

A Study On Sociological Determinants Influencing Gamophobia And The Changing Trends In Marriage Among Women

Annlesna (Student), & Dr. Pushpam. M (Professor)
Department Of Sociology, University Of Kerala

Abstract

This study observes the sociological determinants that influence gamophobia and women's changing attitude towards marriage and aims to delve into the interactions between social, economic, cultural and personal factors that mold women's perspectives and approaches to the institution of marriage. In modern society, women's views regarding marriage are becoming more complex and are shaped by a variety of variables such as changing gender roles, economic independence and personal aspirations. The main aim of this study is to identify the underlying causes of gamophobia among women and women's differing opinions towards marriage, taking into account the influence of cultural narratives, family dynamics, educational background and career goals. By analyzing these determinants based on the empirical data, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the motivations, fears, and aspirations that can lead to gamophobia and inform women's decisions regarding marriage.

Keywords: *Gamophobia, women, sociological determinants, changing trends*

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I. Introduction

Gamophobia is an ongoing issue which is often described as a fear of marriage which is driven by a variety of socio-economic variables. This study will also delve into how the societal frameworks influence individual fears and marital decisions. There arises an opportunity to question and reshape societal expectations and foster acceptance of diverse relationship choices by understanding the sociological factors. And this research adds to the body of academic knowledge in sociology by providing empirical evidence and insights into the complex relationship between sociological factors and gamophobia.

In a global scenario, women worldwide are attaining financial independence through career advancements and financial security. And this shift gives importance to the necessity of personal choice by diminishing the traditional financial incentives for marriage. In many cultures, marriage is perceived as a societal obligation and a rite of passage into adulthood. "The marriage rate is a significant metric for evaluating society's progress since it exhibits a substantial correlation with factors such as population growth and crime reduction" (Rader, 2010; Liu et al., 2023). Globally we can see that the process of socialization has a profound impact on women's attitude towards marriage. In most societies boys are often encouraged to pursue careers and independence while girls from a very young age, are often socialized to domestic responsibilities and care giving tasks. The psychological impact of societal conditions on gamophobia is profound which often results in low self-esteem and despair. Additionally, witnessing domestic abuse, marital problems or unhappy partnerships can shape a women's view of marriage, leading to gamophobia as a defensive reaction. Women who can make choices based on their own maturity rather than societal expectations face fewer incentives to get married. This liberty results in more intentional family planning, happier partnerships, and a favorable impact on mental health. When marriage is seen as an option rather than an obligation, women experience less anxiety, leading to higher psychological security and overall well-being (Travers, 2024)

In India, the cultural expectations have created a significant pressure on women where the marriage is set as a crucial milestone in life and it is deeply entrenched. The traditional practices and cultural norms view marriage as a vital familial and social obligation rather than a personal choice. And this often leads to social ostracism for those who remain unmarried past a certain age and for some individuals this may intensify gamophobia. In the Indian society where the practice of arranged marriage is very common, women fear losing their personal autonomy and being forced to conform to traditional gender roles. As Indian women achieve greater financial independence and career success, they often fear reverting to traditional roles if they marry. This desire to maintain financial control and independence can make them hesitant to pursue marriage. Gamophobia affects family planning by causing women to delay or avoid marriage which leads to disruptions in traditional family

structures. In India we can see that the media has influenced changing attitudes towards marriage as our society becomes more open and transparent to addressing relationships and marriage and people are exposed to a broader range of experiences and stories.

In Kerala, the practice of dowry and related social pressure leads to gamophobia among women. The dowry demands tied with the economic strain and societal expectations results in the reluctance towards marriage. The marriage culture in Kerala is shaped with family honor and traditional values. As women achieve greater financial security, the traditional incentives for marriage diminish, causing them to prioritize financial control and career advancement over marital commitments (Mathrubhumi, 2023). Kerala as a State is praised for its high rates of literacy, progressive social indices and matrilineal customs and it has seen a notable change in marriage patterns in recent years. And the declining percentage of women getting married is one of the notable trend or change. The element that affects this occurrence is the complex interaction of social, cultural, educational and economic elements. The number of women seeking professional and advanced education is rising in Kerala. And due to the importance given to education, women are delaying marriage in favour of advancing their careers and academic standing. There is a decline in early and arranged marriages as a result of people pursuing their career aspirations far into the prime years that are usually linked with marriage.

