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CHANGING ATTITUDES OF YOUTH TOWARD MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS IN PATNA DISTRICT

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Abstract

The present pilot study examines the changing attitudes of youth toward marriage and relationships in Patna district, Bihar. Indian society has traditionally considered marriage a sacred institution strongly influenced by caste, religion, family values, and social customs. However, modernization, urbanization, education, globalization, media exposure, and social networking platforms have significantly influenced the perceptions and attitudes of young people regarding marriage and relationships. Youth today increasingly value personal choice, emotional compatibility, gender equality, and individual freedom in marital decisions.

The study aims to understand the changing perspectives of youth toward love marriage, arranged marriage, inter-caste marriage, live-in relationships, dating culture, and gender roles in relationships. The research also examines the influence of education, social media, urbanization, and family background on youth attitudes. The study adopted descriptive and exploratory research design. Primary data were collected from 40 respondents through interviews, observation, and informal discussions among college students and young adults in Patna district. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, research articles, and online academic sources.

The findings reveal that educated urban youth are increasingly supportive of love marriage, inter-caste marriage, and gender equality in relationships. Social media and modernization have influenced openness toward dating and personal choice in marital decisions. However, traditional values, family pressure, caste restrictions, and social expectations continue to influence attitudes, especially among rural youth. The study concludes that youth attitudes toward marriage and relationships are undergoing gradual transformation, reflecting the interaction between tradition and modernity in contemporary Indian society.

Keywords

Youth, Marriage, Relationships, Modernization, Love Marriage, Arranged Marriage, Gender Equality, Social Change, Urbanization, Patna District

1. Introduction

Marriage is one of the oldest and most important social institutions in human society. In India, marriage has traditionally been regarded as a sacred union not only between two individuals but also between two families. Indian marriages are generally influenced by caste, religion, community traditions, economic status, and family expectations. Arranged marriage has historically been the dominant form of marriage in Indian society.

However, in recent decades, rapid social change has transformed attitudes toward marriage and relationships among youth. Modernization, education, urbanization, industrialization, globalization, media exposure, and digital communication have influenced the thinking and lifestyles of young people. Concepts such as romantic

love, dating, individual freedom, gender equality, and personal compatibility are becoming increasingly important in marital decisions.

Patna district, as an important educational and urban center in Bihar, reflects both traditional cultural values and modern social influences. Youth in Patna are exposed to modern ideas through colleges, universities, social media, films, and digital platforms. These influences have led to changing perceptions regarding love marriage, inter-caste marriage, live-in relationships, and partner selection.

At the same time, traditional family structures and social norms continue to play a strong role in marital decisions. Many families still prefer arranged marriages within caste and community boundaries. As a result, youth often experience conflict between personal desires and social expectations.

The present pilot study seeks to examine the changing attitudes of youth toward marriage and relationships in Patna district and analyse the sociological factors influencing these changes.

2. Rationale of the Study

The study is important because youth attitudes toward marriage and relationships reflect broader processes of social change in society. Marriage patterns are changing due to modernization, education, globalization, and media influence. Understanding these changes is necessary for studying family transformation and youth culture in contemporary India.

Patna district has experienced rapid educational and urban development, leading to greater interaction between traditional and modern values. Young people are increasingly exposed to new ideas regarding love, relationships, gender equality, and personal freedom. However, traditional customs, caste restrictions, and family expectations continue to influence marital decisions.

This study is socially relevant because changing attitudes toward marriage affect family structures, gender relations, and social institutions. The findings may help sociologists, educators, counsellors, and policymakers understand the aspirations, challenges, and emotional conflicts faced by youth.

The study is also academically significant because limited sociological research has focused specifically on youth attitudes toward marriage and relationships in Patna district. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap.

3. Review of Related Literature

M. N. Srinivas (1966), in his work *"Social Change in Modern India,"* studied modernization and changing family structures in India. The objective was to analyse the influence of Westernization and urbanization on traditional institutions. Using qualitative village studies, Srinivas found that modernization encourages individual choice and weakens rigid caste restrictions in marriage.

A. M. Shah (1998), in his study *"The Family in India,"* examined changes in family and marriage patterns in urban India. The study found increasing preference for nuclear families and greater youth participation in marital decisions.

