



# Impact of Higher Education on Women's Attitude towards Marriage

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## I. Abstract:

Marriage remains a significant social institution, particularly in collectivistic societies such as India, where cultural values and family expectations strongly influence marital decisions. However, increasing access to higher education among women has contributed to changing perspectives on marriage, autonomy, and gender roles. The present study examines the impact of higher education on women's attitudes toward marriage. A quantitative cross-sectional design was used, and data were collected from women through an online survey administered via Google Forms. The Marital Attitude Scale (MAS) was used to measure attitudes toward marriage. Participants were grouped based on educational qualification (graduates and postgraduates and above). Data were analyzed using R statistical software, and an independent samples t-test was conducted to examine group differences. The findings indicate that educational attainment significantly influences women's perceptions and attitudes toward marriage. The study highlights the role of higher education in shaping women's expectations, autonomy, and evaluation of marriage as a life institution. The results provide useful insights into evolving marital attitudes among educated women and contribute to the understanding of changing gender and relationship dynamics.

*Keywords:* Higher Education, Women, Marital Attitudes, Marriage Perception, Marital Attitude Scale

## II. Introduction:

Marriage has traditionally been viewed as a central life milestone and a socially valued institution, especially in collectivistic societies where family involvement and cultural norms strongly influence marital expectations. In India, marriage is often associated with social stability, family honor, and gender role fulfillment. However, recent decades have witnessed significant social change, particularly due to modernization, urbanization, and the increasing educational participation of women. These changes have contributed to shifting attitudes toward marriage, including greater emphasis on autonomy, equality, and personal fulfillment.

Higher education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' belief systems, aspirations, and life priorities. Women with higher educational attainment are more likely to experience exposure to diverse perspectives, develop independent decision-making abilities, and seek egalitarian relationships. Such factors may influence how women perceive marriage—not merely as an obligation, but as a partnership that must meet emotional, social, and personal expectations. Education may also increase awareness of marital challenges, such as role conflicts, adjustment difficulties, and divorce, thereby influencing optimism or skepticism toward marriage.

Existing research suggests that education is associated with delayed marriage, increased autonomy in partner selection, and changing gender role expectations. However, there is limited psychological research focusing specifically on women's attitudes toward marriage as a measurable construct. Therefore, the present study aims to examine whether higher educational attainment significantly influences women's attitudes toward marriage by comparing marital attitude scores across educational groups using a standardized measure.

## III. Literature of Review:

Higher education has been identified as a significant factor influencing women's marital outcomes and perceptions, particularly in societies undergoing social and cultural transition. Vikram (2023) examined the influence of college education on marriage in India using nationally representative data and found that educated women tend to marry later and experience greater autonomy in spouse selection. The study also highlighted that college-educated women reported more egalitarian marital relationships and greater decision-making power within marriage, indicating that education contributes to shifts in marital dynamics and gender roles.

Research has also emphasized the association between education and women's autonomy in partner choice. Banerji (2008) reported that education is linked with increased autonomy in marital decision-making, although parental involvement continues to remain influential within traditional frameworks. Further, Banerji (2013) found that younger cohorts of women were not necessarily more likely to engage in self-choice marriages; instead, there was a notable increase in parent-arranged marriages with consent. Similarly, Banerji et al. (2013) using IHDS data across two waves, observed a decline in parent-arranged marriages without choice and a corresponding increase in arranged marriages with partial choice, suggesting that education may facilitate a hybrid marital structure that accommodates individual agency while retaining cultural continuity.

Beyond marriage type and timing, higher education has been linked with attitudinal shifts toward marriage. Kim and Jung (2024), through a natural experiment in South Korea, found that increased access to college education led women to develop less traditional attitudes, including reduced belief in marriage and early childbearing as necessary life events. These findings align with modernization and second demographic transition perspectives, which suggest that education contributes to individualistic values and changing family norms. Jones (2005) also discussed the "flight from marriage" in East and Southeast Asia, attributing declining marriage rates and shifting perceptions to factors such as education, urbanization, and changing gender expectations.

Additionally, broader sociological work highlights that women's increased participation in higher education has contributed to empowerment and changes in gender identity, which may influence marital expectations. Chanana (2000) emphasized that education strengthens women's aspirations and challenges traditional gender roles in the Indian context. Musick et al. (2012) further suggested that education shapes the conditions under which individuals view marriage as desirable, contributing to delayed marriage and selective marital decision-making.