The importance of studying gamophobia among women is very crucial particularly among women as it adds to the larger conversations about gender equality and individual autonomy as it advances our knowledge of mental health and illuminated changing social norms. The policymakers can use these results of study to create programmes that cater to the requirements of those who are gamophobic. This can entail fostering welcoming conditions that lessen the stigma attached to singledom at places of employment, neighbourhoods, and educational institutions.

II. Review Of Literature

The book *All the single ladies: Unmarried Women and the rise of an independent Nation* written by **Rebecca Traister** (2016) provides a perceptive sociological imagination which focuses about the increasing number of single women in modern America. This book also shows us how women's choices have gone beyond marriage, parenthood and taking care of household as they have increased their access to education and has given importance to career aspects. According to Traister, the factors that have contributed to these changes are the feminist movements, the socio-economic movements and the expansion of reproductive rights. She also writes about the one main issue that women face, which is the conflict between achieving one's own goal and what the society expects.

Stephanie Coontz (2005) ground breaking book '*Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage*'s very famously known for its thorough historical analysis and capacity to make the connection between historical customs and contemporary patterns. Coontz also analyses the political and economic beginnings which leads to the development of marriage. She discusses that in the early societies, marriage was a tactical alliance for social prestige between families rather than a loving union between two individuals. This work offers a perspective in the ways in which marriage has undergone constant transformation and incorporates multidisciplinary approach which contains the elements of history, anthropology and sociology.

In the article "*Why Do Chinese Women Experience Gamophobia? Psychoanalytic Theory Assisted Discourses Analysis*" by **Joanna Nian Chang** (2024), says that in 2022, the number of marriages in China fell to 6.833 million, which is the lowest level in 37 years. And this is particularly seen in Beijing and Shanghai which are the wealthy areas. As a remedy the Chinese government expanded the hours for marriage registration on designated days and implemented changes to promote marriage. According to research a considerable proportion of young Chinese adults suffer from anxiety associated to marriage, with 36% of single adults experiencing marital apprehension (Research, 2023). Globally, in South Korea and US there are similar tendencies and dropping marriage rates are found. Despite the initiatives taken by the Chinese government, gamophobia is still pervasive among young Chinese women.

Significance of the Study

It is really important to look into the sociological aspects of gamophobia only then we can comprehend on how it affects people's own wellbeing. By comprehending the social elements that leads to gamophobia, we can create focused interventions to assist people in overcoming their anxieties and enhancing their mental well-being. In most of the societies marriage is regarded as a symbol of adulthood and these social constraints can make gamophobia worse. Researching the socio-cultural elements that impact gamophobia also helps to advance the development of wholesome partnerships. With a better understanding of these variables like educational initiatives and interventions that support effective communication, healthy relationships, and conflict resolution. As a result, people may become more confident in their capacity to establish and preserve wholesome marriages. Reduced marriage rates can have an effect on age demographics, population growth, and the social fabric of

communities as a whole. To better predict these demographic trends and their possible effects, we need to understand the socio-cultural elements that contribute to gamophobia.

