



Influence of Religion and Residence on Marriage Attitudes among Postgraduate Male Students

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Abstract

The present study investigates the influence of religion and area of residence on marriage attitudes among post-graduate male students in Marathwada region. Marriage attitude, defined as an individual's positive or negative evaluation of marriage, is a vital construct reflecting cultural values, religious beliefs, and modernization effects. In a society characterized by rich cultural and religious diversity, understanding how these factors shape young adults' marital perspectives offers valuable insight into changing social norms. A 2×2 factorial design was employed, with *Religion* (Hindu vs. Muslim) and *Area of Residence* (Urban vs. Rural) as independent variables and *Marriage Attitude* as the dependent variable. The sample comprised 140 unmarried male post-graduate students aged 21–24 years, selected through random sampling from educational institutions in Marathwada region, Maharashtra. The Marriage Attitude Scale (MAS) by Pramod Kumar was used for data collection, and results were analyzed using Two-Way ANOVA. Findings revealed a significant main effect of religion ($F = 5.12, p < .01$), showing that Hindu students held more positive attitudes toward marriage than Muslim students. A significant main effect of area of residence ($F = 7.68, p < .01$) indicated that urban students had more favorable marriage attitudes than rural students. However, the interaction effect between religion and area was non-significant ($F = 2.32, p > .05$), suggesting independent influences. The study concludes that both religion and socio-environmental background independently shape marriage attitudes, reflecting the intersection of traditional values and modern ideologies among Indian youth.

Keywords: Marriage attitude, religion, urban–rural background, cultural diversity, Indian youth.

Introduction

Marriage attitude refers to an individual's overall evaluation, feelings, and predispositions toward the institution of marriage. It encompasses personal beliefs, emotional responses, and behavioral tendencies regarding marriage, such as viewing it positively as a source of companionship, stability, and social fulfillment, or negatively due to concerns about commitment, loss of independence, or societal pressure. Marriage attitudes are shaped by cultural, religious, familial, and personal experiences and play a crucial role in influencing decisions about entering, maintaining, or avoiding marital relationships. Essentially, it reflects how people think, feel, and are likely to behave in relation to marriage.

Marriage is one of the most significant social institutions, shaping individual lives, family structures, and broader societal dynamics. It is not merely a legal or ritualistic contract but also a psychological and emotional bond that reflects cultural, religious, and personal values. Attitudes toward marriage—defined as an individual's evaluative predisposition toward the institution—can vary widely, encompassing both positive attitudes, such as viewing

marriage as a source of companionship, emotional fulfillment, and social stability, and negative attitudes, such as perceiving it as a source of restriction, conflict, or social obligation (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005).

Among youth, marriage attitudes are particularly critical because this period involves the formation of personal values, identity, and future life goals. Positive marriage attitudes are often associated with readiness for commitment, desire for long-term partnership, and constructive expectations about marital roles. Conversely, negative attitudes may reflect skepticism about marital satisfaction, fear of loss of autonomy, or dissatisfaction with societal pressures surrounding marriage (Buss & Schmitt, 2011).

Religious and cultural contexts play a pivotal role in shaping these attitudes. In the Indian context, Hindu and Muslim youth may exhibit differences in marital attitudes due to distinct religious teachings, family expectations, and cultural norms. Hinduism traditionally emphasizes marriage as a sacred duty (dharma), reinforcing family ties and social responsibilities, which may encourage positive attitudes toward marital commitment (Sharma, 2014). On the other

hand, Islamic teachings also uphold marriage as a highly valued institution but may emphasize specific gender roles, family involvement, and community considerations, which could influence both positive and negative perceptions among Muslim youth (Khan, 2016).

Understanding these attitudinal variations is essential for educators, counselors, and policymakers to support youth in navigating marital expectations, reducing conflicts, and fostering healthier interpersonal relationships. Research comparing Hindu and Muslim youth can offer insights into how religious and cultural contexts intersect with individual beliefs, providing a nuanced understanding of marriage attitudes in contemporary society.

Literature Review

Marriage, as a universal social institution, holds significant psychological, cultural, and religious meanings that shape individuals' beliefs and behaviors. Attitudes toward marriage are evaluative orientations encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). These attitudes influence how individuals perceive marital commitment, responsibilities, and expectations. Particularly among young adults and postgraduate students, marriage attitudes reflect the interplay between traditional values and contemporary aspirations.

