

“A Study on the Attitude towards Divorce and Cohabitation in the Indian Society”

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Abstract- Indian society as a whole being a patriarchal society is slowly undergoing a transformation in terms of people's attitudes towards cohabitation and divorce. While some contend that attitudes guide behaviour we are seeing people more openly opting for a live in relationship or a divorce when their marriage does not work out. Given this contention, the current study aimed to understand the attitudes towards cohabitation and divorce in Indian society. It was hypothesised that there will be a significant difference between adolescents, adults and the elderly in terms of their attitudes towards divorce and cohabitation. The objective of the study was to verify whether the level of openness towards divorce and cohabitation is increasing with every passing generation. Participants ranging from 17 to 60 years up were contacted via the method of convenience sampling to fill an online survey from which their demographic details and attitudes towards cohabitation and divorce were obtained. A survey was designed based on past research was used to assess the sample's attitudes. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics and interpreted. This study provides a clear understanding of how different are the attitudes among the three age groups i.e adolescents, adults and elderly.

Keywords- Attitudes, Cohabitation, Divorce, Adolescents, Adults, Elderly, Indian Society

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian society is a highly collectivist society and family is an apex social institution. India is a country where marriage is treated as a sacramental bonding between two people. The concept of husband, wife and family is still given utmost importance in the country. Marriage is emphasized as covering subjects like marriage patterns, selection of marriage partner, age at marriage, marriage rituals, financial exchanges and divorce. All around the world since the family institution holds so much importance the concept of cohabitation is becoming widespread. But in Indian society, though it is not illegal, the majority considers it to be aberrant and is looked down upon. It is seen that the attitude towards marriage, cohabitation and divorce largely varies upon the generation to which people belonged. Cohabitation can be defined as couples living together without being married (Feldman, Babu, 2017). Divorce is defined as the termination of a marriage otherwise than by death or annulment. (Mozley and Whitley, 1967). India being a conservative society generally didn't uphold these ideals but slowly there is a shift in people's attitudes towards divorce and cohabitation. According to the 2011 census report, there are over 1,50,000 and 3,20,000 women who are either divorced or separated. This suggests a

twofold rise in the divorce cases in the last two decades in the country. (Feldman, Babu, 2017). With changing times and attitude of the people these relations have come to the mainstream of society. The numbers of such relations are increasing gradually. Cohabitation is now seen as “virtual marriage” and young people no longer support the view that marriage is the only option for intimacy. Thus, to understand the Indian population's attitude towards divorce and cohabitation we conducted this study.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study conducted by Rakhee and KanakYadav (Yadav and Rakhee, 2018) showed that attitudes of young adults on marriage is changing. They conducted a survey of 78 males and 123 females between 18-23 years of age. The participants responded to 25 item survey questionnaire developed by Shivali, Chitagubbi and Devendrappa (2012). The results indicated that mutual compatibility is an important domain for the success of marriage which is why younger generation prefers to first enter into a cohabitation setup.

In addition, it was found that the society we are living in is constantly undergoing a change and the current generations are no longer looking down upon the cohabiting couples (Rathe and Shergil, 2008). In recent times people fear failures, they are afraid of the failure of marriage and thus choose not to get married. Children who have seen their parents, who have a troubled married life or have separated due to various reasons, tend to be more open towards the idea of divorce and cohabitation.

Having a different perspective to the variables of cohabitation and divorce, Claire M. Kamp Dush et al; (Camp, Dush and Amato, 2003) examined the relationship between premarital cohabitation and marital quality and stability. They investigated a sample of 1,425 couples in the US in two groups- those who were married between 1964 and 1980 (when cohabitation was less common) and those married 1981 and 1997 (when cohabitation was more common). The results indicated that spouses who cohabited prior to marriage had poorer marital quality and greater marital instability. Two perspectives were tested which were cohabitation perspective which states that that co-habitation itself increases the likelihood of marital dysfunction above and beyond the characteristics that spouses bring to their relationships and selection perspective which assumes that people who cohabit before marriage differ in certain ways from non cohabiters and that these differences

increase the likelihood of poor marital quality and divorce. The findings supported the experience of cohabitation perspective as an explanation to poor marital quality and greater marital instability because being in a relationship with an uncertain commitment to the future may make individuals more accepting of divorce (Axinn & Thornton, 1992), which, in turn, may cause individuals to invest less in their marriage and be more likely to divorce when confronted with marital problems (Amato & Rogers, 1999).

