

## What Post–Graduate Students Think About Marriage and Higher Education?

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### **Abstract**

*Marriage and education are the prime social institutions in shaping the personality of an individual in a given society. This study intends to analyze the attitudes of post graduate students towards marriage and higher education in India. It is a survey based study, for which the sample size consisted of 250 post graduate students from various departments of the Bangalore University. The findings of the study reveal that most of the post graduate students consider marriage as essential by preferring arranged marriage and saying no to dowry. The ideal age at marriage, according to them, is 18-23 years and 24-27 years for females and males respectively. With regard to the attitudes toward higher education, there are respectful student-teacher relationships. However, they have indicated a declining trend in the standards of higher education.*

**Keywords:** *Attitudes, Marriage, Higher Education, Students*

### **1. Introduction**

Attitudes, generally, constitute some important social realities in the analysis of the role of post-graduate students and these could be determining the approaches and perspectives of the post-graduate students to their life and academic activities. To be effective, a post-graduate student must make an impact on the society and must be capable of impressing by adding to or subtracting from an existing cultural situation of which he or she is a member. An empirical analysis of student's attitudes includes the opinions of post-graduate students with regard to marriage and higher education. The quality of marital life and higher education would make an individual to reach the desired life goals. Thus, marriage and education would have a greater say in determining the successful life of an individual. Many more psychological researches have been undertaken in order to study the concept of attitude and its formation. Social scientists in their research conducted in the recent past have shown that attitudes and beliefs are linked, and attitudes are essentially likes and dislikes. Bem (1970) maintains that our relations for and dislikes to circumstances, entities, individuals, groups or any other distinguishable aspects of our environment, have roots in our we feeling, behavior and social stimuli upon us.

The concept of attitude implies a subjective or psychological status of preparation for action. Attitudes find their roots in our beliefs and they influence our behaviour. They represent the way in which we view the world and organize our relationships. Thus, attitudes are literally individual's psychological postures and monitors for conduct to which each new experience is discussed before a reaction is made. Droba(1933) highlighted an attitude as a psychological disposition of the individual to act for or against a definite entity. Krueger and Reckless (1931) clarified that an attitude is a residue of practice with earlier situations. In this way they can be viewed as acquired tendencies to act in specific ways, towards or against an environmental factor which is imbued with either negative or positive value. More recent researches indicate that attitude represents a summary evaluation of a psychological object and is described both internally and externally in dimensions such as good-bad, likeable-dislikeable, beneficial-harmful, boon-bane and pleasant-unpleasant. All of the above definitions imply a preparation, or readiness for response based on experiences and attitude formation that has occurred prior to the stimulus. If this is the case, post-graduate students who are approaching an interaction with their fellow students, teachers, university and society at large may have already based their attitudes towards these. Their attitudes may also be influenced, sometimes, by their perceptions of the relationships between the conflicting dimensions of the visual representation before them.

## **2. Review of Literature**

Scientific research work undertaken by eminent scholars like Durkheim (1897), Waite (1995), Waite and Gallagher (2000), as well as Ribar (2003) recognized greater rewards to married couples over their non-married counterparts. Marriage as a social institution, is the most significant aspect of the society, appears to be under threat. Thus, marriage has, despite technological transformation, an important value for the individual, families and the society at large (Nock, 2005). It has undergone so many changes. While analysing the significance of marriage Clarksberget.al. (1981) conclude that the majority of youngsters expressed positive attitude towards marriage. O'Reilly et al. (2009) have highlighted that a marital partner must possess such basic qualities as sympathetic, trustworthy, and bright. Females would be anticipating the ability of a man to develop an intimate and satisfying bond.

Coming to deal with the studies on attitudes towards education, Wood (1998) concluded that the attitudes of students would affect the learning process of a subject depending upon the efforts put in by them. Kilic (2001) found that use of technology did not affect student's attitudes toward perusing computers. In fact, the students were optimistic of positive results of using computers and also with respect to communicating on computers. Khunyakari, et al., (2009) have highlighted that perception and attitudinal studies in education have been recycled to untangle critical aspects about a particular problem, a conception or a notion. Powar (2012) maintained that there is a complexity in Indian society in order to understand the relevance of the student's attitude towards higher education as well as employment. It could be attributed to socio-economic and technological imbalances found in the modern society.

## **3. Methodology**

The study group for the present study is post graduate students on the Jnanabharathi campus Bangalore University, Bangalore. A sample of 250 students was drawn from different post graduate departments located on the campus. The data were collected through an interview schedule on the basis of simple stratified random sampling. The data analysis was done by using simple statistical methods.