Overall, the literature indicates that higher education influences women's marriage-related outcomes through increased autonomy, altered gender role expectations, and changing values toward marriage (Vikram, 2023). However, much existing research focuses on demographic patterns such as marriage type and timing, while fewer studies examine women's attitudes toward marriage using standardized psychological instruments. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by assessing women's attitudes toward marriage using the Marital Attitude Scale and comparing marital attitude scores across educational groups.

#### **IV. Research Methodology:**

**4.1 Research Design:** The present study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the impact of higher education on women's attitudes toward marriage. This design was selected as it allows the measurement and comparison of marital attitude scores across educational groups at a single point in time.

**4.2 Sample and Sampling Technique:** Participants were recruited using a non-probability convenience sampling method. The sample consisted of women who met the inclusion criteria and voluntarily agreed to participate. Respondents were categorized into two groups based on educational qualification: graduates and postgraduates and above.

##### **4.3 Inclusion Criteria:**

1. Women aged 21 to 35 years.
2. Women who had completed at least graduation-level education were included in the study.
3. Women who were able to read and understand English.
4. Participants were required to provide informed consent prior to responding.

##### **4.4 Exclusion Criteria:**

1. Male.
2. Women below 21 or above 35.
3. Women who have not completed graduation and above educational qualifications.
4. Women who have not given consent to participate in the Research.
5. Women who are married for more than 5 years, as long-term marital experience may influence attitudes.

**4.5 Instrument:** Women's attitudes toward marriage were measured using the Marital Attitude Scale (MAS). The scale consists of 23 statements assessing both positive and negative beliefs about marriage. Responses were recorded on a Likert-type format, and reverse scoring was applied to specified items as per the scoring key. A total score was calculated by summing all item scores, with higher scores indicating a more positive attitude toward marriage.

**4.6 Procedure:** Data were collected using an online survey created through Google Forms. The form included an informed consent section, demographic questions, and the MAS items. The questionnaire link was circulated online through social media and personal networks. After completion of data collection, responses were screened for completeness and eligibility. The final dataset was exported for statistical analysis.

**4.7 Statistical Analysis:** Data were analyzed using R statistical software. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to summarize participant characteristics and MAS scores. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. An independent sample t-test was conducted to examine differences in marital attitude scores between graduates and postgraduates and above. Statistical significance was set at  $p < .05$ .

## V. Result and Discussion:

The data collected from approximately 160 participants were analyzed using R statistical software. The dataset was first cleaned and checked for completeness, and demographic variables such as age, educational qualification, marital status, and employment status were appropriately coded. The Marital Attitude Scale (MAS) consists of 23 statements measured using a four-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Each response was recorded numerically on a scale from 0 to 3 for statistical analysis. Items marked with an asterisk (\*) represent positively worded statements and were scored directly according to the scale norms, while negatively worded items were reverse scored to ensure a consistent interpretation of attitudes toward marriage. After recording, individual item scores were summed to obtain a total marital attitude score for each participant.

Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and the marital attitude scores. Participants were grouped based on their highest educational qualification, categorized as graduate and postgraduate and above. To examine differences in marital attitudes between the two groups, an independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the mean marital attitude scores. This analysis was used to determine whether women with postgraduate education and above differed significantly in their attitudes toward marriage compared to women with graduate education. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5% level ( $p < 0.05$ ). The results of the analysis were presented using tables and graphical visualizations generated in R.

The Marital Attitude Scale used in this study is a standardized and previously validated instrument designed to measure individuals' attitudes toward marriage. Since the scale has been widely used in previous research, and based on the guidance provided by the research supervisor, a separate pilot study was not conducted for this research. The instrument was administered directly to the participants, and scoring was carried out according to the established norms of the scale. In addition, the internal consistency of the scale for the present sample was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to evaluate the reliability of the responses.

**Table 1**

Reliability of the Marital Attitude Scale

**Cronbach's Alpha**

0.766

Table 1 shows the reliability analysis of the Marital Attitude Scale that was utilized for the study. For the internal consistency of the scale, Cronbach's alpha method was utilized, which produced an alpha value of 0.766. Generally, if the Cronbach's alpha value is above 0.70, the value is acceptable. Therefore, the items included in the Marital Attitude Scale show satisfactory internal consistency. It can, therefore, be concluded that the Marital Attitude Scale is reliable for measuring the attitude towards marriage for the participants of the study.

