

Regional Variations in Spouse Selection Patterns of Women in India

Authors : Nivedita Paul

Abstract : Marriages in India are part and parcel of kinship and cultural practices. Marriage practices differ in India because of cross-regional diversities in social relations which itself has evolved as a result of causal relationship between space and culture. As the place is important for the formation of culture and other social structures, therefore there is regional differentiation in cultural practices and marital customs. Based on the cultural practices some scholars have divided India into North and South kinship regions where women in the North get married early and have lesser autonomy compared to women in the South where marriages are mostly consanguineous. But, the emergence of new modes and alternative strategies such as matrimonial advertisements becoming popular, as well as the increase in women's literacy and work force participation, matchmaking process in India has changed to some extent. The present study uses data from Indian Human Development Survey II (2011-12) which is a nationally representative multitopic survey that covers 41,554 households. Currently married women of age group 15-49 in their first marriage; whose year of marriage is from the 1970s to 2000s have been taken for the study. Based on spouse selection experiences, the sample of women has been divided into three marriage categories-self, semi and family arranged. Women in self-arranged or love marriage is the sole decision maker in choosing the partner, in semi-arranged marriage or arranged marriage with consent both parents and women together take the decision, whereas in family arranged or arranged marriage without consent only parents take the decision. The main aim of the study is to show the spatial and regional variations in spouse selection decision making. The basis for regionalization has been taken from Irawati Karve's pioneering work on kinship studies in India called Kinship Organization in India. India is divided into four kinship regions-North, Central, South and East. Since this work was formulated in 1953, some of the states have experienced changes due to modernization; hence these have been regrouped. After mapping spouse selection patterns using GIS software, it is found that the northern region has mostly family arranged marriages (around 64.6%), the central zone shows a mixed pattern since family arranged marriages are less than north but more than south and semi-arranged marriages are more than north but less than south. The southern zone has the dominance of semi-arranged marriages (around 55%) whereas the eastern zone has more of semi-arranged marriage (around 53%) but there is also a high percentage of self-arranged marriage (around 42%). Thus, arranged marriage is the dominant form of marriage in all four regions, but with a difference in the degree of the involvement of the female and her parents and relatives.

Keywords : spouse selection, consent, kinship, regional pattern

Conference Title : ICCWSS 2019 : International Conference on Children, Women, and Social Studies

Conference Location : Mumbai, India

Conference Dates : February 07-08, 2019