

# Attitude towards 'dowry' among early adulthood, middle and senescence age respondents in urban Jhansi

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Present study was conducted in Jhansi city on 100 respondent of three life stages viz., early adulthood-18 to 40 years (35 number, 17 male and 18 female), middle adulthood-40 to 60 years (35 number 18 male 17 female) and senescence-above 60 years (30 number, 15 male 15 female) randomly selected from 6 areas to assess their attitude towards dowry by using appropriate scale. Data revealed that almost equal number of respondents belonged to both male and female sex. All the respondents in early adulthood and middle adulthood belonged to Hindu religion, while only 6.7 % of respondents in senescence age were Muslims. More number of male and female respondents in these 3 stages of life span had most unfavourable ( $\chi^2=0.057$ ) and favourable ( $\chi^2=0.427$ ), respectively attitude towards dowry. Similarly more number of respondents of Hindu and Muslim religion in senescence stage had most unfavourable and unfavourable attitude towards dowry, while only 20% and 3.33 % of respondents of Hindu religion had moderate and favorable attitude to dowry. Most of the respondents from all 3 age groups with girls in their family had most unfavourable and unfavourable attitude to dowry, while less number of respondents had favourable attitude to dowry. Early adulthood ( $\chi^2=14.379$ ) and senescence age ( $\chi^2=10.285^*$ ) group respondents with boys in their families had unfavourable association to dowry.

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**D**owry system in India started with the purpose of providing security to daughters in event of adversity or misfortune after marriage. For this parents voluntarily gave whatever they could give to their daughters for this purpose. With the passage of time this practice deteriorated to an extent that the grooms and his tasks often started making exorbitant demands which, if not met after marriage resulted in dowry deaths. Study of Waheed (2009) revealed that Indian Muslims

commonly use the Arabic word Jahez for dowry and, very often, justified the practice in terms of Jahez-e-Fatimi. Presently in India while considering marriage, dowry is oftenly the first thing which comes into discussion. The study by Naved and Persson (2010) also explored that dowry demand predicts the extent, frequency, and severity of physical wife abuse regardless of the status of dowry payment. No payment of dowry increased the likelihood of abuse, its frequency, and

severity in households demanding dowry. Prasad (1994) reviewed studies of family violence and wife abuse in India as well as the West and reported that about 25% of dowry victims are mothers and pregnant women. Surender *et al.* (1997) reported that improving female education could be an important means of inducing the necessary social change to eliminate dowries. These workers found that parents with a favorable attitude towards the dowry system have a correspondingly negative attitude towards educating their daughters.

The dowry system has resulted in many social problems like biased treatment towards girls by parents than boys and the denial of justice to women. Parents feel that the male child is source of income and hence they are ready to spend any amount of money for him. But they feel that investment for the girl child is a burden to the family. From childhood, this causes an unequal treatment of girls (Kumar *et al.*, 2013). The growing financial constraints of dowry on bride's family as well as increasing abuse of the tradition from groom or his family has compelled the society to change its perception to dowry. Government has also enacted many laws to regulate this system. The present study was planned with the objective to assess the attitude of different age group respondents to dowry and association of socio cultural variables with attitude towards dowry.

## ■ RESEARCH METHODS

Present study was carried out in urban localities of Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh in year 2013 to know the attitude towards dowry among respondents of different age groups. For this study 6 areas *i.e.* Grassland, Sipri Bazar, Sadar, Bundelkhand University, Awas Vikas Colony and Mission compound were selected randomly. From these areas, 100 respondents with age group ranging from 18 years to more than 60 years were

randomly selected. These respondents based on their age were allotted to different age groups *i.e.* Early adulthood with 35 respondents (17 male and 18 female), Middle adulthood with 35 respondents (18 male 17 female) and Senescence (old age) with 30 respondents (15 male 15 female). Data on dowry attitude was collected using scale developed by Rai (1982) published by Arohi Manovigyan Kendra, Jabalpur. This scale consists of three point Likert type 30 structured items/statements. The items are presented as declarative statements, and the respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with each item on a three-point scale consisting agree, uncertain and disagree. Out of 30 items, 15 are favourable phrased whereas 15 are unfavourable phrased. For the favourable statements allotment of marks were 2 for agree, 1 for uncertain and 0 for disagree and for uncertain statements marks were reverse. The information was also collected by personal interview the on the social profile of the respondents. Age, sex, religion, number of girls in family and number of boys in family were used as independent variables. Attitude towards Dowry was taken as dependent variable. Data was analyzed by computing mean, per cent, and association by Chi-square test.

