

## Research Article

# A Study on Matrimonial Sites in India

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The two major objectives of the present study are 1) to understand the socio-economic and demographic profile of a sample of individuals who are currently registered on a matrimonial site, and 2) to discover the differences in partner preferences of men and women on matrimonial sites, apart from noting their experience of being on matrimonial sites. A total of 103 respondents currently registered on a matrimonial site took part in the study. The present study has led to two major findings: 1) Both male and female respondents are more dissatisfied than satisfied with the services provided via matrimonial sites, and 2) Arranged marriage is taking a modern turn and has assumed some of the characteristics of modern dating sites. There is a growing concern about the business-like nature of arranged marriage through matrimonial sites. Excessive importance is being given to materialistic facets at the cost of other important variables such as personality, compatibility, and future plans. There is also a need to take greater efforts to filter fake profiles on matrimonial sites. Finally, the fact that people who had previously opted for paid membership are no longer willing to opt for it is an indication that the paid upgrades are not offering a satisfactory experience for the members. The need of the hour is for matrimonial sites to reduce their intense focus on economic variables and consider focusing on the other important factors that can help individuals find compatible partners.

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## Introduction

While internationally, and especially in America, researchers have begun focusing on studying interracial coupling (Miller et al., 2022), multicultural families (James et al., 2022), and sexual difficulties among couples (Graham et al., 2020), in India, arranged marriages that are linked to economic interests are still the norm (Parkin, 2021), and topics surrounding sexual satisfaction are not discussed very openly.

Arranged marriage is often confused with forced marriage, which is considered a form of abuse by men against women (Idriss, 2022). Arranged marriage is a form of pre-planned coupling based on common interests and goals. In the modern era, and especially since the beginning of the internet era, arranged marriages have taken a technological turn. Today, arranged marriage sites, commonly known as matrimonial sites, resemble dating sites in many ways and are also available on smartphones via apps (Chakraborty, 2019).

Historically speaking, arranged marriages have existed throughout history, with anthropological evidence suggesting that historically, it has been more common for parents to choose their children's spouse than previously assumed (Apostolou, 2017). This has certainly been the case in India, where the tradition is very much alive, and in fact, it is estimated that more than 95 per cent of all marriages in countries like India (Singh et al., 2016) are arranged.

There is, however, a significant difference between traditional arranged marriages and arranged marriages in the 21st century, especially in urban areas that have a considerable middle class and upper middle class population that is educated and has access to the latest technology, including smartphones and high-speed mobile and broadband internet (Yadav et al., 2021). Although some of the online matrimonial sites in India have their origins in the late 1990s (Srinivasan, 2021), the online matrimony revolution began much later after the internet revolution took over. Today, anyone aged 18 and above can register on a matrimonial site in India, upload their profile, like one would do on a dating site, and begin sending and accepting requests to take things forward. It must be noted, however, that since the same profile can be logged into through multiple devices at the same time, parents of the would-be bride/groom can also operate the profile on behalf of the individual. In some cases, the siblings or close relatives of the individual may also operate the profile, or the profile might be jointly operated by multiple relatives, including the individual seeking a partner. Although this might seem like a violation of privacy, and perhaps it is in some ways, this does not raise the eyebrows of most Indians because marriage is not just seen as a union of two people, but a union of two families as well, and arranged marriages generally accommodate the interests of the families concerned (Donner & Santos, 2016). On the other hand, due to this technological revolution that allows individuals to use matrimonial sites on their own as well, mate choices do matter, even if it is arranged. There are other factors, such as the liberalization, privatization, and globalization of the Indian economy, that have boosted the income levels of young working professionals in the country, which in turn has led to greater control being given to youngsters in choosing their partner. This structural adjustment of the economy, involving a shift from a state-

controlled economy to a more market-friendly economy, took place in the year 1991 (Baru & Mohan, 2018), and that was the turning point that helped India pave its path towards becoming one of the largest economies in the world today, with an active tourism industry that contributes 9.2 per cent to the Indian GDP (Chaudhary et al., 2020).