#### 4. Rationale

The globalizing factors have greatly influenced the marriage and educational trends existing in the Indian society. In the modern era we tend to observe the younger generation giving importance to changing trends in marriage and higher education viz. love marriage, inter-caste marriage, live in relationship, nature of teacher-student relationship, declining standards of education and reference material. The present study addresses the dearth of Indian research on attitudes to marriage and education held by post graduate students. As India is a multicultural country, one could expect to find different results within regions. Bangalore University students are a good focus group as they interact with a wide diversity of cultures and opinions. However, with decreased societal pressure on people to marry and educate one could hypothesize that members of society will exercise more responsible and individual choice, as reflected by their attitude towards marriage and education.

#### 5. Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore whether a social and education milieu would change the knowledge and attitude of post graduate students. This article provides information on the following specific objectives.

1. To study the attitude of post graduate students towards marriage.
2. To assess the attitude of post graduate students towards higher education.

#### 6. Results and Discussion

##### 6.1 Attitudes toward Marriage

An empirical attempt is made here to analyze the students' attitude towards marriage, particularly in choosing life partners, preferred age at marriage, preferring to type of marriage so on and so forth. Decision making is an important part of the process in the making of student personality. Every student at some point of time or the other is faced with a hard choice about a life partner, be it love marriage or arranged marriages. Marriage as a social institution has been undergoing a lot of changes in the context of qualitative changes in the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of youth in general and students in particular. Students demand often certain space and freedom in choosing a life partner, which often come into incompatibilities with parents if not outright conflict. In western society marriage is a personal option, whereas marriage in India is compulsory. At least that is the way it was viewed all along, but in recent times certain alternative to marriage like live-in relationships, marriage purely for romance, and marriage as a contract are being experimented. The results have been at best mixed given the ongoing debate with regard to marriage, it is interesting to find how the sample of post-graduate students responded to a question whether marriage is essential.

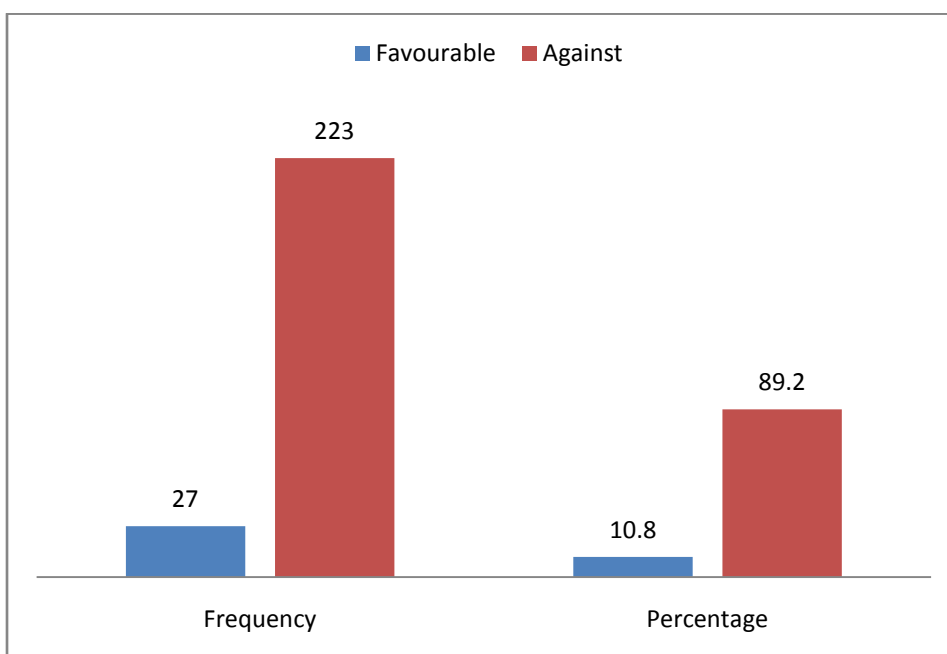
It is observed from the data that a majority (56.8 percent) of them end up saying marriage is essential. However, it is fascinating to observe that nearly one-fourth (21.2 percent) of the sample, think that it is not essential. And small proportions (15.6 percent) of them have said that they don't have any idea pertaining to it. Lastly, negligible proportion (6.4 percent) of them refused to give any response. It can be inferred that marriage continues to occupy a very important place, though it must be added that a considerable size of post-graduate students telling that it is not necessarily essential. One can see a perceptible change in students' attitudes, even though the change is very slow. Attitudes do not change as fast as other economic and cultural aspects of life. This reflects the changing social reality.