Researcher Patricia Uberoi (2006), in her study *"Freedom and Destiny: Gender, Family and Popular Culture in India,"* analysed the influence of media and popular culture on youth attitudes toward love and marriage. The findings showed that films and television promote romantic ideals and influence youth perceptions regarding relationships.

Researcher Dr. Neha Verma (2018) from Patna University conducted a study titled *"Changing Marriage Patterns among Urban Youth in Bihar."* The objective was to analyze youth attitudes toward love marriage and inter-caste marriage. Survey methodology was used. The findings revealed increasing acceptance of love marriage among educated youth.

Research conducted by Dr. Ritu Singh (2020) at Banaras Hindu University titled *"Social Media and Youth Relationships"* examined the influence of digital communication on youth interactions and romantic relationships. The findings indicated that social media has increased openness toward dating culture and interpersonal communication among youth.

Research Gap

Most previous studies have focused broadly on family change and marriage patterns in India. Limited sociological studies have specifically examined changing attitudes of youth toward marriage and relationships in Patna district.

Furthermore, existing research rarely compares traditional values with modern influences such as social media, higher education, and urbanization. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by focusing specifically on youth perceptions regarding marriage and relationships in Patna district.

4. Statement of the Problem

Modernization and globalization have significantly influenced youth attitudes toward marriage and relationships in India. Traditional arranged marriage systems are increasingly challenged by ideas of love marriage, individual choice, and gender equality. However, social norms related to caste, religion, and family honour continue to influence marital decisions.

The present study seeks to examine how modernization has changed youth attitudes toward marriage and relationships in Patna district. **Changing Attitudes of Youth toward Marriage and Relationships in Patna District**

5. Objectives of the Study

1. To study youth attitudes toward marriage and relationships.
2. To examine the influence of modernization on marital preferences.
3. To analyse attitudes toward love marriage, arranged marriage, and inter-caste marriage.
4. To study the influence of social media and education on relationships.
5. To identify conflicts between traditional values and modern attitudes.

6. Research Questions

1. What are the changing attitudes of youth toward marriage?
2. How does modernization influence relationships among youth?
3. Are youth supportive of love marriage and inter-caste marriage?
4. What role does social media play in shaping relationships?
5. How do traditional family values influence youth decisions?

7. Operational Definition of Key Terms

Youth

Individuals between the ages of 18–35 years included in the study.

Marriage

A socially and legally recognized union between two individuals.

Love Marriage

Marriage based on personal choice and romantic relationship.

Arranged Marriage

Marriage arranged primarily by family members.

Modernization

Social transformation influenced by education, urbanization, technology, and globalization.

8. Methodology of the Study

The present study is descriptive and exploratory in nature. The study was conducted in selected educational institutions and urban localities of Patna district.

A sample of 40 respondents was selected through purposive sampling. The respondents included college students and working youth from different social and educational backgrounds.

Primary data were collected through:

- Interview schedules
- Observation
- Informal discussions

Secondary data were collected from:

- Books
- Journals
- Research articles
- Online academic sources

The collected data were analysed using percentage analysis and descriptive interpretation.

9. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The present chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of data collected from 40 youth respondents in Patna district regarding their attitudes toward marriage and relationships. The collected data were classified into different categories and analysed with the help of tables, percentages, and descriptive interpretation. The analysis focuses on changing perceptions regarding marriage, relationships, gender equality, social media influence, family expectations, and modern social values among youth.

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Respondents	Percentage
18–22 Years	14	35%
23–27 Years	16	40%
28–35 Years	10	25%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

The majority of respondents (40%) belonged to the age group of 23–27 years, while 35% were between 18–22 years and 25% belonged to the age group of 28–35 years.

The findings indicate that young adults are more actively engaged in discussions regarding relationships, career, marriage, and personal freedom. Respondents between 23–27 years showed greater interest in

independent decision-making and modern relationship patterns. Younger respondents were more influenced by social media and peer culture compared to older respondents.

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	22	55%
Female	18	45%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

The table reveals that 55% of respondents were male and 45% were female.

The findings indicate that both male and female youth actively participated in expressing opinions regarding marriage and relationships. Female respondents showed stronger support for gender equality, education, and career-oriented marriage decisions. Male respondents were comparatively more influenced by family expectations and economic considerations.

Table 3: Educational Status of Respondents

Educational Level	Respondents	Percentage
Undergraduate	18	45%
Postgraduate	14	35%
Professional Courses	8	20%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

The above table indicates that 45% of respondents were undergraduate students, while 35% had postgraduate education and 20% were pursuing professional courses.