III. Methodology

The researcher has employed *qualitative research approach* for the study. The study used a *qualitative case study design* to investigate the sociological determinants of gamophobia and how it affects women's marriages. The sources used for data collection was both *primary and secondary data*. Primary data collection would include direct personal investigation and interview. Secondary data collection would include articles, journals and newspaper reports. This study targeted women aged 21-30 years, encompassing a range of cultural backgrounds and educational levels. *Purposive sampling method* was employed to identify and recruit participants based on specific criteria, including age, cultural background, and relationship status. This approach ensures that the sample reflects the diversity within the population, providing a broad spectrum of perspectives on gamophobia. By deliberately selecting participants who meet these criteria, the research captured varied experiences and insights, allowing for a thorough exploration of the sociological factors influencing gamophobia and its implications on marriage among women. *In-depth interviews and participant observations* with women from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds were undertaken. In order to gather a variety of viewpoints, the study concentrates on women from middle-class households, Muslim communities in Kerala, and scheduled castes. The tools used for data collection are interview guide, note-taking, voice recorder, observation guide and document collection protocol. *Thematic analysis and symbolic interaction analysis* was conducted. *Thematic analysis* is used to analysis the recurring themes and patterns related to sociological factors influencing gamophobia. In order to pinpoint important sociological elements such personal experiences, cultural norms, family expectations, and economic concerns. The results are intended to give a thorough knowledge of gamophobia and how it affects women's decisions about marriage. And by applying *symbolic interactionism* we can analyze the symbols, meaning and interactions related to marriage. A cross-case comparison to identify similarities and differences among participants is used and this can help in understanding the influence of sociological factors across diverse contexts.

Objectives

1. To analyze the impact of social factors on the prevalence of gamophobia and its marriage trends among women
2. To examine the role of cultural factors in shaping women's attitudes towards marriage.
3. To explore the influence of economic factors on the changing perceptions of marriage.

Theoretical Framework- Postmodernist Perspective on Marriage

The research of *Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck- Gernsheim* raises awareness of the insecurities and difficulties that people in postmodernist western society face when it comes to dating and relationships. In the context of marriage, postmodernism offers a nuanced and often critical perspective that deconstructs the traditional notions and explores the fluid nature of relationships. In the postmodernist view, marriage is not seen as a natural or essential institution, but as something that is created by society. The concept of commitment itself is expanded beyond the traditional notion of marriage. This perspective allows for the possibility of reconstructing marriage in ways that better serve the needs and desires of contemporary individuals. Postmodernist understand the value of marriage, but they also understand the societal pressure and changes that make it extremely difficult to stick with it. The postmodern perspective on marriage also holds a radical rethinking of marriage. This view challenges the traditional norms; it embraces individualism and acknowledges the social construction.

IV. Analysis And Discussions

Social Factors

The process of socialization greatly influences women's attitude towards marriage. From a very young age this shapes their actions, expectations and beliefs. Women are frequently forced by their gender based socialization to choose between their own aspirations and conventional marital expectations. For many women gamophobia may develop as a protective mechanism in response to seeing marital problems, domestic abuse or unpleasant unions. In most of the societies the traditional roles place a strong emphasis on women's domestic and child rearing duties that also fosters a fear of losing one's freedom and professional choices. *Cases 2, 4 and 5 have discussed about the social factors influencing marriage.*

Case 2 discusses that social practices and expectations surrounding marriage are among the social elements that contribute to gamophobia. Marriage is a significant event in the Muslim society, and the Mehr that is given to the bride's family represents the bride's worth. But in Kerala, women give the groom's family the dowry, which can worsen gender inequity and fuel gamophobia. This practice emphasises the idea that women are less valuable than males, which increases the pressure and anxiety associated with marriage. She also says that she is not ready for motherhood and child caring.

Case 4 comments her experiences with gender inequality and dowry concerns have a big impact on her gamophobia. She is more afraid of getting married because she has seen the emotional and financial toll that dowry demands take. Her story sheds light on the conflicting demands placed on women in the SC community as they attempt to fulfil their own goals and contend with society norms. This realisation emphasises how societal elements like gender inequality and dowries fuel misgivings about marriage.

Case 5 opines that the demands of gender roles and social pressure exacerbate her reluctance to get married. She feels unprepared for the responsibility of running a household, therefore she gets stressed out when family and neighbours ask her about her plans for marriage all the time. Her resistance is made worse by her dissatisfaction with traditional gender norms and the notion that she should fulfil traditional feminine functions. She also discusses about how people advise her with her age to get married and have kids. Her fear of marriage is greatly influenced by these social variables, which include gender standards that are restricting and pressure to marry. These aspects also underline her quest for independence.