Given the various ways of performing marriages and variety of marriages, we have attempted to elicit the opinion of students regarding the type of marriage.

**Table-1: Type of Preferred Marriage**

Type of Marriage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Arranged Marriage	149	59.6
Love Marriage	44	17.6
Inter-Caste Marriage	36	14.4
Inter-Religious Marriage	11	4.4
Live-in relationship	10	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It can be found from the table-1 that majority, 60 (59.6) percent of the post-graduate students, prefer arranged marriages. However, it is interesting to observe that significant proportion (17.6 percent) of them prefers love marriages and 14.4 percent prefer inter caste marriages and only 4.4 percent prefer inter religious marriages as well. Further, the most talked about issue of live-in- relationship was preferred only by ten out of 250 respondents. This analysis shows that students continued to have conservative attitudes. If at all arranged marriage is taken as a criterion, the percentage of students preferring love marriage is not significant, though one would expect higher education to affect changes in students' preference. In that a considerable percentage would have preferred love marriages, but it is not the case. So is the case with inter caste, inter religious marriages and live-in-relationships. This simple analysis would make us to infer certain observations, though they might appear far fetching. Idealism which characterizes students' behavior at one point of time is giving way to practical and aversion to take risk as far as marriage is concerned. Thus, students would like to go with the state of existing social situations. Social institutions like marriage and students' attitude towards it hardly change. Change requires an ability and willingness on the part of the students to experiment with new things which might appear difficult given the kind of students coming from rural areas seeking admission to post-graduate courses. Even the media, including electronic media like TV relays programmes which portray this state of affairs.

**Figure -1: Attitudes towards Dowry**

Students' attitude towards dowry is another aspect examined in this chapter. An attempt is made to elicit the attitude of sample of post-graduate students towards dowry. It can be noticed from the data presented that an overwhelming majority (89.2 percent) of the sample reported against dowry and only 10.8 percent reported to favor dowry. Dowry is a social evil as universally accepted. Public opinion is always divided. In a social system with increasing socio-economic disparities the negative effect of dowry is a matter of a lot of conjecture. Though there is growing evidence to show that many cases of domestic violence resulting in the death of a spouse is alleged to be connected with dowry harassment. All said and done, it is gratifying to note that majority of post-graduate students are against dowry.

**Table-2: Qualities Looking for in the Selection of Life Partners**

Qualities	Yes	No	Total
Income	20 (8.0)	230 (92.0)	250 (100.0)
Education	93 (37.2)	157 (62.8)	250 (100.0)
Physical Appearance	32 (12.8)	218 (87.2)	250 (100.0)
Status	16 (6.4)	234 (93.6)	250 (100.0)
Caste	16 (6.4)	234 (93.6)	250 (100.0)
Religion	17 (6.8)	233 (93.2)	250 (100.0)
Character	151 (60.4)	99 (39.6)	250 (100.0)
Identical Interests	20 (8.0)	230 (92.0)	250 (100.0)
Intelligence	53 (21.2)	197 (78.8)	250 (100.0)
Liberal Attitudes	38 (15.2)	212 (84.8)	250 (100.0)

Choosing a life partner is another aspect of some interest in the study of post-graduate students. In choosing a life partner what qualities of a life partner are taken into consideration, is a matter of concern indeed. It can be observed from the table-2 that of the given qualities, the majority of the sample given more weight age to character while other qualities like education, physical appearance, status, caste, religion, liberal attitudes have been given less importance. The above analysis shows that the character of the person outsmarts all other qualities, because 60.4 percent of them give more importance to the character of a life partner.

Further, marriage being an important institution, it was thought as relevant to ascertain the attitudes of post-graduate students toward practices related to marriage. The respondents were found to be positively predisposed toward marriage at a relatively higher age than the statutory minimum age for marriage that is 18 years.

**Table-3: Suitable Age at Marriage for Male and Female**

Age at Marriage	Suitable age at Marriage for Male	Suitable age at Marriage for Female
18-23 years	30 (12.0)	152 (60.8)
24-27 years	124 (49.6)	92 (36.8)
28-30 years	86 (34.4)	06 (2.4)
31 years & above	10 (4.0)	00 (00)
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	<b>250</b> <b>(100.0)</b>

