Research Article

MARRIAGE AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES IN HILLY RURAL AREAS OF UTTARAKHAND

Shubham Pandey[1]., Shaili Vyas[2]., Jayanti Semwal[3]., Ashish Gaur[4] and Ankit Singh[5*]

[1,4,5]Department of Biostatistics, Himalayan Institute of Medical Sciences, Dehradun
[2,3]Department of Community Medicine, Himalayan Institute of Medical Sciences, Dehradun

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

In demography, the study of Nuptiality essentially involves the statistical analysis of marriage variables by period or cohort approach. Religion and caste are the most important cultural factors influencing human behavior. Age at marriage and social views of marriage may be different for different religious groups. This paper will be exploring the various aspects of the Indian caste system and religion and its effects on Nuptiality and its comparison rural areas of Uttarakhand, India.

Highly educated people are assumed to be less influenced by religion and caste than those with less education. The main objective is to determine the pattern and comparison of nuptiality among different castes and religions to discuss the determinants of nuptiality analysis in rural population of Uttarakhand.

This retrospective study was analyzed on the seven cohort systems from 1931-40, 1941-50, 1951-60, 1961-70, 1971-80, 1981-90 and 1991-2000 within age groups 17-86 years. The data for this study is collected through the primary collection technique using pre-designed questionnaire.

The data for the study was analyzed through the trend analysis and also forecasted in order to study the pattern of change in nuptiality in the context of religion and caste.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage plays an important social role in Indian culture and has for quite some time been embraced as a vital stage in one's life. The status of women was extremely rich in culture and stands supreme for its glory. At the dawn of Indian history, women possessed a high social status and some of them were widely reputed for their learning[1]. In Vedic age, women occupied a high position in society. She had equal rights with men and enjoyed freedom in choosing her life partner; women went to Guru Kula to receive education and married only after acquiring education. Gradually, the condition changed[2]. The social background provided by the authoritarian joint family and caste with its domination in all spheres of life, afforded no scope for the recognition of any personal interests and aspirations of woman in the family life[3].

Legally speaking, the traditional ideals of marriage have been replaced with a new set in which marriage is no longer a social or a family concern[4]. It is purely a personal affair leading a man and woman to seek social, psychological and economic happiness by pursuing their own free will[5].

Modern attitude of man and woman with regard to marriage has changed a lot.

Corresponding author: **Ankit Singh**
Department of Biostatistics, Himalayan Institute of Medical Sciences, Dehradun

Modern concept about marriage and family has undergone significantly a sea change owing to the influence western of civilization[6]. "Higher education, material prosperity, higher employment opportunities and financial independence of women, awareness of gender equality and personal freedom, modern understanding of human sexuality, easy access to other cultures[7].

Though religion is a universal phenomenon it is understood differently by different people. According to Durkheim – religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things that is to way, things set apart and forbidden[8]. According to Mcdonald – "religion is an attitude towards superhuman powers" religious diversity in India[9]. The preamble of the Constitution of India proclaims India to be a secular republic where citizens may freely worship and propagate any religion of their choice[10]. The right to freedom of religion is also declared as a fundamental right by the Constitution of India. Indian religions have exerted significant influence all over the world[11]. The major Negative impact of religions is follows:

1. Groupism
2. Frequent conflicts
3. Dogmatism
4. Block social change

In recent decades family studies have undergone several developments. Family studies in India are viewed within the institutional framework of particular society. In each society, families vary in their extent of adjustment to accept norms owing to the family interaction pattern and external forces. The present article reviews the rapidly changing family scenario. Research studies on the family conducted in the past few decades in India have focused on various dimensions of family life (that is, multiple forms, structure, size, changing functions, and individual roles).

The Indian population can be divided on the basis of its religious composition. In 1981, the overwhelming majority forming 82.35% were Hindus followed by 11.74% Muslims, 2.44% Christians, 1.97% Sikhs, and 1.57% others[12]. The Hindus are divided into numerous castes and sub-castes. Although dogmatically Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Jainism do not approve the caste division, in practice castes or caste like groups also exist in each of them[13].