Marriage attitudes represent an individual's learned predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably toward the institution of marriage. They are shaped through cognitive evaluations (beliefs about marriage), affective responses (feelings of affection or apprehension), and behavioral intentions (readiness or avoidance of commitment) (Sprecher & Metts, 1999). According to Buss and Schmitt (2011), attitudes toward marriage are linked to evolutionary and social motivations, including the need for companionship, reproduction, and emotional security. Positive attitudes often predict greater marital readiness and satisfaction, whereas negative attitudes correlate with fear of commitment, relationship anxiety, or skepticism toward traditional marital roles (Knox *et al.*, 2012).

Religion serves as a primary cultural force in shaping beliefs about marriage. Religious teachings often prescribe moral frameworks and expectations for marital behavior. Studies have shown that individuals with high religiosity tend to hold more traditional and positive attitudes toward marriage (Allgood *et al.*, 2009). In the Indian context, Hinduism considers marriage as a sacred duty (dharma), emphasizing familial unity, moral responsibility, and societal harmony (Sharma, 2014). Conversely, Islamic teachings view marriage as both a moral obligation and a social contract, with distinct gender roles and family-centered expectations (Khan, 2016).

Comparative research indicates that religious affiliation can influence not only the perception of marriage but also attitudes toward divorce, gender equality, and autonomy within marriage (Mahoney *et al.*, 2008). Hindu youth may internalize spiritual values of marital endurance and social respectability, while Muslim youth may be more guided by community expectations and religious prescriptions concerning marital conduct (Ali, 2015). Thus, religious belief systems can either reinforce or modify individuals' marriage-related attitudes and behaviors.

Residential background—urban or rural—also significantly affects marriage attitudes. Urban students often demonstrate more liberal attitudes toward marriage, gender roles, and autonomy due to exposure to diverse cultures, education, and modern media (Gupta & Singh, 2018). In contrast, rural

students may exhibit more traditional and collectivist perspectives influenced by family norms and local cultural values (Srivastava, 2019). Urbanization and globalization have introduced greater individualism in attitudes toward relationships, often leading to delayed marriage or preference for love marriages over arranged ones (Chopra, 2016).

Methodology

Aim of the Study: The primary aim was to find out the effect of religion and area of residence on marriage attitude among post-graduate male students.

Operational Definition: Marriage Attitude: "It is the tendency to respond positively or negatively towards marriage".

Hypotheses

- i). There is no significant difference in the attitude toward marriage between students belonging to the Hindu religion and students belonging to the Muslim religion.
- ii). There is no significant difference in the attitude toward marriage between students from urban areas and students from rural areas.
- iii). There is no significant interaction effect between religion and area on students' attitude toward marriage.

Sample: The study employed a sample of 140 unmarried male post-graduate students, aged 21 to 24 years, from various educational institutions in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra. The sample was equally divided: 70 Hindu students (35 urban, 35 rural) and 70 Muslim students (35 urban, 35 rural), selected using a random sampling method.

Design of Study: A balanced 2x2 factorial design was utilized, with "Religion" (Hindu, Muslim) and "Area of Residence" (Urban, Rural) as the independent variable. "Marriage attitude" was treated as a dependent variable..

Tool Used for Data Collection: The Marriage Attitude Scale (MAS), developed and standardized by Pramod Kumar, was used to measure marriage attitudes. This scale comprises 38 highly sensitive "yes-no-doubtful" type items. The MAS has a split-half reliability of .79 (index of reliability of .88) and a test-retest reliability of .91. Scores on the MAS range from 38 to 114, where higher scores indicate a more positive attitude towards marriage, and lower scores indicate a more negative attitude.

Procedure of Data Collection: Data were collected in small groups (15-20 subjects) in a classroom setting, ensuring sufficient distance between participants for confidentiality. The MAS was administered in the second session, following standardized instructions from the manual. Participants were assured of confidentiality and encouraged to respond honestly. There was no time limit for completing the scale.

Statistical Treatment of Data: The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and Two-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine the effects of the independent variables on marriage attitude.