Age at marriage has been a subject of a lot of theoretical and empirical research in the field of population research. It has been recognized that early age of marriage has been the single most important factor for higher fertility. In order to check high birth rate, steps are being taken to discourage people, not to marry at the lower age. Giving education to girls lead to rise in age to marriage. An attempt is made here to find from the samples, regarding their preferred age at marriage. The majority (60 percent) of the sample prefers low age at marriage for females between 18 to 23 years. Whereas, a small proportion (12 percent) reported, age between 18-23 years as a preferred age of marriage for males. However, one-half (49.6 percent) of the respondents preferred 24-27 years as ideal age at marriage for males, correspondingly significant proportion (36.8 percent) of the respondents preferred the same age group suitable for females. The age between 28-30 years and 31 years and above age groups were not preferred at all for males and females by post- graduate boys and girls of the sample. Thus, age between 24-27 years was the most preferred age for both boys and girls. It can also be observed that higher education has not significantly altered students' attitude towards age at marriage, as the majority of the sample mentioned low age that is, 18-23 years as the preferred age for girls. This may be viewed as a welcome change in the attitudes of post-graduate students toward age at marriage. In view of the above finding, it may be stated that post-graduate students of the university are progressive and individualistic in their notions regarding marriage.

Marriage is yet to come in the way of students pursuing higher education. However, the opinion is always divided on this issue. A question was asked to the sample of students, stating, will you discontinue your studies, if your marriage is arranged.

**Table-4: Idea of Discontinuing Studies if the Marriage is arranged**

Idea	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	42	16.8
No	208	83.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

It can be found from the table-4 that overwhelming majorities (83.2 percent) of the sample reported, they won't discontinue studies if marriage takes place. However, small proportions (16.8 percent) of them seem to think on the lines of disrupting and discontinuing their study if marriage is arranged suddenly. Many comments can be made even at the risk of being accused of making hasty conclusions; it would mean that students from the sample seem to be increasingly, favorably disposed towards getting married, even in their midst of the studies. It is also possible to argue that students have come to take their studies quite lightly. It may be due to lack of proper guidance and counseling regarding their studies and the best means of going about getting the best advantages of their studies. This is reflected in low motivation because generally, it is found marriage means additional responsibility and it demands more time, attention and resources particularly finance. It is high time, students in the post-graduate departments are advised properly with regard to their studies and career.

Coming to their conception regarding gender equality, majority (58 percent) of the respondents stated that there is no equality between men and women in our country. However, a significant proportion (42 percent) of them is of the opinion that equality of gender has been achieved, gradually, in India. It could be stated that the students in higher education are under the impression that equal opportunities are provided for both men and women in order to achieve their goals. Hence, a gradually gender gap existed in the society has been narrowing down, though most of them have their own reservations.

The most important factor in determining an individual's religious outlook is his faith in the practice of religious rituals. Religion is believed to be meaningful only to those who have faith in rituals and God. To ascertain this, the students were asked to mention whether they have belief in religious rituals. In spite of the fact that the students studied constitute a highly educated section of society, a majority (54.4 percent) of the students gave nod to it. However, 45.6 percent of the students were found to be against the performance of religious rituals. At least in the case of these students, it could be believed that the higher level of education and scientific outlook of life might have contributed to this rationalism and empiricism among them.

## **6.2 Attitudes toward Higher Education**

Students' attitude towards higher education is a matter of a lot of debate and discourse. There is a feeling that students seeking admission to post-graduate courses seem to think that it is an extension of under graduate course. Rarely do they seem to apply their mind in choosing a course. As a result, the course in which they land has least thing to do with their interest, objectives and aspirations. If this is the state of affairs in Government funded institutions, private educational institutions, including the deemed to be universities have been conducting entrance tests meant to assess the merit of students before allotting admission to a particular course of study. Higher education in private institutions is definitely expensive, yet parents and the students alike would prefer to go to those institutions. Be the controversy as it may, an attempt is made in the profile of post graduate students to assess their attitude towards higher education.

Student-teacher relationships and the interaction between them play a key role in the proceedings of learning, production, dissemination and even in the consumption of knowledge. In mass education system, such relationships have become touch me not and increasingly tenuous. The gap between the students and teachers is increasing as most of the time students are busy with their results and the teachers are with either in completing the portion or with their own affairs. Accountability of teacher has been given a back seat very rarely students are encouraged to ask questions, seek clarification of doubts.