Most Hindu castes practice the patrilineal family system, although in the south-western state of Kerala the Nairs and a few other castes practice, by tradition, the matrilineal family system. Similarly, the Garo and Khasi tribes in north-eastern India are matrilineal though their matriliny is, in some ways, different from that of the Nairs. "From joint family to elementary farmer," this has been a slogan to summarize changes in the family in India during modern times[14, 15].

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study area: The study was conducted in the hilly rural areas of Uttarakhand.

Study participants: The subjects of the study were the local residents of selected hilly rural areas of Uttarakhand state.

Inclusion criteria for subjects: Women, who were ever married and unmarried, born in between 1931 to 2000.

Exclusion criteria for subjects: The following category of women have been excluded from the study-

- Those who were born before 1931 and after 2000.
- Who were unable to give their history because of mental illness, physical disability.
- Who were not signing the informed consent.

Ethical Approval: The study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Swami Rama Himalayan University, Jolly Grant, Dehradun. Informed consent in the local language have been taken from subjects during filling pre-designed questionnaire.

Data Collection: The data for the study was collected by conducting field survey in the hilly rural areas of Uttarakhand on key demographic characteristics of women and their households and detailed information on fertility and maternity. In this paper, we use the data for viewing the variation between age at marriage and first pregnancy in seven distinct birth cohorts.

Statistical Analysis: Data were analyzed using R Software 3.3.1 version. In this paper, an attempt has been made to fit the data in the stochastic model to view the variation in the interval between age at marriage and first pregnancy age for seven different birth cohorts, follows an exponential distribution with a density function-

$$f_0(t) = \lambda e^{-\lambda t} \; ; \; \lambda > 0, t > 0$$

having parameter λ.

The Kruskal-Wallis test has been used to view the significant difference and Sidak test is used to focus on the two cohorts which differs significantly with each other.

RESULTS

Table 1 Mean age at Marriage and first pregnancy age in females in 1931-2000

Cohort	Mean age at first marriage(years)			Mean age at first Pregnancy(years)		
	Hindu	**Muslim**	**Others**	**Hindu**	**Muslim**	**Others**
1931-1940	15.13	14.25	16.50	19.37	18.95	22.00
1941-1950	16.08	15.26	16.96	19.64	19.39	0.00
1951-1960	17.60	16.52	18.33	20.50	19.74	21.00
1961-1970	18.96	17.15	18.83	21.48	19.88	19.67
1971-1980	19.19	17.24	24.75	21.10	18.97	23.00
1981-1990	19.80	18.61	23.00	21.38	19.71	24.00
1991-2000	19.17	18.89	25.50	22.08	20.11	26.00

The above table illustrates that between 1931 and 2000 cohorts the mean age of marriage according to religions shows lower age at first marriage in muslimcommunity with slighter difference in others. Alongside this change, there has been a rise of about 1-2 year in the proportion of mean age at first pregnancy (slightly less for muslims compared with hindu).

Table 2 Mean interval between the age at first marriage and first pregnancy age in females for seven different cohorts according to religion (in months)

Cohort	Hindu			Muslim			Others		
	Mean interval	**Minimum gap**	**Maximum gap**	**Mean interval**	**Minimum gap**	**Maximu m gap**	**Mean interval**	**Minimum gap**	**Maximum gap**
1931-1940	51.76	2	240	20.95	3	60	66.00	12	120
1941-1950	45.13	1	240	61.57	12	264	0.00	0	0
1951-1960	35.45	1	192	27.68	3	72	32.00	12	48
1961-1970	31.01	1	168	22.03	4	72	13.00	3	24
1971-1980	24.20	1	168	22.18	1	156	27.25	1	60
1981-1990	20.99	1	144	15.29	1	120	15.40	5	24
1991-2000	13.41	1	72	18.14	1	144	18.00	12	24

In first cohort 1931-1940, the mean difference between age at marriage and first pregnancy is very high i.e. 51.76 months because of gauna ceremony is associated with the custom of child marriage. This ceremony takes place several years after marriage. This mean difference decreases rapidly in each cohort because nowadays this tradition is not existing anymore.