As the case studies illustrate, the social factors contributing to gamophobia reveals a clash between the evolving modern aspirations and entrenched traditional norms. Case 2 exposes how dowry shows the notion of women's lesser value and how the practice of dowry system in Kerala deepens the gender inequality and fuel gamophobia. The participants' reluctance towards motherhood shows that her priorities her personal goals and career and these thoughts align with Beck's assertion that contemporary societal structures challenge the traditional roles. Case 4 discusses about the pressure faced by women from the SC community to reconcile their career ambitions with societal norms underscore the impact of these traditional practices on their marital apprehensions. Case 5 demonstrates how societal pressures and rigid gender roles exacerbate reluctance to marry. The participant's frustration with constant inquiries about her marital status and the expectation to conform to traditional feminine roles underline Beck's theory that postmodern individuals are increasingly seeking to redefine their identities beyond conventional norms. These three cases show how the traditional social expectations and gender roles intensify gamophobia, revealing a broader conflict between personal autonomy and societal pressures.

Cultural Factors

The cultural narratives often shape women's attitude towards marriage. In patriarchal societies we can see that women's roles and prestige is defined by their marital status and marital failures can result in loss of respect in society. Pressure is really heightened in cultures with arranged marriages, where single women face severe social censure of disappointing their families. In many societies women are imposed with high expectations of household management and child rearing. The cultural expectations of motherhood and the pressure to have children right after marriage can take a heavy toll on women and refuse marriage. According to many cultures, there is a stigma around divorce. And for many women this can create a fear of being trapped in an unhealthy marriage which can also be abusive. Fantasized portrayals of marriage in media and movies set unrealistic standards which causes women to fear the upcoming expectations. *Case 1,2and 4 discusses about the cultural practices and factors that influence the marriage among women.*

Case 1 discusses about how the strong cultural and religious values of her Anglo-Indian family have an impact on her gamophobia. She was raised in a strongly religious environment because her parents forced her to attend church on a regular basis and study at convent schools. She also lived close to the bishop's house. She feels pressed for time and limited by her family's expectations because of their emphasis on finding a spouse who shares their religious beliefs. She struggles with competing beliefs and personal liberty, which adds to her unwillingness to marriage due to cultural and familial pressure.

Case 2 says- she is under a pressure to get married before the age of 23 or 24, which is in line with cultural and religious expectations, from her traditional Muslim family and the religious community. Exposure to the media and popular culture, which greatly influences her opinions on marriage, exacerbates this pressure. She observes that conventional expectations are drastically at odds with Western influences, such as the notion of cohabitation and dating prior to marriage. She criticises popular culture for devaluing relationships, emphasising how people approach relationships with a more self-centred and commodified perspective since they frequently lack the trust, commitment, and closeness that were once common in those kinds of partnerships.

Case 4 comments that despite the small number of suitable males, she, a member of the Scheduled Caste community and a follower of Hinduism, is subject to strong cultural expectations to marry within her caste. The pressure from society to live up to these ideals, while juggling her career goals makes her reluctance of marriage even worse. Through her experience, she sheds light on the conflicting demands of following cultural norms and achieving personal objectives, providing important context for understanding how these cultural elements affect gamophobia in women in SC communities.

The cultural factors influencing gamophobia in the provided cases reveal a complex interaction between traditional expectations and individual aspirations, as examined through Ulrich Beck's post-modern marriage theory. Case 1 illustrates how deep-rooted religious and cultural values within an Anglo-Indian family contribute

to gamophobia. The participant's experience in a religious environment and education in convent schools imposes traditional marriage expectations, creating a conflict between her personal beliefs and family pressures. Case 2 shows how traditional expectations from a Muslim family intersect with modern influences like media and popular culture. This clash exemplifies Beck's concept of "individualization". Case 4 demonstrates the difficulties that members of the Scheduled Caste group encounter in a Hindu cultural context. For example, the participant's battle with traditional expectations, such as getting married within the caste, conflicts with her professional aspirations. Overall, these cases illustrate how traditional norms and familial pressures persist even as individuals navigate modern values and personal ambitions, reflecting the complex landscape of marriage decisions today.

