



Role of Age and Gender in Marital Preparedness of Young Adults in India

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Abstract: Marriage is the most dynamic and complex of all human relationships. There have been changes in the attitudes towards marriage owing to urbanization, industrialization, and modernization. The choices, freedom and experiences of the present generation have been radically different from the previous generation. Marriage is no longer seen as an inevitable reality but rather as a choice based on personal decision rather than a cultural mandate. Therefore, there is a need to examine the marital preparedness of young adults, a relatively new concept in India. This research was conducted to study marital preparedness and to investigate the influence of age and gender on the preparedness of young adults in India. An ex -post facto survey research was carried out on a sample of 341 young adults between the ages 20 – 30 years. The tool used in the study was the Marital Preparedness Questionnaire constructed by the researchers which had high reliability and validity. The data was analyzed using two-way ANOVA. The results showed that there were no significant differences in marital preparedness between males and females and between younger and older, young adults. However, the interaction between age and gender in marital preparedness was found to be significant. Younger women and older men were more prepared for marriage than their counterparts. The findings have implications for planning pre-marital education and other mental health interventions. Premarital preparation and education have been found to be effective in strengthening marriage and reducing divorce.

Keywords: Marital preparedness, Age, Gender, Young Adults

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is the backbone of society. It is the most dynamic and complex of all human relationships. Cox (1987) described marriage as the most intimate of all relationships. Married individuals have better physical and psychological wellbeing than their unmarried and divorced counterparts. (Bloom & Asher, 1978). Premarital education and premarital counselling have been found to be effective in increasing relationship quality after marriage. (Carroll & Doherty, 2004). Development of effective primary prevention programs can decrease marital conflict and divorce and an increase in the overall happiness index of a society.

Owing to urbanization, industrialization and modernization there have been changes in the attitudes towards and trends in marriage among young adults. Young adulthood is the stage when young people start careers and get

married. This stage extends from 20 years – 40 years (Papalia & Olds, 1994). According to Trivedi (2014) the choices, freedom and experiences of the present generation have been radically different from the previous generation. After the industrial revolution, there has been an increase in the number of women getting educated and joining the workforce there have been changes in role expectations (Shiju & Anand, 2016). Financial freedom and independence of women who are older have had an impact on their preparedness for marriage.

Nagaswami (2008) states that marriage is no longer seen as an absolute necessity; young adults believe that marriage is not only for procreation but for emotional fulfillment and hence they are willing to wait till they have found the right partner. Further, many young people enter marriage with high hopes and expectations from partners which are unreasonable. Such high expectations only lead to disappointment and eventually maladjustments in marriage and divorce. Walker and Brokaw (1998) also stated that people marry for the wrong reasons, they pointed out that the present generation takes marriage lightly and are not willing to resolve their marital problems. Media has also played a role in influencing the expectations and attitudes of young people towards marriage and realistic relationships (Banaag et. al., 2014). It thus appears that young urban adults in India are not ready for long term commitment.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Holman and Li (1997) designed a theoretical model to examine the multiple factors related to young adults' perceptions of their readiness for marriage. The study found that individuals who were older, who were females, had educational experience, were financially stable and had family support were readier for marriage.

Larson, Wilson, Benson and Medora (1998) examined the effect of family of origin on marital attitudes and readiness for marriage among 977 late adolescents. The study found that individuals who were older and female were more ready for marriage.

Badger (2005) assessed the perception of marriage readiness among emerging adults on a sample of 254 undergraduate and graduate students. The study found significant gender differences in what men and women considered as being ready for marriage. Compared to men, women placed more importance on interpersonal competency, personal responsibility and other centered capacity. Women were more likely than men to report that they were not ready for marriage.

Literature in the field of premarital preparation and counseling is sparse and very little attention has been given to the same (as cited in Badger, 2005; Larson, 2007). This is relatively a new concept in India, and it has not been the focus of much research attention. There is a definite need to study marital preparedness scientifically and build the existing knowledge base.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were to examine the marital preparedness of young adults, to explore gender differences in marital preparedness and to analyze the influence of age on marital preparedness.

IV. RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

The research design for the study was an ex post facto research design.

Variables

The independent variables of the study were age and gender.

The dependent variable of the study was marital preparedness which is defined as the subjective evaluation of one's willingness to enter into a marital relationship, attitude towards marriage and competence to fulfill marital roles and responsibilities.