Table 3 Median interval between age at marriage and age at first pregnancy (according to Religion) and Significance difference between the two respective cohorts

Religion	Frequency	Median interval (in months)	p-value
Hindu	894	24	
Muslim	206	12	0.003
others	22	18	
Religion	Mean Difference	Std Error	p-value
Hindu-Muslim	5.216	2.343	.077
Hindu-Others	6.755	6.542	.660
Muslim-others	1.539	6.800	.994

The above table illustrates that frequency in all cohort 1931-2000 is higher in Hindus, then in muslims and slightly less in other religions like jain, buddhism etc. It shows a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) association between religions. The median interval between age at marriage and age at first pregnancy was higher in hindus, thereafter in others and less in muslims. But in association between hindu and muslim, Hindu and others and muslim and others it shows statistically insignificant i.e. ($p>0.05$).

Table 4 Mean age at Marriage and first pregnancy age in females in 1931-2000 for Caste

Cohort	Mean age at first marriage(years)			Mean age at first Pregnancy(years)		
	General	OBC	Others	General	OBC	Others
1931-1940	16.16	15.18	16.00	20.56	18.23	19.75
1941-1950	15.98	16.31	15.65	19.39	20.42	19.41
1951-1960	18.47	17.08	16.67	21.25	19.91	19.39
1961-1970	19.38	18.47	17.91	21.71	20.79	20.31
1971-1980	20.05	18.07	18.55	22.00	20.06	20.12
1981-1990	20.74	18.31	18.67	22.40	20.57	20.29
1991-2000	20.00	18.86	18.50	20.73	20.06	19.55

The above table illustrates that between 1931 and 2000 cohorts the mean age of marriage according to caste shows slight difference between age at first marriage. The above table also shows that mean age at first pregnancy is lower in other backward caste.

Table 5 Mean interval between the age at first marriage and first pregnancy age in females for seven different cohorts for caste

Cohort	GENERAL			OBC			Others		
	Mean interval	Minimum gap	Maximum gap	Mean interval	Minimum gap	Maximum gap	Mean interval	Minimum gap	Maximum gap
1931-1940	53.31	6	240	37.95	3	132	46.17	3	144
1941-1950	46.30	4	264	49.59	2	240	45.18	12	144
1951-1960	33.82	2	192	34.41	1	168	33.09	3	144
1961-1970	28.77	1	120	28.00	1	144	29.97	1	168
1971-1980	24.87	1	144	25.53	1	168	19.86	1	96
1981-1990	21.58	2	108	18.17	1	144	20.93	3	60
1991-2000	12.73	1	72	17.06	2	144	15.50	7	48

In first cohort 1931-1940, the mean interval between age at marriage and age at first pregnancy is very high i.e. 53.76 months because of gauna ceremony is associated with the custom of child marriage. This ceremony takes place several years after marriage. This mean difference decreases rapidly in each cohort because nowadays this tradition is not existing anymore.

Table 6 Median interval between age at marriage and age at first pregnancy (according to Caste)

Caste	Frequency	Median interval (in months)	p-value
General	442	24	
OBC	482	24	0.774
Others	198	24	
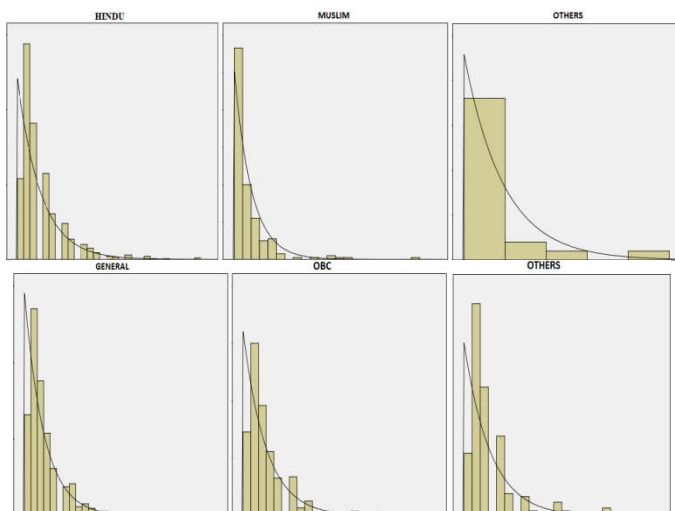
Figure 1 Exponential distribution of data according to Religion and Caste

The above table illustrates that frequency in all cohort 1931-2000 is higher in other backward caste, then in general caste and slightly less in other caste like SC, ST. It shows a statistically insignificant (p > 0.05) association between caste. The median interval between age at marriage and age at first pregnancy was similar in each caste. The above graph shows the exponential distribution of data in each cohorts according to religion and caste. This shows that there is rapidly decrease in difference between age at marriage and age at first pregnancy due to modernization, increase in literacy rate andincrease in child and mother care by health facilities.