As far as partner preferences are concerned, there is considerable research that suggests that men and women differ when it comes to mate choices for long-term partnerships such as marriage (Bech-Sørensen & Pollet, 2016), with cross-cultural research indicating several differences, with women preferring to marry men who are older than them and men preferring to marry women who are generally younger than them (Walter et al., 2020). However, the question remains – how accurate is this in the case of arranged marriages? With millions of Indians seeking partners through the arranged marriage route and thus making use of matrimonial sites, this is a research question to which many would want to know the answer, and this is precisely why the researchers have opted to undertake the present study.

## **Methodology**

The two main objectives of the present study are 1) to understand the socio-economic and demographic profile of a sample of individuals who are currently registered on a matrimonial site and are looking for a partner, and 2) to discover the differences in partner preferences of men and women who are registered on matrimonial sites, apart from noting their experience of being registered on a matrimonial site.

### *Universe and Sampling*

Since the present study is focused on Indians who are registered on matrimonial sites and since it is difficult to identify and personally interview individuals who are registered on a matrimonial site, the data was collected from a sub-reddit (an online group) on the social media site Reddit. This sub-reddit was dedicated to arranged marriage, and participants were requested to fill in the online questionnaire shared on the site. A total of 114 responses were received, of which some were incomplete. Hence, the final sample size was 103.

### *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

In order to be included in this study, the respondents needed to be 18 years or older. Moreover, they needed to be currently registered on a matrimonial site and had to be currently residing in India. Individuals who were using matrimonial sites on behalf of someone else were excluded from the study.

since the aim of the study was to discover the partner preferences of the individuals themselves and not their parents/siblings/friends.

### *Tools of Data Collection*

As mentioned previously, an online questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire contained three parts. The first part contained questions related to socio-economic and demographic factors, whereas the second part contained questions related to their presence and experience on matrimonial sites. The third part of the questionnaire contained partner preferences. This included their preference in terms of age, height, income, and other important variables. Specifically, these variables were included as a result of reviewing previous studies that confirmed that there were certain gender differences in partner preferences in non-arranged marriage settings. For example, a meta-analysis showed that while men prefer women who are younger, women prefer men with breadwinning capabilities (Abramova et al., 2016). Studies also indicate that women prefer taller men (Buss & Schmitt, 2019). However, most of these studies have examined these preferences from the perspective of individuals registered on dating sites and were conducted mostly on Western populations. The present study is aimed at examining whether such preferences also hold true on arranged marriage sites or matrimonial sites in the Indian context.

### *Analysis of Data*

The collected data were entered into PSPP, a freeware data analysis software (Yagnik, 2014). Apart from conducting a basic percentage analysis to highlight the background characteristics of the respondents, the researchers also conducted chi-square tests to identify the differences in partner preferences between both genders. One of the reasons why chi-square tests were chosen was that the variables in the study were categorical in nature. Moreover, in some cases, Fisher's Exact test was used as it is more accurate and appropriate than chi-square tests for smaller samples (Connelly, 2016) and when more than 20% of the cells have less than 5 expected frequencies (Kim, 2017).

### *Ethical Consideration*

The researchers adhered to the principles laid out in the Belmont Report (Zucker, 2007) and also secured ethical approval from St. Joseph's University. None of the items in the questionnaire were hurtful in any manner. Respondents needed to provide their consent in order to be part of the study.

## Results

### *Background Characteristics (Table 1)*

A basic percentage analysis was conducted to understand the basic characteristics of the respondents (Table 1). From the results, it can be concluded that the respondents in the present study were well-educated and belonged to a well-off economic background. It is also important to note that the majority of the respondents in the present study hailed from metropolitan cities. This indicates that although matrimonial sites are used by individuals living in villages, they still remain more popular in cities, and in particular, metropolitan cities where many people migrate because of more job prospects in urban areas when compared to villages (Imbert & Papp, 2020). Migrating to a city or a metropolitan city can also result in the loss of contact with extended family members. This, in turn, could have an impact on the manner in which individuals seek potential partners. Traditionally, when a vast majority of Indians still lived in villages, arranged marriage partners were sought using extended family networks, mostly through word of mouth based on caste endogamy that drove the traditional arranged marriage system (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016). Today, migration has left many families disconnected from their extended family ties. As a result, matrimonial sites have become a more common tool for searching for potential mates for those looking for an arranged marriage. It appears to be more popular among the economically well-off because, in order to use these sites, one needs to own a computer or a smartphone, have an active and fast internet connection, and live in urban areas where there is already a concentration of individuals looking for potential partners through these arranged marriage sites.