Economic Factors

In the modern world being financially stable is considered as a need for marriage and economic conditions have a big impact in fuelling gamophobia. And many people put off marriage because of this financial insecurity. Majority of women who achieves financial independence view marriage as unnecessary to their autonomy, this happens mainly because they might fear of losing control over personal finances. Women from middle class families sometimes view themselves as a burden for their family by thinking about the cost of hosting marriages and dowries. Concerns regarding equitable household contributions and financial stability can also arise from economic discrepancies between partners. This case study explores the connection between gamophobia and financial limitations, specifically for young individuals trying to strike a balance between advancing their careers and becoming financially independent. By analysing these factors, the study aims to understand how economic circumstances shape contemporary views on marriage, potentially influencing broader societal patterns in matrimonial behaviour. *Cases 1, 2, 3 and 4 have discussed about the importance of the economic factors that influences marriages.*

Case 1 says that her family expects her to get married between 26-28, when she is financially stable. She says that's the female members of her family always reminds her that she should be financially independent. She should earn for herself and should never be dependent on her husband. She opines that getting economically independent is necessary because it makes room for her to say opinion and take part in decision making process in her family and will earn respect.

Case 2 opines that it is really important for a girl to be economically independent and she should have a stand for herself. Her family has faced financial challenges, which has affected her view of the significance of financial freedom. She witnessed her parents' financial hardships as a child and the effects they had on their life. Her past experiences have given her a great desire to steer clear of similar difficulties and make sure she can sustain herself on her own.

Case 3 comments that perspective on marriage can be better understood by taking into account economic issues. Her drive for independence and self-sufficiency emphasises how financial security has shaped how people view marriage in current society. Her reluctance in marriage is largely a result of her fear of being economically dependent and her desire for personal financial stability, which is consistent with larger societal trends among women who value their careers and independence over traditional marriage responsibilities.

Case 4 discusses that economic factors are crucial in influencing women's attitude towards marriage. Witnessing the financial strain of dowry demands has significantly influenced her attitude, reinforcing her desire for financial independence and career advancement over marital commitments. This highlights the impact of economic pressures on women's marital decisions, particularly within the SC community.

Collectively, these cases highlight the intersection of economic factors, such as financial independence and career goals, with cultural norms and societal expectations, emphasizing the growing importance of personal autonomy and economic self-sufficiency. The analysis of economic factors influencing gamophobia, as illustrated in the case descriptions, aligns with Ulrich Beck's postmodern theory on evolving perceptions of marriage. Beck's theory highlights a shift from traditional to individualized relationships, where economic factors play a crucial role in shaping marital decisions. Beck's theory supports this trend, indicating that individuals may delay or avoid marriage if it conflicts with their economic and personal aspirations.

V. Findings

- Reluctance to marry is partly caused by the fact that many women place a higher priority on their careers and financial independence than on traditional marital obligations.
- Fears of marriage are made worse by the dowry system's financial and social constraints, especially for middle-class women.
- Individuals with past relationship trauma often exhibit heightened gamophobia, linking their fears to previous emotional distress.
- Reluctance to marriage is also caused because of the fear to get settled in a new household and live according to the expectations of the in-laws.
- Witnessing failed or unhappy marriages can reinforce fears about marital commitment.

- Traditional gender roles and systemic workplace disparities impact women's views on marriage and financial independence.

The conflict between personal aspirations and societal expectations leads to significant emotional strain among women towards marriage.

VI. Conclusion

Gamophobia is the fear of commitment or marriage, which is an ongoing issue mainly among women. It is deeply intertwined with societal, cultural and economic factors which can be summed as the sociological determinants contributing to gamophobia. The societal expectations of household responsibilities and child rearing and the cultural practices of dowry system and traditional gender roles often fuels gamophobia among women. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research targets women aged 21-30 from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds, employing interviews and observations to gather data. Thematic and symbolic interaction analysis will identify key sociological factors, providing insights into Gamophobia's impact on marriage. Despite potential biases and recruitment challenges, the study aims to enrich academic understanding of gamophobia and challenge societal marriage norms.

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