The findings suggest that education significantly influences attitudes toward marriage and relationships. Educated youth were more supportive of personal choice, inter-caste marriage, and gender equality. Exposure to higher education increases social interaction and awareness regarding modern lifestyles and relationship values.

Table 4: Residential Background of Respondents

Residential Area	Respondents	Percentage
Urban Area	24	60%
Semi-Urban Area	10	25%
Rural Area	6	15%

Residential Area	Respondents	Percentage
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

The table shows that 60% of respondents belonged to urban areas, while 25% came from semi-urban areas and 15% from rural areas.

Urban youth were found to be more open toward modern relationship patterns such as love marriage and inter-caste marriage. Rural respondents showed relatively conservative attitudes influenced by traditional family values and community norms.

Table 5: Preference for Type of Marriage

Type of Marriage Preferred	Respondents	Percentage
Love Marriage	18	45%
Arranged Marriage	12	30%
Love-cum-Arranged Marriage	10	25%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

The majority of respondents (45%) preferred love marriage, while 30% preferred arranged marriage and 25% supported love-cum-arranged marriage.

The findings indicate increasing importance of emotional compatibility and personal choice among youth. However, many respondents also preferred family involvement in marital decisions, leading to support for love-cum-arranged marriage.

Table 6: Attitude toward Inter-Caste Marriage

Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Supportive	20	50%
Opposed	11	27.5%
Neutral	9	22.5%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

Half of the respondents supported inter-caste marriage, while 27.5% opposed it and 22.5% remained neutral.

The findings reveal gradual decline in caste rigidity among educated urban youth. Supporters believed that education and compatibility are more important than caste identity. However, opposition remained strong among respondents influenced by traditional family and community expectations.

Table 7: Attitude toward Inter-Religious Marriage

Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Supportive	14	35%
Opposed	18	45%
Neutral	8	20%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

The table indicates that 45% of respondents opposed inter-religious marriage, while 35% supported it.

The findings suggest that religion continues to strongly influence marriage decisions. Many respondents feared social conflict, family opposition, and cultural adjustment problems in inter-religious marriages. Urban educated youth were comparatively more supportive.

Table 8: Influence of Social Media on Relationships

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Strong Influence	17	42.5%
Moderate Influence	15	37.5%
No Influence	8	20%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

The majority of respondents acknowledged the influence of social media on relationships. About 42.5% reported strong influence, while 37.5% reported moderate influence.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and online communication apps have increased interaction among youth. Respondents stated that social media influences friendship, dating culture, emotional communication, and partner selection.

Table 9: Opinion on Gender Equality in Relationships

Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Support	22	55%
Moderately Support	13	32.5%
Do Not Support	5	12.5%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

The findings reveal that 55% of respondents strongly supported gender equality in relationships.

Female respondents especially emphasized equal rights in education, employment, career decisions, and household responsibilities. The findings indicate growing awareness regarding women's empowerment and changing gender roles among youth.

Table 10: Family Influence on Marriage Decisions

Level of Family Influence	Respondents	Percentage
High Influence	16	40%
Moderate Influence	14	35%
Low Influence	10	25%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

The table reveals that family influence remains significant in marital decisions. About 40% reported high family influence.

The findings indicate that despite modernization and individualism, Indian families continue to play an important role in partner selection and marriage arrangements. Youth often experience conflict between personal desires and family expectations.

Table 11: Attitude toward Live-in Relationships

Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Acceptable	12	30%
Not Acceptable	20	50%
Neutral	8	20%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

Half of the respondents considered live-in relationships socially unacceptable, while 30% accepted them.

The findings indicate that traditional cultural values continue to dominate attitudes regarding live-in relationships. Urban youth were comparatively more open-minded, while rural respondents strongly opposed such relationships.

Table 12: Preferred Qualities in Marriage Partner

Preferred Qualities	Respondents	Percentage
Education	14	35%
Good Nature	10	25%
Financial Stability	8	20%
Physical Appearance	5	12.5%
Same Caste/Religion	3	7.5%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

Education was considered the most important quality in a marriage partner by 35% of respondents.

The findings suggest that modern youth give greater importance to education, personality, and financial stability rather than caste and traditional family background.