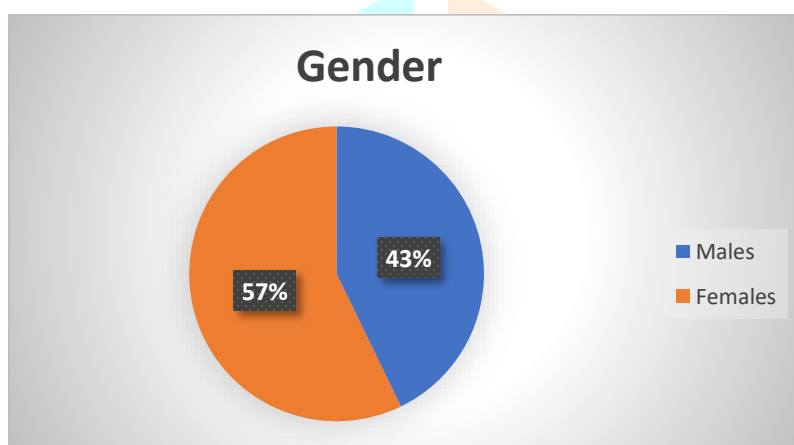
Sample

The study was conducted on a sample of 341 young adults in the age group of 20- 30 years from the different cities in India and selected using purposive sampling. The data was collected through online questionnaire and personal administration. The demographic details of the sample are shown in the figures below.

Gender

Figure 1

Composition of males and females in the sample

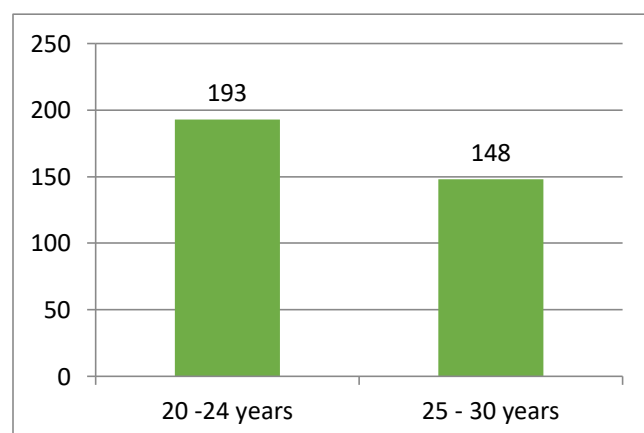


As seen in Figure 1, there were 43% (146) males and 57% (195) females in the study.

Age

Figure 2

Composition of young adults in the two age categories



The sample was divided into two age categories. As observed in the above figure, the individuals in the age group 20 – 24 years were 57% (193) and individuals in the age group 25 – 30 years were 43% (148).

V. MEASURE USED

The Marital Preparedness Questionnaire developed by the researchers was used. The tool had 54 items measuring various aspects of marital preparedness namely adult competence, interpersonal competencies, intrapersonal competencies, attitude towards marriage, financial readiness, sexual readiness, readiness for intimacy, readiness for commitment, readiness for marital roles and responsibilities. The psychometric properties of the tool were established. The tool had a high internal consistency reliability with Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.89 and test-retest reliability of 0.84. The content validity of the tool was 0.89. and the concurrent validity was found to be 0.86.

VI. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data was analyzed using two-way ANOVA using SPSS version 16. The computation of mean and standard deviation, two – way analysis of variance was carried out to assess the main effects of gender, age and interaction effects.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the current research are enumerated in the section below

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviations of Marital Preparedness of total young adults by gender and age (N = 341)

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD
Gender	Male	146	161.15	15.22
	Female	195	161.55	14.29
Age	20 -24yrs	193	161.01	14.89
	25-30yrs	148	161.87	14.43

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation of Marital Preparedness of males and females across the two age categories, Males (20 – 24 years and 25 – 30 years) and Females (20 – 24 years and 25 – 30 years)

Variables	20 – 24yrs			25 – 30 yrs		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Males	59	158.96	15.46	87	162.64	14.97
Females	134	161.91	14.60	61	160.77	13.67

Table 3

Two-way ANOVA showing the interaction of Age and Gender on Marital Preparedness of young adults ($N = 341$)