Variables	N	%	$\bar{x}$ (min) (max)
<b>Age group (yrs)</b>			
21-30 years	88	85.4	27.43 (21) (56)
31 years and above	15	14.6	
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	40	38.8	
Male	63	61.2	
<b>Marital status</b>			
Never married	97	94.2	
Widowed	01	01	
Divorced/Separated	05	4.9	
<b>Religion</b>			
Hindu	69	67	
Muslim	07	6.8	
Christian	18	17.5	
Other	9	8.7	
<b>Highest qualification</b>			
Undergraduate	46	44.7	
Postgraduate	51	49.5	
PhD	06	05.8	
<b>Annual income (in Indian Rupees) Note: Rs. 7 lakh = 8,450 USD</b>			
Rs. 7 lakh and below	52	50.5	15.5 lakh (0) (1 crore)
Above Rs. 7 lakh	51	49.5	
<b>Current Location</b>			
Village/Town	17	16.5	
Town/City	21	20.4	

Variables	N	%	$\bar{x}$ (min) (max)
Metropolitan City	65	63.1	
<b>Alcohol consumption habits of the respondent</b>			
Never drinks	47	45.6	
Drink socially	51	49.5	
Drink regularly	05	4.9	
<b>Smoking habits of the respondent</b>			
Never smokes	84	81.6	
Smoke occasionally	17	16.5	
Smokes regularly	02	1.9	
<b>Economic status of the respondents' family</b>			
Rich	8	7.8	
Upper middle class	46	44.7	
Middle class	44	42.7	
Lower middle class	05	4.9	

**Table 1.** Basic Percentage Analysis (n =103)

### *Experience with Matrimonial sites (Table 2)*

Although a little more than half of the total respondents operate their matrimonial account by themselves, a considerable number of respondents have stated that either their parents operate and manage their account or that it is jointly managed. This indicates that although matrimonial sites and their mobile apps appear to be similar to dating sites in terms of their interface, the traditional arranged marriage system and its insistence on parents being the primary decision-makers hold true to some extent, although the sites do provide individuals who are seeking partners some autonomy in choosing their partners within the arranged marriage setup.

As far as the experience of being on the matrimonial site is concerned, there was just a 1 per cent difference in the percentage of individuals who were dissatisfied with matrimonial sites vs those who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and on the whole, a higher percentage of respondents were dissatisfied than satisfied with matrimonial sites. This is also reflected in the fact that a slightly higher percentage of respondents are not paid members at the moment when compared to the past. To understand the precise reasons as to why there is a sense of dissatisfaction among the respondents, the qualitative data in terms of the comments of the respondents have been analyzed.



Variables	N	%	$\bar{x}$ (min) (max)
<b>Number of years spent on matrimonial sites</b>			
0-1 year	67	65	1.6 (0.20) (8)
2-3 years	26	25.2	
4 years or more	10	9.7	
<b>Person who manages the respondent's matrimonial account</b>			
Respondent	56	54.4	
Parents/friends/siblings	19	18.4	
Jointly managed	28	27.2	
<b>Are you currently a paid member?</b>			
Yes	36	35	
No	67	65	
<b>Have you been a paid member in the past?</b>			
Yes	46	44.7	
No	57	55.3	
<b>Amount of money spent on matrimonial site so far</b>			
Rs. 5,000 or below	69	67	Rs. 8,303 (0) (1,00,000)
Rs. 5,001 to Rs. 10000	11	10.7	
Rs. 10001 and above	23	22.3	
<b>How satisfied are you with matrimonial sites?</b>			
Extremely dissatisfied	15	14.6	
Dissatisfied	34	33.0	
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	35	34.0	
Satisfied	13	12.6	
Extremely satisfied	06	5.8	

**Table 2.** Matrimonial Site Experience (n =103)

### *Differences in Partner Preferences across Gender (Table 3)*

In order to avoid overcrowding of the tables with multiple variables, only those results that were found to be statistically significant have been presented in Table 3. While chi-square tests were performed in the case of five of the variables, Fisher's exact test was performed in the case of two other variables. Fisher's test was opted for analyzing two of the seven variables because the assumption of minimum expected count in each cell (Franke et al., 2012) was violated in those two cases. This is a fundamental assumption that has to be met in order to carry out a chi-square test (Franke et al., 2012), and since it wasn't met in these two cases, Fisher's test was used instead of the chi-square test.

