CULTURAL SCHEMAS OF SPOUSE SELECTION AND ASSORTATIVE MATING

Farah Mushtaq¹ Dr. Sadia Saeed²

¹Ph.D. Scholar, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad
²Assistant professor, Department of Sociology Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Sadia Saeed
Department of Sociology, Quaid-i-Azam University
ssaeed@qau.edu.pk

Abstract: Assortative mating promulgate that the people of some similar characteristics has the more tendency for marriage. The study investigated the point of similarities and differences between educated youth and their parents on the bases of assortative mating traits. This research endeavor with 300 sample size that encompasses educated youth (both males and females) and their parents were studied. The research aims to find out the intergenerational gap in spouse selection on the basis of their cultural preferences. The findings revealed that cultural schemas are more preferred by parents as compared to their children. Additionally, youth are more concerned with financial stability, higher educational status and similar thinking of their partners.

Keywords: Culture, Modernity, Assortative Mating, Intergenerational Gap, Spouse Selection, financial stability

INTRODUCTION
Marriage is sacred settlement between male and female for the formation of family system in our society. The culture and religion in any society highly influence the decision of people for marriage. However, the dwellers of society think carefully before taking a decision and their thought behind the decision of marriage appears to be contemplated on cultural as well as on religious grounds (Moshtagh, Teimourpour & Pourshanbaz, 2013). Furthermore, the demographic position of potential mates plays a significant role as people go through the process of spouse selection before getting into marriage relationship. There are several factors that are considered by the people in spouse selection like, ethnic group, physical appearance, family structure, economic stability, family background and education (Kozlowska & Hanney, 2002; Sepehri & Bagherian, 2013; Dribe & Lundh, 2010; Koehler, 2005). Cultural norms and values play a vital role in spouse selection. As people of the certain culture gives meanings and interpretations to the social actions. The people form normative patterns of the society with the help of the non-material culture. These ways influence the marriage patterns of the society and the decision of spouse selection. The cultural practices play a meaningful role in the family environment as well. Moreover, the family practices carry out on the basis of tradition, religion and modernity influences on the cognition processes of the member of the family (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). The assortative mating promulgate that the people of some similar characteristics has the more tendency or inclination for marriage. It tends that the people prefer the individuals with similar traits in the matter of marriage. This term also encompasses the concept of homogamy. However, the parents appear reluctant for inter-ethnic marriages. They tend to prefer homogamy in which the spouses are like each other in some cultural traits. The individuals selected for marriage by parental generation are mostly having same traits in terms of family values, ethnicity, caste, class and religion. On the other side, the educated youth seems to possibly possess difference perspective on assortative mating traits that could be based on same educational status, same personality traits and so on. This paper will determine the possible difference between intergenerational
perspectives on consideration of assortative mating.

Parental Role in Spouse Selection

The strength of parental authority in spouse selection process is known to vary noticeably in different cultures and societies. For instance, according to the research, the young adults of North America select a life partner for themselves without the help of their parents, whereas the youth of Kurdistan look forward to their parents to play a significant role in finding a spouse for them (Buunk, Park, & Duncan, 2010). Moreover, Talbani & Hasanali (2000) with the help of their research on the second-generation South Asian immigrants who are living in North America indicated that about 25% participants in the study stated that their parents want to arrange their marriage. In the same way, the study conducted on the Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in Netherland by Sterckx (2005) shown that parents often try to arrange the marriage of their children and give their daughters mostly to their friends and relatives. Bhat (2015) identified that in the traditional normative forms of Indian marriages; mostly the decision of spouse selection is in the hands of the family elders. The youth is unaware of their selected spouse until the day of their marriage. Husain & Gulzar (2015) indicated that in Pakistani society, the parents and other family members play an important role in the decision of spouse selection. The families keenly observe the individual and scrutinize several psychosocial factors before deciding the mates. The criteria vary from family to family based on the way of their thinking.