Even though research found that premarital cohabitation does not always lead to great marital quality and stability. A research conducted by Vicki T Davis and Raghu N Davis (Davis and Singh, 1989) studied the attitudes towards marriage and family life of 83 Indian students found that Indian students were open to the idea of cohabitation and premarital sex. An adapted version of Marriage and Family life attitude survey was used to collect data from 53 attitudinal statements under 10 areas of marriage and family life. Results showed that Indian students had a more open attitude towards cohabitation and premarital sexual relation which was similar to those of many American university students. Attitudes towards premarital sex and cohabitation were positively and significantly correlated to their attitudes towards divorce and marriage. The research also found that students with relatively negative attitudes towards divorce and cohabitation were likely to be over 26 years of age, married or had never dated anyone.

III. AIM

The aim of the study was to find the difference in openness of attitude towards cohabitation and divorce in the Indian society. This study was spread across a sample of three generations.

IV. HYPOTHESIS

Based on the above literature review it was hypothesised that there will be a significant difference between adolescents, adults and the elderly in terms of their attitudes towards divorce and cohabitation. We wanted to verify whether the level of openness towards divorce and cohabitation is increasing with every passing generation. We have thus employed an alternative two-tail hypothesis.

V. METHODOLOGY & PROCEDURE

To investigate the attitudes of people towards cohabitation and divorce in Indian society, a survey study was conducted. Participants were contacted via the method of convenience sampling to fill an online survey in order to get the data which was later scored to test the hypothesis.

VI. SAMPLE DETAILS

a sample size of 60 (n=60) was collected, the sample size consisted of 20 elders (60 years and up), 20 middle aged adults (20-60), 20 adolescents (10-19). The participants were randomly selected from different age groups. No participant had

prior information or prior experience about the research being conducted.

VII. INSTRUMENTS

In order to gather the data a survey questionnaire was developed. It had 20 items in total. The rating scale used to measure the responses was a 5-point Likert scale which is a psychometric scale commonly involved in research that employs questionnaires. The scale is employed to find out the maximum and minimum score scored by the individual for the variable being assessed. The scale was of a self-administrative nature. Respondents were asked to read the statements carefully and answer all the questions honestly. Scoring was done using Microsoft Excel with the help of scoring keys. For analysis, F-test (Anova- one way) was applied to the data for finding the significance of the difference between high conflict and low conflict groups. Frequency and percentage analysis was done for the questionnaire to find out the openness of attitude towards cohabitation and divorce amongst three different age groups.

VIII. ANALYSIS

We conducted a survey where in we collected data from 60 people. To analyse the data we ran it through the SPSS (16th edition). SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) statistics is a software package produced by SPSS inc and later acquired by IBM in 2009. We made use of this software to run statistical operations and further analysis.

A descriptive analysis was done using SPSS (16th edition) to calculate the Mean, Median and Mode. The use of one way Anova was taken into consideration to run inferential analysis of the data. One-Way ANOVA ("analysis of variance") compares the means of two or more independent groups in order to determine whether there is statistical evidence that the associated population means are significantly different

IX. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The major aim behind this study was to see whether there is a significant difference in attitude of adolescents, middle age and elderly towards the concept of Cohabitation and Divorce.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

| Attitude | Descriptives | | | | | | | |
|----------|--------------|---------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Minimum | Maximum |
| 1.00 | 20 | 68.0500 | 6.15993 | 1.37740 | 65.1671 | 70.9329 | 51.00 | 76.00 |
| 2.00 | 21 | 63.7143 | 7.33582 | 1.60081 | 60.3751 | 67.0535 | 53.00 | 75.00 |
| 3.00 | 20 | 56.2500 | 9.14719 | 2.04537 | 51.9690 | 60.5310 | 42.00 | 77.00 |
| Total | 61 | 62.6885 | 8.95645 | 1.14676 | 60.3947 | 64.9824 | 42.00 | 77.00 |

Table 1 indicates the descriptive statistics of the difference between the attitude towards divorce and cohabitation among adolescents, adults and elderly (N=61) where 1 stands for the

attitudes among adolescents (N=20, M=68.05, SD=6.15) , 2 stands for attitudes among adults (N=21, Mean=63.71, SD=7.33) and 3 stands for attitudes among elderly (N=20, M=56.25, SD=9.14). It can be seen that there is a difference between the means of the 3 groups. Further to understand if there is a significant difference between the means ANOVA (F test) was computed.