Based on the results laid out in Table 3, it can be stated that a greater percentage of female respondents than male respondents were more likely to prefer a partner who was taller, highly educated (postgraduate or above;  $p<0.001$ ), a higher-earning individual ( $p<0.0001$ ), and someone who was settled abroad ( $p<0.01$ ). This is in line with existing research that indicates that women tend to choose partners based on their sociosexuality, including their height, level of income, and education (Asendorpf et al., 2011). The results also indicate that women prefer older men, whereas men are more likely to prefer a younger partner. This too is in line with previous research (Schwarz & Hassebrauck, 2012). Female respondents were more likely to have their profiles managed by their parents or jointly managed when compared to male respondents ( $p<0.05$ ), and they were also more likely to spend a slightly greater number of years on a matrimonial site when compared to their male counterparts ( $p<0.01$ ). Both of these findings indicate that, in the case of female respondents, there is greater parental control and higher expectations from male counterparts.

Association between gender and preferred age of potential partner					
Gender	Same/Similar age	Younger	Older	Total	Chi sq. 46.094  Sig 0.000 (p<0.001)
Female	13 (32.5%)	2 (5.0%)	25 (62.5%)	40 (100%)	
Male	22 (34.9%)	37 (58.7%)	4 (6.3%)	63 (100%)	
Total	35 (34.0%)	39 (37.9%)	29 (28.2%)	103 (100%)	
Association between gender and preferred height of potential partner					
Gender	Same/Similar height	Shorter	Taller	Total	Chi sq. 60.826  Sig 0.000 (p<0.001)
Female	07 (17.5%)	0 (0.0%)	33 (82.5%)	40 (100%)	
Male	30 (47.6%)	28 (44.4%)	5 (7.9%)	63 (100%)	
Total	37 (35.9%)	28 (27.2%)	38 (36.9%)	103 (100%)	
Association between gender and preferred educational status of potential partner					
Gender	Undergradaute	Postgraduate or above	Total	Chi sq. 19.161  Sig 0.000 (p<0.001)	
Female	19 (47.5%)	21 (52.5%)	40 (100%)		
Male	55 (87.3%)	8 (12.7%)	63 (100%)		
Total	74 (71%)	29 (28.2%)	103 (100%)		
Association between gender and preferred income of the potential partner					
Gender	Below Rs. 7 lakh	Rs. 7 lakh and above	Total	Chi sq. 23.127  Sig 0.000 (P<0.001)	
Female	12 (30%)	28 (70%)	40 (100%)		
Male	49 (77.9%)	14 (22.2%)	63 (100%)		
Total	61 (59%)	42 (40.8%)	103 (100%)		
Association between gender and preferred location of the partner					
Gender	Doesn't matter	India	Abroad	Fisher's Exact Test  11.553  Sig 0.002 (P<0.01)	
Female	15 (37.5)	19 (47.5%)	06 (15%)		
Male	19 (30.2%)	44 (69.8%)	0 (0%)		
Total	61 (59%)	42 (40.8%)	6 (5.8%)		

Association between gender and profile management					
Gender	Respondent	Parents/friends/siblings	Jointly managed	Total	Chi sq.
Female	16 (40%)	12 (30%)	12 (30%)	40 (100%)	7.406
Male	40 (63.5%)	7 (11.1%)	16 (25.4%)	63 (100%)	Sig 0.025
Total	56 (54.4%)	19 (18.4%)	28 (27.2%)	103 (100%)	(p<0.05)
Association between gender and number of years spent on a matrimonial site					
Gender	0-1 year	2-3 years	4 years or more	Total	Fisher's Exact test.
Female	19 (47.5%)	17 (42.5%)	4 (10%)	40 (100%)	10.587
Male	48 (76.2%)	9 (14.3%)	6 (9.5%)	63 (100%)	Sig 0.005
Total	67 (65.0%)	26 (25.2%)	10 (9.7%)	103 (100%)	(p<0.01)