**Table-5: Nature of Relationship with Teachers**

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Kind	24	9.6
Friendly	47	18.8
Respectfully	148	59.2
Professional like	31	12.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Student teacher relationship is a serious crisis, as evident from wide spread student unrest. A study like this concerning on post-graduate students in higher education legitimately includes teacher student relationship for serious analysis. It may be found from the table-5 that nearly 60 percent of the total sample reported to respect the teachers. Being respectful could also mean maintaining distance from the teachers as students are seen hardly interacting with teachers both in the class and outside as well. Being respectful is one thing and taking the help of the teachers is another thing. Students are encouraged and provided with opportunities to take advantage of teacher knowledge, scholarship and wisdom in the field of higher education. However, a significant proportion (18.8 percent) of the sample reported being friendly with teachers. Being friendly should not mean confining the relationship to mundane affairs. Friendliness is meaningful if they are no barriers, particularly cultural and psychological between teachers and students. And only 12.4percent of the sample reported their professional-like relationships, whatever that means in actual learning situations and finally another small proportion (9.6percent) of them reported that the relationships what they maintain with teachers are very kind. The above analysis shows that the majority of the students are yet to overcome stereotype like that student should always give respect to the teachers. At the university level this type of attitude will not really help to improve the situation and standards of higher education. Learning and sharing of knowledge and experience can take place meaningfully in a free atmosphere.

Interaction among student themselves in the form of combined studies, exchange of notes, supporting students who are weak in their studies, go a long way in creating healthy atmosphere and stimulating learning environment. There is a feeling that some of these human qualities are slowly declining among students as the modern education, encourage them to be self-centered, highly materialistic and even practicing exclusively in schools and colleges. Among other things, this can be set to lead to rivalry, violence on a host of unhealthy attitudes among students. Education as a means of character building when producing a sound personality is losing its importance and significance. This has also produced among students, negative emotions like inferiority, lack of concentration, lack of motivation, so on and so forth. An attempt is made in this chapter to find whether the students have the habit of helping each other. It can be found from the data that nearly 70 percent of the sample reported that they help each other, not only in studies but also in extracurricular activities and only 30 percent reported negatively.

Student perception on standards of higher education is another issue examined in the thesis. It has been repeatedly reported in the media and in the public at large that the standards of higher education including research are declining. In this context, it is interesting to find how students actually perceive the situation.



**Table-6: Opinion towards Declining Standards in Higher Education**

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	163	65.2
No	87	34.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

It can be seen from the above table that majority (65.2 percent) of the sample thinks that standards are declining. However, significant proportions (34.8 percent) of the sample do not think so. Declining in standard of education is certainly not because of the students. Because more often they are in the receiving end and it is a responsibility of educational administrators, teachers and parents at large, to see that standards are maintained and mediocrity is least tolerated. The decline is so striking that it confirms the fact that the increasing numbers of students have become increasingly aware of this situation. It is high time that steps are needed to be taken to retrieve this situation.

One of the short comings that often come to the notice of all those concerned with the standards of higher education and problems of students are whether sufficient reading or reference material relevant to the study is available. In the State universities, by and large the students learn and write exams in regional languages. Medium of instruction, officially, is English, but students are allowed to write their exams in regional language. This has added to the already existing confusion, resulting in students not getting quality reading material.

**Table-7: Availability of Sufficient Reading and Reference Material for Studies**

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	179	71.6
No	71	28.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

However, it can be seen from the table-7 that a sizeable proportion (71.6 percent) of the sample reported the scenario that enables them to find sufficient study material and more than one-fourth (28.4 percent) of them reported negatively. The student's perception of this aspect of higher education seems to be a mixed bag because what is quality or relevant material is a matter of dispute. Students might find everything and anything easily accessible, quality study material unless; they try to ascertain it from the teacher's concern.

Coming to deal with the objectives of higher education, more than two-thirds (68.8 percent) of the post-graduate students in the present study feel that post-graduate education is helpful in developing skills pertaining to their branches of the respective areas of knowledge. However, a small proportion (12.8 percent) of them stated that it is exciting and another 10 percent opined that higher education would enable them to meet interesting persons in their field of study.

## 7. Conclusion

Analysis of data pertaining to sample students' attitude towards higher education, reveal certain insights which need to be noted here. Students' attitude towards higher education and various aspects of it have been mixed and in some case ambivalent. For example: majority of students reporting declines in the standards show their dissolution-meant and even helplessness, because they seem to be confused about what to do and where to go from here. The majority of students reported lack of availability of quality reading material. Medium of instruction has been English and the majority of post-graduate students are studying in regional languages. They are unable to utilize reading material available in English. With regard to the teacher - student relationship, students have respect to the teachers, but are hesitant to interact with teachers meaningfully. The student seems to suffer from certain inherent deficiencies. The present education system is not equipped to overcome these deficiencies and inadequacies. Analysis of the student - teacher relationship led to one conclusion that there is a need to provide guidance and counseling with a view to prepare them to take on roles, that they require to play to be successful in higher education.

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