Table 2: Inferential Statistics

| Multiple Comparisons | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|------------------------|------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Dependent Variable: Attitude | | | | | | | |
| | (i) Age | (j) Age | Mean Difference (i-j) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
| | | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Tukey HSD | 1.00 | 2.00 | 4.33571 | 2.38759 | .173 | -1.4072 | 10.0786 |
| | | 3.00 | 11.80000 ^a | 2.41653 | .000 | 5.9875 | 17.6125 |
| | 2.00 | 1.00 | -4.33571 | 2.38759 | .173 | -10.0786 | 1.4072 |
| | | 3.00 | 7.46429 ^a | 2.38759 | .008 | 1.7214 | 13.2072 |
| | 3.00 | 1.00 | -11.80000 ^a | 2.41653 | .000 | -17.6125 | -5.9875 |
| | | 2.00 | -7.46429 ^a | 2.38759 | .008 | -13.2072 | -1.7214 |

Table 2 indicates the multiple comparisons between the attitudes among adolescents, adults and elderly. According to Tukey's HSD, it can be seen that there is a significant difference between group 1 and group 3 (Mean difference 11.80, $p=0.00$), between group 2 and 3 (Mean difference 7.464, $p=0.008$), and between. It can be said that when these findings are clubbed together, a pattern can be seen of significant differences in attitudes of adolescents, adults and elderly. Most difference can be seen between the attitudes of adolescents and elderly.

Table 3: Anova

| ANOVA | | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|------|
| Attitude | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 1426.096 | 2 | 713.048 | 12.211 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 3386.986 | 58 | 58.396 | | |
| Total | 4813.082 | 60 | | | |

Table 3 indicates the results obtained by doing ANOVA. The analysis of variance between the three group suggests $F=12.211$ ($p=0.000$). This leads us to reject the null hypothesis, there are significant differences between the three age groups and their attitudes. Further, to know where the difference lies between the 3 groups Tukey's HSD was run.

Using the literature review, we can say that the results are in line with the reviews. The results clearly show that the younger generation is more open and acceptable to cohabitation and divorce, while the middle age are fairly more open than the elders, the elders have a lesser open attitude towards divorce and cohabitation. In the first study, results indicate that mutual compatibility holds an important stand for the success of marriage which is why younger generation prefers to first enter into a cohabitation setup. We saw that the adults generally

agreed to be more supportive in situations where their friend was planning a divorce. The adolescents believed that living in a cohabitation setup with their partner before marriage would give them a greater understanding of their partner and their relationship as a whole and experience flexibility. The adults also seemed much open to having a cohabiting couple as a neighbour as compared to an elderly. The younger generation were less likely to view cohabitation as a loss of values for the individual and a source of defiance for the sanctity of the institution of marriage whereas the elderly relatively showed attitudes against live in relationships and divorce. The limitation of this study was that we cannot generalise our inference based on the limited sample size chosen. The study consisted of a sample that belonged to the upper middle and middle class strata and did not include the lower strata of the society. Self reported data was used which is limited by the fact that it rarely can be independently verified.

X. CONCLUSION

Cohabitation and divorce data was collected for individuals in the surveyed household who are of the age 10 and older. The data is considered to be reliable for the sample size that was taken. The attitude of the three generations, varied the most between the young adolescents and the elderly. This shows that the elderly have a significant less open attitude towards cohabitation and divorce, while the middle aged adults and the youth had a considerably less difference in their openness to attitude towards the same. The strength of the project is that we had a significant difference in our mean scores regarding the three different age groups it was in line with the hypothesis. The research can be further extended with a larger sample population along with the inclusion of people from all stratas of society.

XI. LEARNINGS

The learning of the project was definitely a fulfilling one, as this was the first time we got to do a research and it enhanced our skills. It was an enlightening experience to formulate a survey and administer it to the ones that live around us. This project has given us an opportunity to look beyond our prescribed syllabus and study the population. The process of meticulously going through past literature helped us broaden our horizon of knowledge. By doing this assignment we have gained a considerable understanding of how a research project is conducted and it has also given us an understanding on using software designed to run statistical operations. We believe that it kindled our interest in research and this experience will surely aid us in our future research.

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