**Table 3.** Association between gender and partner preferences on matrimonial sites

### *Comments by respondents*

Apart from gaining insight into the partner preferences of men and women who are registered on a matrimonial site, one of the other objectives of the present study is to note their experience of it. Hence, the questionnaire included one last open-ended question titled- Comments about your experience of being on a matrimonial site. To this, the researchers received 35 responses. However, only certain comments were detailed (more than 3-4 words), and those comments are laid out below.

### *Comments by Female Respondents*

1. *It sucks. The parental involvement is the worst. Men take 0 effort in presenting themselves favorably. It's simply disappointing.*
2. *Too many queries from the candidates, sometimes it's uncomfortable.*
3. *Fake income and earning information, unclear background verification, and requests from unsuitable matches despite clearly mentioning our expectations.*
4. *Irrelevant matches, contacted by unmarried and rejected for being divorced. Divorcee stigma even on these sites is exhausting.*

5. Guys here want a **sanskari** (one who adheres to traditions) home wife, but that's not my preference. Couldn't find men who understand basic feminism.
6. I'm a female.. the experience so far has not been a good one as I'm still searching for a partner.
7. Not suitable for me. Most of the profiles are **old fashioned/regressive/conservative** and are **managed by parents**, which is a big no-no for me. I can't match with people for whom things like caste, height, past relationships are important. It is hard to find a person of my mindset via matrimonial apps, but I am still hopeful.
8. I am a female and had a bad experience about his **family hiding details** , so I had to break off the engagement...so trusting people is difficult.
9. As a girl, the biggest drawback is when people act like my business should take a backseat. I can't change my city as my setup is here, so I try to look for partners in my city, but I'm expected to work fewer hours, be more attentive to their extended family, and spend all my time talking to them during courtship. I am a full person; this is an extension in my life, so I will still do my work, meet friends once every two weeks, and not put everything else on a backseat for someone I've just started to get to know.
10. Sucked, found fiancé on a dating app. Matrimonial sites don't work.
11. Many sites have poor interface experience. There **are no visible benefits of payment**. There is hardly any increase in visitors. They harass you to be a member.. Later, they are not even bothered to give a good customer experience.
12. I get irritated sometimes as many **men will DM (direct message) me** on social media. Also, nothing has worked out so far.
13. As a woman, I hate them (arranged marriage sites) because **they'll let parents** willfully auction their children online, like it's nothing.

### Comments by Male Respondents

1. One of the most frustrating things has been getting the first meeting arranged. I think there should be a rating system available on matrimony sites that lets others rate them based on a few factors out of 10, like - how keen to meet?, how prompt was their communication. When I am presented with random profiles and I spend hours each week sending requests, it would help me to send requests after knowing how much on a scale of 10 they are likely to reply to my request, and make a more conscious decision.
2. It's very upsetting to see that out of thousands of algorithms available, yet **I'm unable to find my match**.
3. **Higher salary expectations** from the bride and sub-caste preference.

4. *It appears that both sides (myself included) on matrimonial websites have exceedingly **high expectations**, making it difficult to find matches. Many people whom I message don't respond at all, and I suspect a lot of the accounts are dormant.*
5. *Got about 20 great matches through a matrimonial site. My family and I are currently in the process of contacting them. Most of the responses are warm and welcoming. Some matches may not call us after the initial contact. Arranged marriage is a time-consuming process. But I hope to find a suitable partner soon.*
6. ***So many fake profiles**; need to give verification through passport or Aadhaar (Identity card for Indians).*
7. *It's not that helpful, and personally, I don't **trust** people I meet on matrimonial sites. There are a lot of scammers out there. If we're into AM (arranged marriage), we ought to, from (approach) relatives. So if anything goes wrong, at least you know the family.*
8. *It sucks, **feels inauthentic and inhuman**, better to meet people in real life.*
9. *People generally are **not serious and honest on these sites**, and there are many **fake people** there who spoil the image of online life partner hunting.*
10. *Most of the people I express interest in **do not respond**.*
11. ***It made me depressed**. My job, my salary, and my looks **were not up to the expectations of thousands of women and their parents** who did not even try to get a well-earning job. The bride's side is expecting a living **ATM machine** with full hair, bright complexion, and huge social status, whereas the bride-to-be does not even have a proper job. I hated every second of it.*
12. *Although I get matches, I can't communicate with them because neither of us has premium (membership that allows members to view and contact each other).*