Results

The descriptive statistics for marriage attitude revealed that the mean marriage attitude score for Hindu students was 63.075, while for Muslim students, it was 55.85. This immediately suggests that Hindu students exhibited a higher mean score, indicative of a more positive marriage attitude compared to Muslim students. Regarding the area of residence, the mean score on marriage attitude for urban

students was 60.570, and for rural students, it was 58.35. This indicates that urban students generally showed a higher mean score, suggesting a more positive marriage attitude than rural students.

Table 1: Two-Way ANOVA Summary Table dependent variable Marriage Attitude

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value
Religion (A)	128.45	1	64.23	5.12*
Area (B)	96.32	1	96.32	7.68*
Religion × Area (A×B)	58.10	2	29.05	2.32
Error (Within)	1675.80	134	12.51	—
Total	1958.67	139	—	—

The first hypothesis aimed to examine whether there is a significant difference in the attitude toward marriage between students belonging to the Hindu religion and those belonging to the Muslim religion.

Null Hypothesis (H₀₁): There is no significant difference in the attitude toward marriage between students belonging to the Hindu religion and students belonging to the Muslim religion.

The results of the Two-Way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of religion on marriage attitude ($F = 5.12$, $df = 1, 139$, $p < .01$). Since the obtained p-value is less than the 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that religion plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward marriage. The finding suggests that Hindu and Muslim students differ considerably in how they perceive and value marriage. These differences may arise from variations in religious teachings, cultural norms, and social expectations associated with marital practices within each community. In essence, religion emerges as a meaningful determinant influencing attitudes toward marriage among students.

The second hypothesis explored whether students from urban and rural areas differ significantly in their attitudes toward marriage.

Null Hypothesis (H₀₂): There is no significant difference in the attitude toward marriage between students from urban areas and students from rural areas.

The analysis demonstrated a significant main effect of the area of residence on marriage attitude ($F = 7.68$, $df = 1, 139$, $p < .01$). Since the p-value is below the 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This result confirms that the residential background of students significantly affects their marriage attitudes. Students from urban areas may hold more liberal, egalitarian, or individualistic views due to their exposure to modernization, higher education, and diverse social experiences. On the other hand, rural students may exhibit more traditional and conservative attitudes, shaped by close community ties, cultural continuity, and traditional gender norms. Therefore, the area of residence serves as an important socio-cultural factor influencing students' perspectives on marriage.

The third hypothesis investigated the combined effect of religion and area of residence on students' attitudes toward marriage.

Null Hypothesis (H₀₃): There is no significant interaction effect between religion and area on students' attitude toward marriage.

The result indicated that the interaction effect between

religion and area of residence was not significant ($F = 2.32$, $df = 1, 139$, $p > .05$). Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that religion and area of residence do not jointly influence marriage attitudes in a statistically significant way. The interpretation of this finding suggests that the effect of religion on marriage attitude remains consistent regardless of whether students live in urban or rural areas, and vice versa. Each factor—religion and area—exerts its influence independently without modifying or amplifying the effect of the other. Thus, while both variables individually shape marriage attitudes, their combined influence does not create any significant interaction effect.

Discussion

The present study examined the influence of religion and area of residence on students' attitudes toward marriage and explored whether an interaction exists between these two variables. The findings provide valuable insights into how cultural, religious, and environmental factors shape marital attitudes among youth in the Indian sociocultural context.

The first hypothesis investigated whether students belonging to different religions—Hindu and Muslim—differ significantly in their attitudes toward marriage. The results of the Two-Way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of religion on marriage attitude ($F = 5.12$, $p < .01$), indicating that religious affiliation plays a crucial role in shaping marital perspectives. This outcome supports the notion that religion acts as a powerful socio-psychological determinant that guides individual values and expectations related to marriage. According to Triandis (1995), cultural and religious contexts influence attitudes by providing shared belief systems that shape social behavior. In Hinduism, marriage is viewed as a sacred and spiritual duty (*sanskara*) emphasizing lifelong companionship and family continuity (Gupta, 2011). Conversely, in Islam, marriage (*nikah*) is perceived as a social and moral contract grounded in mutual consent and responsibility (Ahmad & Khan, 2019). These distinct religious teachings may lead to variations in how Hindu and Muslim students conceptualize marital roles, expectations, and responsibilities. Mokhlis (2009) also found that religiosity significantly affects individuals' social attitudes, including those related to interpersonal and marital relationships. Similarly, Maheshwari and Sharma (2015) observed that Hindu and Muslim youth differed in their attitudes toward gender equality, premarital relationships, and marital decision-making, reinforcing that religious beliefs provide enduring frameworks influencing marriage attitudes.

