have a great stake in which their child marries. The most extreme form of parental influence is an arranged marriage in which the bride and grooms have no say at all. The results showed that stronger influence of parents on mate choice was perceived by the participants from Bagalkot, in Karnataka, that was higher in collectivism. This is mainly due to their tradition, culture, language, region of that area. Other cultural dimensions were also correlated with parental influence, but most of their variables did not exert independent predictive effects on parental influence. And also our data seem to suggest that it is indeed in group collectivism and not another, partially confounded cultural dimension, that is directly related to parental influence on mate choice.

A limitation of the present study is that the measure of parental influence an mate choice is self report. Ideally one would attempt to measure this construct more objectively, by assessing prevalence of arranged marriage across cultures. it is not clear to what extent parental influence on mate choice has been an important part of human evolutionary history. Nevertheless, it seem obvious that for a more complete understanding of human mating, future research must attend more carefully to the role of parents and the cultural variation in parental influence on mate choice.

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