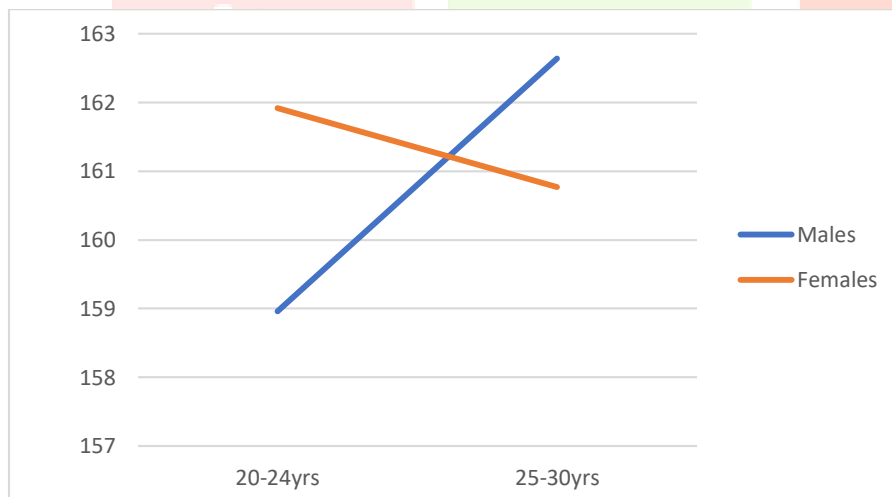
Sources of Variance	Type III Sum of squares	df	MS	F ratio
Corrected Model	544.13	3	181.37	0.840
Intercept	7937358.34	1	7937358.34	36768.86
Gender	22.24	1	22.24	0.10
Age	122.40	1	122.40	0.56
Gender * Age	445.13	1	445.13	2.06**
Error	72748.77	337	215.87	

** ($p < .01$)

Table 3 shows that there is no effect of gender on marital preparedness thus indicating that both males and females are similar in their preparedness. Further, there is no effect of age on marital preparedness. The interaction between age and gender is significant ($p < .01$).

Figure 3

Interaction between age and gender on marital preparedness



As seen in the figure above there is an interaction between age and gender on marital preparedness.

As observed in Table 1, the mean scores of marital preparedness among males ($M = 161.15$) and females ($M = 161.55$) were similar. There was no significant difference between males and females in marital preparedness. This similarity between the genders in marital preparedness could be attributed to modernization and equal opportunities for males and females in the present generation. This is different compared to the previous generation where women were expected to give more importance to marital life than their careers. In the postmodern era, women give equal importance to their careers as well as their marriage and hence they become more similar to the men in many aspects. The findings support the study done by Badger (2005) who found no

difference between the genders in marital preparedness owing to the narrowing of the gender gap. Holman and Li (1997) and Larson, Wilson, Benson and Medora (1998) reported contradictory findings and observed that females are better prepared than males.

There was no significant difference in marital preparedness between young adults belonging to the two age group categories (Table 3). The marital preparedness means for those between 20 – 24 years was ($M = 61.01$) and those between 25 – 30 years was ($M=161.87$) respectively (Table 1). This contradicts the findings of Holman and Li (1997) and Larson, Wilson, Benson and Medora (1998) who found that older the individuals, better prepared they were for marriage. The results contradict the overall popular opinion that age plays an important role in marital preparedness. The present study shows that age does not play a direct role in determining readiness. There could be other demographic variables which along with age could influence preparedness.

As seen in table 3, there was a significant interaction between age and gender on marital preparedness ($F = 2.06$, $p < .01$). The marital preparedness of men increased with an increase in age whereas for women the marital preparedness declined with increase in age. It was observed that, in the older age group (25 – 30 years), the males had higher marital preparedness ($M = 162.64$) than their female counterparts ($M = 160.77$) indicating that the males were better prepared than females in the older age category. In the younger age group (20 – 24 years), it was observed that the females were better prepared for marriage ($M = 161.91$) than the males ($M = 158.96$).

The research therefore shows that younger women and older men were more prepared for marriage. This finding could be attributed to the fact that men become more mature with age and are settled in their careers when they are older making them more prepared for marriage. The women however, mature faster than men, have wishes and dreams about married life when younger and hence could be ready for marriage much earlier. The decline in the marital preparedness of women as they get older could be attributed to the increasing importance of career demands. It is also possible that the older group women have fixed expectations about marriage, life and what they want in a mate and hence they usually delay the marriage till they find the 'ideal' person. This finding is confirmed by Badger (2005) who stated that women are more likely than men to report they were not likely to get married. This also shows the effect of globalization in India, as reported by Badger in 2005.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The research explored the marital preparedness of young adults in India. The objectives of the study were to measure marital preparedness and understand the influence of age and gender. An ex-post facto research was carried out and a survey conducted on 341 young adults between the ages 20 – 30 years. The results of young adults were statistically analyzed using SPSS 16 and two-way ANOVA was used.

The findings of the study were as follows:

1. There were no significant differences seen between the males and females or between the two age categories (20-24 years) and (25 – 30 years) in marital preparedness.
2. The study found a significant interaction between age and gender on marital preparedness of young adults.

IX. IMPLICATIONS

The findings are useful for counsellors and family life educators in planning an effective framework for premarital programs for young adults. Such research can help young adults have realistic expectations of themselves and marriage leading to a better experience of marriage.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. To study marital preparedness of young adults in the rural and semi urban areas.
2. To conduct a longitudinal study of marital preparedness from adolescents onwards to see the changes and the age in which it is emerging.

3.To study other variables with marital preparedness.

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