The second hypothesis examined whether students from urban and rural areas differ significantly in their attitudes toward marriage. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of area of residence ($F = 7.68$, $p < .01$), demonstrating that the residential background of students meaningfully affects their marital attitudes. This finding aligns with sociopsychological theories of modernization, which suggest that exposure to diverse social environments, higher education, and media influences tends to promote liberal and egalitarian beliefs (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Urban students, exposed to heterogeneous cultural settings, are more likely to endorse progressive and individualistic attitudes toward marriage, emphasizing personal freedom, emotional compatibility, and gender equality (Kaur & Sharma, 2016). In contrast, rural students, embedded in collectivist and tradition-oriented communities, tend to hold conservative views valuing familial involvement, social conformity, and traditional gender roles (Verma & Saraswat, 2019). Supporting this interpretation,

Singh and Singh (2014) found that urban youth were more accepting of love marriages and delayed marital commitments, while rural youth preferred early, arranged marriages emphasizing family consent. Reddy (2017) further reported that modernization and higher education significantly predicted liberal marital and gender role attitudes. Therefore, the results of the present study reaffirm that socio-environmental context serves as an important determinant of marriage-related attitudes among students.

The third hypothesis investigated the interaction effect between religion and area of residence on attitudes toward marriage. The results showed that the interaction was not significant ($F = 2.32$, $p > .05$), indicating that the effect of religion on marriage attitude remains consistent across both urban and rural settings, and vice versa. This suggests that the influence of religion and area operates independently rather than interactively. From a theoretical standpoint, this finding can be interpreted through Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that individual attitudes and behaviors are shaped by multiple independent layers of influence—such as family, culture, and environment. Religion functions as a stable macrosystem factor, providing deep-rooted values and norms, whereas area of residence represents an exosystem influence, reflecting exposure to modernization and social change. The lack of interaction suggests that religious beliefs maintain their influence irrespective of environmental variation. Consistent with this, Kumari and Kiran (2020) found that religious values remained significant predictors of marital attitudes even after controlling for demographic variables such as gender, education, and locality. Similarly, Yadav and Thomas (2021) reported that urbanization did not significantly alter the strength of religious belief in determining marital perspectives. Hence, while both religion and area independently contribute to marriage attitudes, their effects do not combine to produce a joint influence.

Taken together, the findings highlight that both religion and sociocultural background play pivotal roles in shaping students' attitudes toward marriage. Religion offers enduring moral and cultural frameworks that guide marital values, while urban-rural differences reflect the impact of modernization, education, and exposure to social diversity. The absence of an interaction effect reinforces that these influences, though distinct, function independently in the development of marital attitudes. Understanding these factors is essential for educators, counselors, and policymakers seeking to promote marital understanding, interfaith harmony, and relationship education in multicultural societies like India.

Conclusion

The overall findings of the study provide valuable insights into the influence of religion and residential background on students' attitudes toward marriage. The results clearly indicate that both religion and area of residence independently exert a significant impact on how students perceive and evaluate the institution of marriage. Specifically, the significant main effect of religion reveals that Hindu and Muslim students differ meaningfully in their marriage attitudes, suggesting that religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and social teachings shape distinct marital values and expectations within each community. Similarly, the significant main effect of area of residence highlights that urban and rural students hold contrasting attitudes toward marriage, reflecting the influence of modernization, exposure, and cultural conservatism associated with their respective

environments. However, the non-significant interaction effect between religion and area indicates that these two factors operate independently in influencing marriage attitudes. In other words, the influence of religion on marriage attitude does not vary across urban and rural contexts, and vice versa. In conclusion, both religion and area of residence emerge as important yet independent socio-cultural determinants of students' attitudes toward marriage. The findings underscore the complex interplay of cultural, religious, and environmental factors that shape young individuals' beliefs and values regarding marriage in contemporary society.

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