**Table 2**

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
<b>Age Group</b>	21-23 years	50 (32.05%)
	24-26 years	60 (38.46%)
	27-29 years	22 (14.10%)
	30 years and above	24 (15.38%)
<b>Education Level</b>	Graduate	51 (32.69%)
	Postgraduate and Above	105 (67.31%)
<b>Marital Status</b>	Divorced/ Separated	1 (0.64%)
	Married	46 (29.49%)
	Unmarried	109 (69.87%)
<b>Employment Status</b>	Employed	80 (51.28%)

Student	49 (31.41%)
Unemployed	27 (17.31%)

The sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants are presented in Table 2. In terms of age distribution, the majority of the participants were in the 24-26 age group, accounting for 38.46%, while 32.05% of the participants were in the 21-23 age group. The 27-29 age group accounted for 14.10%, while the 30 years and above age group accounted for 15.38%. In terms of education level, the majority of the participants had postgraduate education or above, accounting for 67.31%, while 32.69% of the participants had graduate education. In terms of marital status, the majority of the participants were unmarried, accounting for 69.87%, while 29.49% of the participants were married. Only 0.64% of the participants were divorced or separated. In terms of employment status, 51.28% of the participants were employed, while 31.41% of the participants were students. In addition, 17.31% of the participants were unemployed.

**Table 3**  
Marital Attitude Scores by Education Level

Education Group	Mean ± SD
Graduate	31.96 ± 8.31
Postgraduate and Above	35.14 ± 7

Table 3 shows the mean marital attitude scores of the participants according to their educational level. Women with graduate educational level had a mean marital attitude score of 31.96 (SD = 8.31), while women with postgraduate educational level and above had a higher mean marital attitude score of 35.14 (SD = 7.00). This shows that women with higher educational level tend to manifest a more positive attitude towards marriage compared to women with lower educational level, since higher scores on the Marital Attitude Scale indicate a more positive attitude towards marriage.

**Table 4**  
Independent Samples t-test Results

t	df	p	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
6	85.46	0.021	-5.86	-0.5

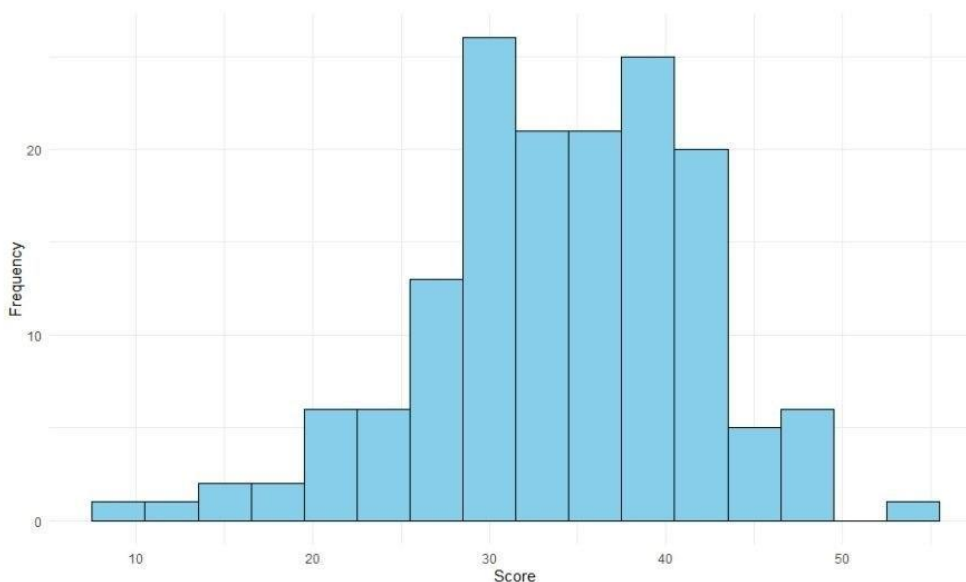
Table 4 shows the results of the independent samples t-test, which was used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the marital attitude score means of women with graduate education and those with postgraduate education and above. The results showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups, since the p-value is less than 0.05,  $t(85.46) = -2.36$ ,  $p = 0.021$ , with a 95% confidence interval between -5.86 and -0.50. This means that women with postgraduate education and above have significantly higher marital attitude score means than those with graduate education. This is important since it implies that women with higher educational levels place more emphasis on marriage.