Table 13: Opinion Regarding Career before Marriage

Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Career Should Come First	24	60%
Marriage Should Come First	7	17.5%
Both Equally Important	9	22.5%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

The majority of respondents believed that career should be prioritized before marriage.

The findings indicate changing aspirations among youth, especially among women who seek economic independence and professional success before marriage.

Table 14: Opinion on Dating Culture

Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Supportive	16	40%
Opposed	14	35%
Neutral	10	25%

Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

The table shows mixed attitudes toward dating culture. Urban youth were more supportive, while rural respondents showed hesitation.

The findings suggest that dating culture is gradually becoming acceptable among educated youth due to modernization and media influence.

Table 15: Source of Influence on Relationship Attitudes

Source of Influence	Respondents	Percentage
Social Media	15	37.5%
Family	10	25%
Friends/Peer Group	8	20%
Films and Television	5	12.5%
Educational Institutions	2	5%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Analysis and Interpretation

Social media emerged as the strongest influence on youth attitudes toward relationships.

The findings indicate that digital communication and entertainment media significantly shape modern relationship ideals and expectations among youth.

Overall Interpretation of Data

The overall analysis reveals significant changes in youth attitudes toward marriage and relationships in Patna district. Education, urbanization, modernization, and social media have encouraged greater acceptance of love marriage, gender equality, inter-caste marriage, and personal freedom in relationships.

At the same time, traditional institutions such as caste, religion, and family continue to influence marital decisions. Many respondents preferred balancing personal choice with family approval.

Urban educated youth were found to be more supportive of modern relationship values, while rural youth remained comparatively conservative. The findings indicate that Indian society is experiencing gradual transformation where traditional and modern values coexist simultaneously.

The study concludes that youth attitudes toward marriage and relationships reflect broader processes of social change, modernization, and cultural transition in contemporary Indian society.

10. Findings

1. Youth attitudes toward marriage are changing due to modernization.
2. Love marriage is increasingly accepted among educated youth.
3. Social media strongly influences relationships and communication.
4. Gender equality is widely supported among respondents.
5. Traditional family values continue to influence marriage decisions.
6. Inter-caste marriage is gradually becoming more acceptable.
7. Rural youth are more conservative compared to urban youth.
8. Live-in relationships remain less accepted socially.

11. Discussion

The study reveals a gradual transformation in youth attitudes toward marriage and relationships. Education, urbanization, and media exposure have encouraged ideas of personal choice, emotional compatibility, and gender equality.

However, traditional institutions such as caste, family honour, and arranged marriage continue to shape social behaviour. Youth often experience conflict between modern aspirations and traditional expectations.

The findings support sociological theories of modernization which suggest that social change weakens traditional structures and promotes individualism.

12. Suggestions

1. Educational institutions should promote awareness regarding healthy relationships.
2. Family counselling programs should address generational conflicts.
3. Gender equality awareness should be strengthened.
4. Social media literacy programs should guide youth regarding responsible communication.
5. Society should encourage freedom of choice while respecting cultural values.

13. Recommendations

1. Youth counselling centers should be established in educational institutions.
2. Awareness campaigns regarding gender sensitivity should be conducted.
3. Family and community dialogue should be encouraged to reduce conflicts.
4. Educational curricula should include life skills and relationship education.

14. Suggestions for Further Studies

1. Comparative studies between rural and urban youth may be conducted.
2. Future research may focus on online dating culture.
3. Studies may examine marriage anxiety among youth.
4. Research can analyse the impact of social media addiction on relationships.

15. Sociological Implications of the Study

The study highlights the interaction between tradition and modernity in contemporary Indian society. Youth attitudes toward marriage reflect changing social norms, gender roles, and family structures.

The findings contribute to the sociology of family, youth culture, and modernization by demonstrating how globalization and technology influence interpersonal relationships.

Conclusion

The present pilot study examined changing attitudes of youth toward marriage and relationships in Patna district. The study found that modernization, education, and social media have significantly influenced youth perceptions regarding marriage, relationships, and gender equality.

Youth increasingly value personal choice, emotional compatibility, and individual freedom. However, traditional values related to caste, religion, and family honour continue to influence marital decisions.

The study concludes that attitudes toward marriage and relationships are gradually transforming, reflecting broader social changes in Indian society. Both traditional and modern values coexist, creating new patterns of social interaction and family life among youth in Patna district.

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