

HYPERGAMY AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION: AN INDIGENOUS TOOL FOR PROCUREMENT OF RESOURCES

Saira Parveen, Abid Ghafoor Chaudhry, Syeda Aimen Hadi, Adnan Nasir

Department of Anthropology, PMAS- Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi

Corresponding Author's Email: abidge@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: *Hypergamy in a socially stratified and divided society is a common tool for procurement of resources. It is a marriage pattern where one of the spouses intentionally chooses a partner of a higher socio-economic position to grant themselves a distinctive position in the society that they were deprived of before the marriage. The research was conducted in the city Jhelum, using a sample of 152 respondents.*

Key Words: *Hypergamy, Social Alleviation, Social status*

INTRODUCTION

Stratification is a derivative term originating from the geological concept of 'Strata'. Geologically the term refers to the layers of rocks that are created naturally. Symbolically thus, the term of social stratification originates which regards to the social hierarchical positioning of individuals in relation to their economic production. It is referred as "horizontal division of society into higher and lower social units" [1].

Societies have long been dividing themselves into different distinct groups, socially distinguished and economically variant, thus fabricating the process of competition. Stratification is thus, "patterned social inequality" [2], in which the societal resources are unequally distributed depending upon the "structural position" that is entitled on the basis of "broadly recognized standards" (dictionary). The differentiation is "wide-scale", has "regularity" and is on the basis of certain "specific and identifiable characteristics like race, class and gender" [2].

Moreover, stratification is identified to be on the grounds of "power, prestige and property" that define one's social status and effects the access to resources.

- Power: the capacity to which one's will can be imposed on people
- Prestige: the level of respect
- Property: the level of wealth

Stratification is a "generalized aspect" common to the "structure of all social systems". It is the division of society into various social groups leading to social classes that are defined by the level of "insertion into the fundamental process of production within a particular economic and social system" [3]. The two major classes in a capitalist society are the "dominant class" and "working class". These classes are defined by the "role played in production" that is resultant of "social division of labor". Thus the dominant class which plays the role of controlling the state, and "means of production" also has authority over the "economic surplus" [3].

Marriage an institution for alliance formation has long been operational in various societies. To maintain social ties and alliances various patterns of marriage are in practice. Marriage basically is the unification of "two people of opposite sex who decide to live together, share a household and co-operate economically" [4]. Thus the core of a marital alliance is amalgamation and dependency of economic resources. It has been affirmed that the "prime motive for an

alliance is a response to a market opportunity between partners who normally would be in a competitive situation" [5]. Thus, two social groups or classes that are normally in a state of competition would come into a "volatile state of competitive collaboration" [6] after marriage.

Hypergamy is practiced all over the world specially in South Asia. It is the kind of marriage which elevates the social status of the individual on the lines of power, prestige and property. It is a tool to climb the "social ladder" [4]. The grounds of hypergamy is access to resources that are otherwise alien to the individual due to the social strata he/she belongs to. Males who are unemployed practice hypergamy "to receive dowry from the bride's family" [7]. It has also been observed to be functional when matters of "land and ancestral ties" are under consideration [4]. The lower strata since are inevitably excluded from the profit and economic surplus thus marriage becomes one of the tools to become a part of the production and dominant class both for men and woman. Thus, "families where poverty is high the girls are regarded as an economic burden" [8] and thus given into a hypergamous marital alliance for strengthening their social and economic security.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Current study was conducted in the Jhelum city by selecting a sample of 152 respondents. Tools used to collect data included socio-economic census forms and structured interviews. The participants were fully informed about the objectives of the study and insured confidentiality. Data was analyzed in SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cross tabulation: Hypergamy and socio-economic alleviation.

		Hypergamy	Not Hypergamy
Social Status Alleviated	Yes	105	0
	No	0	47
Economic Change	Clothing	18	17
	Food	33	13
	House	54	17

The cross tabulated data shows that 69.1 percent of the total respondents had a hypergamous marriage while 30.9 percent did not.

All the respondents i.e. 69.1 percent, 105 respondents who had a hypergamous marriage promptly responded that their social status and the status of the natal family both increased as a result of marrying up. Moreover, 30.9 percent i.e. 47 respondents responded that marriage had not changed their social status at all.

Moreover the change in the economic conditions was observed by inquiring regarding the change in the clothing pattern, food consumed and housing condition. Out of the women who had married up i.e. 69.1 percent, 17.15 percent affirmed positive change in their clothing, 31.4 percent held that their food pattern had become rather lavish, while 51.4 percent stated that their housing conditions had improved. The results are further strengthened by results of various researches that affirm that "Indian marriages are traditionally status male hypergamous" [9], and the "grooms are older, more educated and taller than their brides" [10].

Respondents who had affirmed that their marriage was not hypergamous and had no social alleviation as a result of the marriage still agreed to the fact that their economic conditions had fairly enhanced. 36.1 percent affirmed change in clothing, 27.65 percent in food, while 36.1 percent in the overall housing conditions. Research shows, that in "Indian marriage market, the demand for socioeconomically successful husbands had increased" [11].

Frequency Analysis: Adjustment Issues Faced Due to Hypergamy

Questions	Responses	Frequency	%
Adjustment Issues In International Marriages	Yes	96	63.2
	No	56	36.8
Adjustment Issues With Spouse	Yes	59	38.8
	No	93	61.2
Adjustment Issues With In-laws	Yes	104	68.4
	No	48	31.6
Adjustment Issues With Class	Yes	78	51.3
	No	74	48.7
Problems Faced	Raising Children	116	76.3
	Language	36	23.7

The frequency analysis shows various horizontal dimensions where issues are faced due to hypergamy. The major issue i.e. of adjustment in the new socio-economic sphere after marriage was affirmed to be quiet apparent.

Marriages where the female went abroad i.e. "international marriage" was highlighted to be the most difficult in terms of adjustment, as 63.2 percent of the respondents agreed. The respondents revealed that incase of such a marriage they not only faced difficulty in adjusting with the economic uplift but also found it extremely tricky when it came to understanding and adopting the socio-cultural norms. They were severely troubled as they could not come up to the expectations of the family as a whole.

It was further revealed that adjusting with the spouse was not much of an issue for them. 61.2 percent of the respondents stated that their spouse were extremely supportive and patient and helped them adjust with the new environment.

However, data further reveals that they faced serious issues when it came to adjusting with the family of the spouse i.e. In-Laws. 68.4 percent agreed to this statement and shared that since they belonged to a completely different economic and social background; the expectations of the In-Laws were always too high for them and were rarely met. They were frequently taunted about their past social status, matters of dowry and degraded at various occasions due to which the gap between the natal and the new family remained even after years of marriage. "Dowry size" is visibly affected by hypergamy, "indicated by the difference in the amount of land owned by the parents of the respective spouses before marriage" [10] Grooms belonging to "higher socio-economic strata demanded higher dowries"[12], these demands when not fulfilled led to conflicts.

CONCLUSION

Hypergamy is a common phenomenon among the Asian societies where females are considered an economic burden. The data reveals that even though hypergamy elevates the social and economic status of a female, however they have to go through various other issues in the process like adjusting with the social class, In-Laws, raising children and language.

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