**Table 5:**  
Item-wise Descriptive Statistics for the Marital Attitude Scale

Item	Mean ± SD
1. People should marry *	1.85 ± 0.79
2. I have little confidence that my marriage will be a success.	1.24 ± 0.87
3. People should stay married to their spouses for the rest of their lives *	1.65 ± 0.95
4. Most couples are either unhappy in their marriage or are divorced.	1.42 ± 0.82
5. I will be satisfied when I get married *	1.61 ± 0.79
6. I am fearful of marriage.	1.19 ± 0.88
Item	Mean ± SD
7. I have doubts about marriage.	1.25 ± 0.85

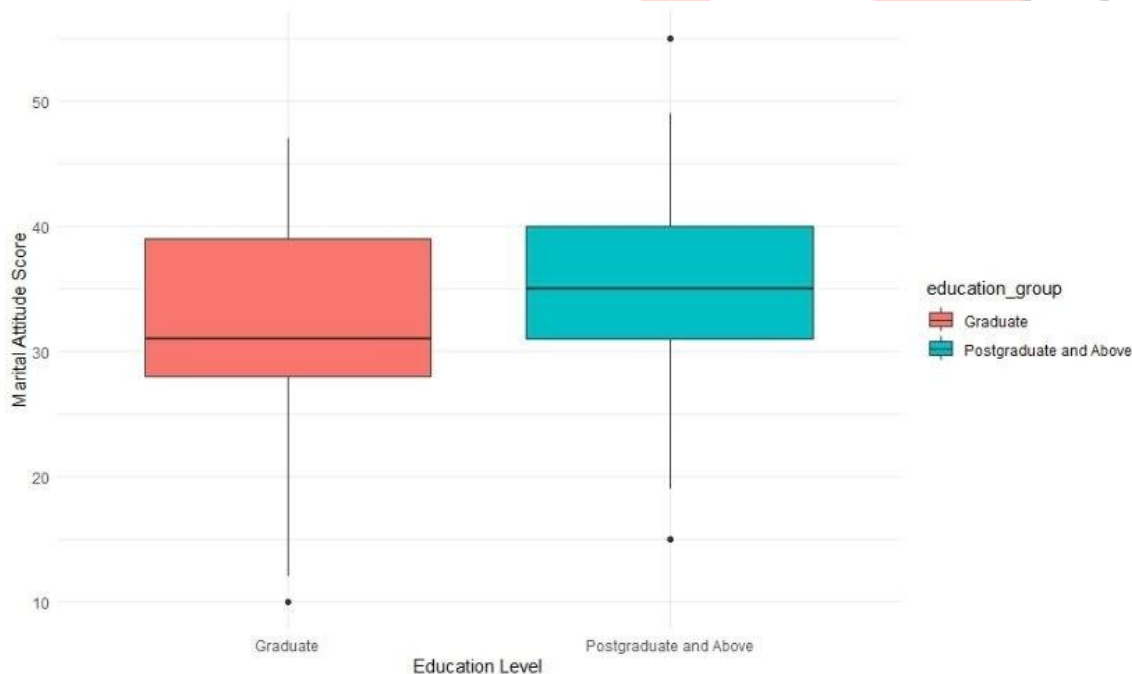
8. People should only get married if they are sure that it will last forever *	2.08 ± 0.83
9. People should feel very cautious about entering into a marriage.	0.72 ± 0.69
10. Most marriages are unhappy situations.	1.47 ± 0.78
11. Marriage is only a legal contract.	1.79 ± 0.94
12. Marriage is a sacred act *	1.79 ± 0.89
13. Most marriages aren't equal partnerships.	1.02 ± 0.77
14. Most people have to sacrifice too much in marriage.	0.94 ± 0.77
15. Because half of all marriages end in divorce, marriage seems futile.	1.39 ± 0.76
16. If I divorce, I would probably remarry *	1.37 ± 0.84
17. When people don't get along, I believe they should divorce.	1.09 ± 0.77
18. I believe a relationship can be just as strong without having to go through the marriage ceremony	1.06 ± 0.76
19. My life long dream includes a happy marriage *	2.01 ± 0.83
20. There is not such a thing as a happy marriage	1.81 ± 0.78
21. Marriage restricts individuals from achieving their goals	1.65 ± 0.79
22. People aren't meant to stay in one relationship for their entire lives.	1.83 ± 0.77
23. Marriage provides companionship that is missing from other types of relationships *	2.04 ± 0.79

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for each item of the Marital Attitude Scale, including the mean and standard deviation. The results revealed differences in the participants' reactions to various statements concerning their attitudes towards marriage. For instance, the items that reflected the positive aspects of the concept of marriage, such as "People should only get married if they are sure that it will last forever" (Mean = 2.08, SD = 0.83) and "Marriage provides companionship that is missing from other types of relationships" (Mean = 2.04, SD = 0.79), indicated relatively high means for the participants' reactions. On the contrary, the items that reflected the cautious attitudes of the participants towards the concept of marriage, such as "People should feel very cautious about entering into a marriage" (Mean = 0.72, SD = 0.69) and "Most people have to sacrifice too much in marriage" (Mean = 0.94, SD = 0.77), indicated low means for the participants' reactions.