The decision of mate choice is not taken in a vacuum. In fact, there are many decisive factors that are involved in mate choice as the role of parents is highly valuable. The characteristics that are perceived to be the most objectionable to the parents incorporated: the lack of fine family background, dissimilar ethnic group and low social class as compared to them (Dubbs, Buunk & Taniguchi, 2013). On the other side, the children prefer the physical attractiveness in the criteria for a spouse (Hynie, Lalonde & Lee, 2006). The parents are not letting the decision of partner on their children feelings rather they consider their preferences on logical grounds, but the final decision of the mate selection is taken by the parents. In addition, the parents appear to justify their decision of spouse selection, as they make their criteria on the bases of culture and society in which they live (Zalcberg, 2012).

Consanguineous Marriages

The consanguineous marriages refer to the marriage between cousins and close relatives. The consanguineous marriages seem to be preferred by the parents. However, this is strongly possible that the factors of same ethnicity, same caste and endogamy are highly considered by the traditional parents. It seems that the societal changing trends decrease the rate of endogamous marriages in the recent past years. The people broaden their vision and marry their offspring out of family according to their demands and changing societal demands. However, observed high rate of divorce currently compel people to go to the homogamy again to minimize the risk of divorce. Saadat (2015) illustrates the association between consanguineous marriages and risk of divorce. The people prefer consanguineous marriages because of the low divorce rate in them.

The custom of consanguineous marriages is prevailing mostly in rural areas. It appears that parents feel socially secure to marry their offspring within kin system. The close kin marriages are believed to have social as well as economic benefits. In the social benefits, the similar family values, traits, ethnicity, caste, social privilege are included. On the other hand, the kin marriages have also economic benefits as the family property remains in the family (Agha, 2016).

Modern Expansion and Assortative Mating

The marriage between the individuals who possess similarity in some respects that seem to be concerned in the decision of spouse selection refers as assortative mating. The concept of
assortative mating has been explored in numerous traits, like, ethnic homogamy, socioeconomic status, educational compatibility, personality and physical similarities in different societies and cultures (Bereczkei, Gyuris, Koves, & Bernath, 2002; Silventoinen, et al., 2003; Little, Burt, & David, 2006).

The parents arrange the marriage of their children with the individual who has similar family traits. The people especially parents prefer ethnic homogamy. In the endogamous marriages, it is believed that there are maximum rewards in the relationship (Clark, et al., 2015; van Zantvliet, Kalmijn, & Verbakel, 2015). There is a strong possibility that the prevalence of modernity and educational achievements bring change in spouse selection as they increase the chance of educational homogamy and assortative mating in this regard (Wang & Wong, 2017; Hu & Qian, 2016). Belot & Francesconi (2013) stated that the people prefer the life partners who are like themselves. The people wanted a life partner who is compatible and likes themselves to minimize the clash of interest in marriage life. Moreover, the “like seeking like” is also the important factor behind the decision of spouse selection (Schwartz, 2013).

The aspects of familiarity and friendship are the more salient features in relationships in the modern societies as compared to the traditional societies. Therefore, the similarity in age becomes greater desire due to the prevailing ways of modernization in the societies. The similarity in age appears to increase the level of understanding and mental compatibility (Glenn, 1992).

Modeling of Exchange theory on Spouse Selection

George Homans established the theory of social exchange in 1969. The social behaviour is the exchange of activities and reciprocity in relationships. The explanations of the social behaviours need the evaluation of cause and effect relationship as the one social fact causes another social fact. The people evaluate the positive and negative relationship on three aspects. Firstly, the relationship is evaluated on cost and benefit analysis. Secondly, the relationship estimates on the comparison in terms of past and present relationship status. Thirdly, the relationships are built on the comparison of alternative in which the individuals compare the relation to the rest. There is a strong possibility that the decision of the spouse selection made on the cost and benefit analysis.