### *Analyzing the Comments of the Respondents*

A total of 13 full-fledged comments from female respondents and 12 from male respondents have been laid out and examined. Based on the comments received from female respondents, it can be stated that, in general, the majority of the female respondents who commented are dissatisfied with matrimonial services. Three of the thirteen comments from the female respondents indicated that they were unhappy with the excessive involvement of the would-be groom's parents. However, the quantitative results indicate that a higher percentage of female respondents than male respondents were likely to have their parents/siblings/friends manage their matrimonial account. Two respondents felt that they were under pressure to be more conservative in their outlook in order to please the groom's parents. Three female respondents also felt that it was uncomfortable to be contacted by irrelevant matches or to be contacted through social media. As far as the male respondents were concerned, the majority of the respondents

also expressed dissatisfaction with matrimonial sites. Three of the respondents stated that they were highly upset by the high expectations from them by the bride or the bride's family members. This is in line with the quantitative findings in particular, which clearly indicate that female respondents do have higher expectations from their male counterparts compared to the expectations of male partners from their female counterparts. Female respondents expect their male partner to be more educated than themselves, earn a high income, and be settled abroad. Apart from this, female respondents also tend to expect their partner to be taller than them and older than them.

Both female and male respondents expressed concerns about false information as well as false profiles on matrimonial sites. This is concerning because it increases the probability of fraud, which is being regularly reported by the media (Hindustan Times, 2021; The Times of India, 2022; NDTV, 2022). The situation is such that the Delhi Commission for Women has recently issued a notice to matrimonial sites on this matter (India Today, 2022). Although there isn't any data available on who is more likely to be cheated on matrimonial sites, media reports suggest that women are more likely to be financially defrauded than men (Times Now, 2022; The Indian Express, 2022; The Times of India, 2022a; Times Now News, 2022; ANI News, 2022).

## Discussion

Very little is known about partner preferences in arranged marriages and even less so when it comes to matrimonial sites. Although there have been a few studies conducted on matrimonial sites in recent years (Sharma et al., 2019; Bajnaid et al., 2019), there has always been a paucity of research examining both satisfaction with matrimonial sites and partner preferences on matrimonial sites. The present study aimed at filling this gap, especially in the Indian context. The quantitative data suggest that there is greater pressure on male respondents to have higher educational qualifications, earn more money, and be settled abroad. The latter expectation of being settled abroad is possibly encouraging a great number of students, especially young males, to migrate to Western countries and to find a pathway to citizenship. This possibility is supported by research that indicates that Indian male students who migrate to the West are more likely to do so for long-term migration compared to Indian female students (Bajnaid et al., 2019).

On the other hand, the comments from the female respondents indicate that they face a different type of pressure on matrimonial sites, such as the expectation to be more traditional in their outlook. Both groups were mostly dissatisfied with matrimonial sites, as reflected through their comments as well as

the quantitative data, wherein a greater number of people stated that they were dissatisfied than satisfied with the services of matrimonial sites. One of the other concerns was that paid membership did not bring any major benefits to the members. Some registered members tend to contact possible matches through social media, as one needs a premium membership to contact someone through the matrimonial site or application itself, and premium memberships can be expensive. This is also why many respondents who were once premium or paid members do not opt for it again. The option to contact matches through social media once they view their full name, combined with the fact that paid membership is expensive, appears to be driving members away from opting for paid membership again.

Overall, the finding that women tend to evaluate men largely on their socio-economic status is in line with evolutionary biology that has been observed in the case of dating sites as well (Abramova et al., 2016; Su & Hu, 2019;). This also includes the preference of female respondents for males who are more educated than they are (Whyte & Torgler, 2017).