**Figure 1**  
Distribution of Marital Attitude Scores

Figure 1 is a diagram of the distribution of total marital attitude scores for all the participants. From the histogram, it is evident that the distribution of the total marital attitude scores is moderate, with the majority of the scores ranging from 28 to 40. This implies that the majority of the participants had moderate attitudes towards marriage, as depicted by the range of the scores. The distribution of the total marital attitude scores is symmetrical, indicating no extreme skewness in the distribution of the data, and this is appropriate for the application of parametric statistical tests such as the independent samples t-test.



**Figure 2**  
Marital Attitude Scores by Education Levels

Figure 2 illustrates the boxplot of the comparison of the marital attitude score of women who had graduate education and those who had postgraduate education and above. As illustrated in the boxplot, the median value of the marital attitude score of the postgraduate group is higher than the median value of the graduate group. This observation is in agreement with the statistical findings obtained from the independent sample t-test, which indicates that women who had higher education levels had more favorable attitudes towards marriage compared to women who had low education levels.

## Final Interpretation

Overall, the results of the study support the research hypothesis that women with higher levels of educational attainment exhibit more favorable attitudes toward marriage. Women who had attained postgraduate education and above reported significantly higher marital attitude scores compared to women with graduate education, indicating comparatively more positive attitudes and a greater value placed on marriage. These findings suggest that higher educational attainment may influence women's perspectives on marriage in a positive manner. Despite increased access to education and professional opportunities, women with higher education may still view marriage as an important aspect of life, possibly reflecting a balance between personal aspirations, social values, and expectations related to family and relationships.

## Interpretation of Findings

The findings of the present study revealed that the level of educational attainment could influence the perceptions of women towards marriage. Women with higher educational qualifications could have more exposure to different ideas, career prospects, and aspirations for their personal development. This could influence their attitudes towards marriage as a social institution.

Women with higher educational qualifications could also have more awareness about the importance of gender equality, individual rights, and other alternatives in life. This could influence their perceptions towards marriage as a social institution. This could result in women with higher educational qualifications considering marriage as one aspect of their life.

It is also possible that women with higher educational qualifications could delay their marriage as a result of the time involved in their higher education. This could influence their perceptions towards marriage as a social institution.

The findings of the present study support the general sociological and psychological views that education could influence the values, priorities, and life goals of individuals. Women with higher educational qualifications could have more exposure to different ideas, career prospects, and aspirations for their personal development. This could influence their attitudes towards marriage as a social institution.

## Implications of the Study

The findings of this study also have a number of implications for the understanding of the changing attitudes of society towards the institution of marriage. Firstly, the findings of this study reinforce the significance of the role played by education in the lives of women and their attitudes towards the institution of marriage. The more education is accessible to women, the more likely the traditional forms of marriage and family will evolve.

Secondly, the findings of this study contribute to the larger debate about the evolution of roles between the genders in contemporary society. The increased focus on the development of the career and the individual will likely see women seek a balance between the two.

Thirdly, the findings of this study reinforce the significance of the role played by education in the lives of women and their attitudes towards the institution of marriage. Understanding the role played by education will help policymakers, educators, and researchers understand the evolution of attitudes towards the institution of marriage and the roles played by socioeconomic factors.

## Limitations of the Study

Although the study provided important insights, the current study had some limitations. Firstly, the study relied on a questionnaire that may have been affected by the participants' interpretations. Secondly, the number of participants was limited, with the majority being young women. This may limit the generalization of the results to other women beyond the young adult population.

Thirdly, the study was based on the assumption that the level of education is the key factor that affects women's attitudes towards marriage. However, other factors, such as cultural background, family environment, socioeconomic factors, and individual experiences, may also have an impact on the attitude towards marriage. These factors have not been explored in the current study.

Lastly, the study relied on the cross-sectional method, which helps in the collection of information at one point in time. Longitudinal studies would also have provided important insights into the changes that occur in women's attitudes towards marriage at different stages of their lives.

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