It seems that the people compare the individual with the rest of the options, if have, then select an individual for a marriage. They choose the option in which there are minimum compromises and maximum benefits. Therefore, the experiences of life effect on the decision of spouse selection. It seems that the parents take a decision for their children marriage based on their own life experiences. On the other side, the youth evaluate and calculate the cost and benefit analysis to build a relationship according to their knowledge and experiences. However, there is a possibility of differences in the criteria of spouse selection because of the generation gap between the youth and their parents. The generation gap is the result of divergence in the societal settings and the social change occurrence in the society with the passage of time.

Figure # 1 George Homans- Social Exchange Theory Applies on Spouse Selection
The figure demonstrates the application of the social exchange theory on the generational gap in spouse selection. The parents and educated youth have their own perspectives according to their cost and benefit analysis.

**Hypothesis Formation:**

Cultural Schemas for Assortative Mating (Ethnicity, Caste, Endogamous Marriages, Same Economic Class)

Religious Aspect (Same Sect)  Modern Demands (Same Education & Same Thinking)

**Figure #2 Assortative Mating Traits**

$H_1$: The parents are more likely to consider same ethnicity as compared to their educated children in spouse selection.

$H_2$: The parents are more likely to consider same caste as compared to their educated children in spouse selection.

$H_3$: The educated youth is more concerned about same education with spouse as compared to their parents.

$H_4$: The educated youth is more concerned about same thinking with spouse as compared to their parents.

**METHODS**

In this research, the quantitative research methodology was used. The study was conducted in Islamabad. The people of Islamabad are belonging to different professional as well as educational status and the youth appears to get education in various fields. However, the focus of this study was to find out the criteria of educated youth and their parents. The educated youth and the parents of educated youth were the target population of the study. The researcher used simple sampling technique. The tools used for the data collection were questionnaire and interview schedule. The questionnaire had been used to collect the data from youth which reflected the personal preferences of educated youth for spouse selection. The interview schedule was used for the data collection from parents as researcher herself collected the data from parents. The technique used for the data collection was survey method. In the present study, the quantitative data analyzes with the help of statistical analysis. The data was quantified with the help of statistical testing and analysis. The tool used for the quantitative data analysis was SPSS. The frequencies and percentages were drawn. Furthermore, it helped to test hypotheses of the study. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. The data was collected by the individuals who were conveniently ready to respond. Additionally, the researcher assured the respondents that
their identity and information taken by them will be kept confidentially.