In that sense, there are some similarities between dating sites and matrimonial sites. Hypergamy is clearly prevalent on both platforms, despite some studies suggesting that hypergamy is about to end (Esteve et al., 2012; Erát, 2021;). While discussing the issue of hypergamy, one has to also pay attention to other variables that contribute to its intensity in countries such as India. One such variable is the sex ratio. Despite a recent study indicating that the preference for a male child has fallen by half in recent years (Kumari & Goli, 2022), there are more males than females in the country by a significant margin (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2021). In the matrimonial context, this means that there are more men competing for women than the other way around. This puts tremendous pressure on men to improve their socio-economic status. The other factor that amplifies hypergamy is the nature of the matrimonial sites themselves. They do not possess a personal touch that can generally be observed in face-to-face meetings. There is a mechanical feel to them due to their excessive focus on materialistic details. Other important factors, such as similarities and differences with regard to personality, goals, and dreams, are not highlighted.

The traditional and perhaps the original system of arranged marriage was based on familial ties, the socio-economic status of the family, and the level of familiarity between the family of the bride and the groom. It was primarily based on mutual trust. Today, with the emergence of the modern matrimonial system, hypergamy has become the most powerful factor in determining partner preferences. One of the possible causal factors behind this could be the fact that both genders, and especially females, have the



freedom to at least take part, if not entirely and independently choose, their life partner. This improvement in the freedom of choice is certainly welcome.

## Conclusion

The present study has led the researchers to two major findings

1. For a variety of reasons, both male and female respondents are more dissatisfied than satisfied with the services provided via matrimonial sites. This is borne out by both the quantitative as well as the qualitative data. The reasons for the dissatisfaction were wide-ranging and differed between males and females. While female respondents were more disturbed about excessive parental involvement and irrelevant matches, male respondents were more demotivated by the higher expectations of the female respondents, such as a higher income and education (hypergamy). Both male and female respondents were concerned about the falsification of information on matrimonial sites.
2. The other major finding is that arranged marriage is taking a modern turn and has assumed some of the characteristics of modern dating sites, which in turn is manifested through intense hypergamy. Social status is connected to financial and educational status (Buckley, 2016) and is often used as a marker for selecting a partner. The same has been observed in the present study as well. Hypergamy is a reality that cannot be wished away. However, based on the comments of some of the respondents, it appears that there is a growing concern about the business-like nature of arranged marriage through matrimonial sites. There is excessive importance being given to the materialistic facets at the cost of other important variables such as personality compatibility and future plans. There is also a need to take greater efforts to filter fake profiles on matrimonial sites. Finally, the fact that people who had previously opted for paid membership are no longer willing to opt for it is an indication that the paid upgrades are not offering a satisfactory experience for the members. The need of the hour is for matrimonial sites to reduce their intense focus on economic variables and perhaps consider focusing on the other important factors that can help individuals find compatible partners. One such factor could be personality traits. There is evidence to suggest that the personality traits from the big five personality model could have a significant influence on relationships (Harris & Vazire, 2016). If indeed there is a scientific element that can be successfully used to predict the compatibility between two individuals, then matrimonial sites could consider emphasizing it. That being said, it has been observed that some matrimonial sites do survey members about some of their perspectives on the level of importance to be given to equality in a

relationship in terms of sharing household responsibilities, among other facets. This is a positive step towards recognizing that relationship compatibility is more complex than merely economic compatibility. However, a greater use of psychological tools such as the big five model could help members identify more compatible partners.

### *Limitations*

The present study mainly focuses on the experiences of individuals who are registered on matrimonial sites. Therefore, based on the results of the present study, one cannot pass judgment on the entire arranged marriage phenomenon. Even today, there are many who look for potential partners through relatives in the real world, and their experiences might be completely different compared to those who are dependent on matrimonial sites, although both eventually lead to an arranged marriage.

## **Statements and Declarations**

### *Funding*

The authors did not receive any funding for carrying out the present study.

### *Declaration*

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

### *Data availability*

The data set associated with the present study is publicly available at 10.6084/m9.figshare.22640224.

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## **Declarations**

**Funding:** No specific funding was received for this work.

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.