DISCUSSION

The variation between the age at marriage and first pregnancy according to the religion and caste is seen in this paper. This study helps us in estimating the variation in the interval between age at marriage and first pregnancy over time. It determines how and till what extent the changes in the median time of the interval between the age at marriage and first pregnancy would have been fluctuating over time.

This paper contains a detailed examination of the variation in the gap between the age of women at the time of marriage and first pregnancy age in the hilly rural areas of Uttarakhand for the 7 different cohorts of 10 years each. The mean difference between age at marriage and age at first pregnancy in months decreases rapidly from cohort 1931 to 2000.In 1929, Sarada Act a child marriage restraint act legislates the minimum age at marriage for girls raised to 14 years. But the gauna ceremony is associated with the custom of child marriage. This ceremony takes place several years after marriage. That's why the difference between mean age at marriage and mean age at first pregnancy was so high[16], Nowadays this tradition is fully eliminated therefore the difference decreases with cohorts.In 1955, Hindu Marriage Act legislates the minimum age of marriage for boys is 18 years and 15 years for girls[17, 18]. Until the passage of this act, in theory was free to marry with number of women. The act of 1955 allows women to divorce if they are married to men who are insane, affiliated with leprosy and venereal diseases[19].

This study investigated cohort fertility patterns among Hindus and Muslims in India, and the causes of higher fertility among Muslims, by considering cohorts of women from 1931 to 2000, and adopting a causal analysis framework. This is the first study to focus on cohort fertility patterns among Hindus and Muslims in India. A gap of 1.95years in mean age at marriage between Muslim and Hindu women was found for the 1971-1980 cohort and a maximum gap of 2.20 years in mean age at first pregnancy between Hindu and Muslim in cohort 1971-80. A decrease of about 0.28 yearsmean age at marriage for Hindus and Muslims would be expected between the 1991-2000 cohorts as a result of the similar pace of mean age at marriage decline for both groups. Over the considered cohorts, the Median interval between age at marriage and age at first pregnancy were about 24months and 12 months respectively for Muslim women than for Hindu women. Similarly, a gap of 2.43 years in mean age at marriage between general and other backward caste was found in cohort 1981-90.Over the considered cohorts, the Median interval between age at marriage and age at first pregnancy were same of about 24 months respectively for general and other backward caste. The difference in age at marriage and age at first pregnancy between general and other backward caste decreases with cohorts.

At present, no other such relevant study was found for the estimation of marriage and socio-cultural changes between caste and religion for the comparison of this study.

CONCLUSION

Family has been recognized as a basic unit of society and is a link between individual and community. The structure of the family continues to be patriarchal. A number of changes have been observed in the patterns of marriage such as age at marriage, inter-caste marriage, etc. A relative increase is noticed in divorce cases in urban areas. It was quite common in the past but at that time families were more stable and provided adequate security in terms of physical, social and emotional needs. Current trends indicate that there is a definite change in the basic system of family, especially the role of elders and disharmony in husband-wife relationship. Divorce rates are testimony to the increasing fragility of husband-wife relationship. Migration has major implications on women and children. Although children in several set-ups, women, and the elderlies have been the subjects of various studies, investigations on the family as a whole are clearly very limited. There is, therefore, a need to bring together under one umbrella, all research efforts which focus on specific aspects of family with the aim of influencing family practices and family policy development. Religion could be a differentiating factor in value orientations and behaviour pattern in India. Unlike the all India pattern, Uttarakhand has a sizable proportion of population from all the three major religious groups, (Hindu, Muslim and Christian), giving the different religious value systems an opportunity to operate on the level of fertility. All religious categories have low fertility level in Uttarakhand.

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