**EMPIRICAL RESULTS**

Table 1 Respondent’s opinion on assortative mating traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Majority of Response</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Coefficient of Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents criterion for same ethnicity of their child’s spouse</td>
<td>55.3% (to great an extent)</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>0.803</td>
<td>48.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth criterion for same ethnicity of their spouse</td>
<td>48% (not at all)</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>0.817</td>
<td>36.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents criterion for same caste of their child’s spouse</td>
<td>38.7% (to great an extent)</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.836</td>
<td>43.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth criterion for same caste of their spouse</td>
<td>60.7% (not at all)</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.756</td>
<td>30.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents criterion for same sect of their child’s spouse</td>
<td>75.3% (to great an extent)</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.579</td>
<td>44.198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth criterion for same sect of their spouse</td>
<td>42% (to great an extent)</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td>45.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents criterion for same education of their child’s spouse</td>
<td>40.7% (to some an extent)</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>40.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth criterion for same education of their spouse</td>
<td>38% (to great an extent)</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td>42.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents criterion for same thinking of their child’s spouse</td>
<td>35.3% (to some an extent)</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.806</td>
<td>40.914</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table illustrates the points on which the intergenerational gap in spouse selection imitates. The parental generation is more concerned to the cultural aspects of assortative mating in which they highly consider same ethnic background and caste of potential mates for their children. The majority of 55.3% parents to great an extent consider same ethnic background whereas 48% youth has no concern with ethnic affiliation of their spouse. The greater number of parents with 38.7% considers the same caste of the individuals and 30% to some extent regard this thing in spouse selection. The majority of 60.7% of youth not at all contemplate the same caste of the potential mates in their criteria. Only 16% youth wanted to choose the spouse from the same caste. The 75.3% parents have the criteria of same sect of the spouses and only 6% not at all judge it in their criteria of spouse selection. The 42% youth reflects their concern on the same sect of the spouse and 25.3% to some extent considering it in their criteria. The majority of 40% parents give the response of to some extent for considering the same educational status of the individuals in spouse selection. The 24.6% parents said that they will not deem the same educational status in their criteria. The youth with the 38% response regard the same educational status to great extent in their criteria. The 26% youth said that they will not consider it at all. The 35.3% parents said that they to some an extent contemplate on the criterion of same thinking in spouse selection process for their children. Whereas, 30.7% are not at all heed on same thinking of spouses. The 47.3% youth find as to deem on the criteria of same thinking in spouse selection. Only 15.3% youth are not at all regarding this criterion. The table demonstrates the point of difference among parents and youth responses on family.
economic status. The parents are more inclined towards middle class family as compared to the youth. As mentioned in the participant’s demographic information, the respondents belong to the middle-class families. The parents prefer the same economic status of the family for their children and think that it would be more convenient for their children to set in that family. Conversely, the youth want economically sound family. It appears that youth of the current time have some sort of materialistic approach in this regard. The coefficient of variance supports the descriptive analysis, as the higher the CV the greater level of dispersion around the mean.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the study indicate the point of differences between parental criteria and educated youth criteria on assortative mating traits. The findings reflect the intergenerational gap and represent cultural aspects as a main factor behind the gap. The study reflects the contrasting views of parents and youth on the criteria of same ethnicity for spouse selection. Furthermore, reveals the point of difference among parents and youth on the matter of same caste of the spouse. The parents seem to be traditional as well as cultural in this regard as they are more concerned about the same caste of the spouse as compared to the criteria of youth. Moreover, there is point of difference in the responses of parents and youth. The parents appear to be more concerned about the issue of same sect as compared to the criteria of youth. The result imitate that parents are not tending to compromise on some religious values especially association of spouse with different sect.

Findings reveal the slight difference in the responses of parents and youth about the same educational status of life partners. The researcher finds out the difference in the responses regarding to the criteria of daughter-in-law and son-in-law among the parent’s respondents. The parents tend to emphasize on the high educational status of their son-in-law as compared to the educational achievements of daughter-in-law. Simultaneously, the researcher observed the gender difference in the responses of youth. The female respondents wish a spouse with high academic achievements as compared to them. As they believe that the more the educational status of the spouse will be, the more the couple will financially secured. The male respondent responses can be divided into two visions as some believe on same educational status and on the other hand, some think that they have no concern with their spouse education. Additionally, recognizes that there is a point of difference in the opinion of parents and youth on same thinking of spouses. The youth appears to have more concern about this criterion as compared to parents. The mental compatibility because of the same thinking seems to be significant factor for the educated youth of the present time. They said that the understanding between spouses is the main component for the happy and prosperous married life and it comes from the mental compatibility between spouses. The waves of modernization are rapidly bringing social changes in our surroundings and it demands some behavioural change as well for the adoptability of that change. The respondents have the opinion that if the perspectives and adoptability of the individuals are varying than it could be becoming a matter of conflict in relations.
It appears that Parents are somewhere directly as well as indirectly involved in the decision of spouse selection. The gap between the generation’s perspectives linked with their adoption to changing trends of society. The most imperative aspect is culture for parental generation and they seem to be rigid on traditional criteria of assortative mating traits. Along with this, parents also considering the higher educational status of an individual to some an extent as they realize the importance of education with reference to financial security. The intelligence of individual is associated with the capacity of good resource provider.

REFERENCES


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