## ■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study as well as relevant discussion have been presented under following heads :

### Respondent's socio personal profile :

Data in Table 1 revealed that almost equal number of respondents belonged to both male and female categories. All the respondents in early adulthood and middle adulthood belonged to Hindu religion, while 93.3% respondents of senescence age were Hindu and 6.66%

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents as per socio personal profile**

Variables	Age groups		
	18-40 years	40-60 years	Above 60 years
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	17 (48.57)	18 (51.42)	15 (50)
Female	18 (51.42)	17 (48.57)	15 (50)
<b>Religion</b>			
Hindu	35(100)	35 (100)	28 (93.33)
Muslim	0	0	2 (6.66)
Sikh	0	0	0
Christian	0	0	0

Muslim and there was no respondent from Sikh and Christian religion.

**Respondent’s sex and attitude towards dowry :**

Result in Table 2 indicated that in early adulthood 37.14% of female and 28.57% of male respondents showed most unfavorable attitude towards dowry system followed by 11.42% male and 3.71% female who showed unfavorable attitude. Very less number of respondents had moderate (2.85%) and favorable attitude (5.71%). This age group respondent’s favorable statement had no association (chi-square value 1.044) with dowry while unfavorable statement (chi-square value 9.201) showed significant association with dowry. Attitude of both sex respondents in middle adulthood and senescence age had no association with dowry and the difference in attitude of male and female respondents for dowry is not different. In a study by Jitubhai (2011) revealed no significance difference in attitudes toward dowry among

male and female. On the other hand Ghosh (2013) recorded significant difference between the attitude of the boys and girls college students. According to her results, the girls possess favorable attitude towards dowry.

In middle age more number of male respondents (70.14 %) had unfavorable attitude towards dowry, while more number of female (31.42%) respondents had most unfavourable attitude to dowry. Our results were in contradiction with findings of Verma and Mehrotra (1990) who reported that 63% women in middle age were in favour of dowry. Unfavourable attitude of female to dowry in our study may be partially attributed to women education and awareness in society with the passage of time. Srinivasan and Lee (2004) also studied attitudes towards the dowry system among married women in the northern province of Bihar (N= 4,603), in which the dowry has strong roots in tradition. In senescence age, majority of male respondents (23.33%) had shown most unfavorable attitude while 13.33% female had

**Table 2: Respondent’s sex and their attitude towards dowry**

Stage	Sex	Most favorable	Favorable	Moderate	Unfavorable	Most unfavorable
Early adulthood	Male	0	1 (2.85)	2 (5.71)	4 (11.42)	10 (28.57)
	Female	0	1 (2.85)	2 (5.71)	2 (5.71)	13 (37.14)
		$\chi^2 = 1.044$			$\chi^2 = 9.201^*$	
Middle adulthood	Male	0	0	2 (5.71)	6 (70.14)	10 (28.57)
	Female	0	0	2 (5.71)	4 (11.42)	11 (31.42)
		$\chi^2 = 0.0009$			$\chi^2 = 0.057$	
Senescence Age	Male	0	0	3 (10)	5 (16.66)	7 (23.33)
	Female	0	1 (3.33)	3 (10)	7 (23.33)	4 (13.33)
		$\chi^2 = 2$			$\chi^2 = 0.427$	

\*indicates significance of value at P <0.05 level

**Table 3: Religion wise distributions of respondents and attitude towards dowry**

Stage	Religion	Most favourable	Favourable	Moderate	Unfavourable	Most unfavourable
Early adulthood	Hindu	0	2 (5.71)	4 (11.42)	6 (17.14)	23 (65.71)
	Muslim	0	0	0	0	0
	Sikh	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian	0	0	0	0	0
Middle adulthood	Hindu	0	0	4 (11.42)	10 (28.57)	21 (60)
	Muslim	0	0	0	0	0
	Sikh	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian	0	0	0	0	0
Senescence Age	Hindu	0	1 (3.33)	6 (20)	11 (36.66)	10 (33.33)
	Muslim	0	0	0	1 (3.33)	1 (3.33)
	Sikh	0	0	0	0	0
	Christian	0	0	0	0	0
		$\chi^2 = 4.289^*$			$\chi^2 = 0.190$	

\*indicates significance of value at P <0.05 level

unfavorable attitude towards dowry.

**Respondent’s religion and attitude towards dowry:**

Table 3 depicts that in three stages of life *i.e.* early adult hood, middle adult hood and senescence age majority of Hindu respondents (65.71, 60 and 33.33%, respectively) showed most unfavorable attitude to dowry, while Muslim respondents had unfavourable to most unfavourable attitude to dowry. Information on relative prevalence and attitude of respondents from different religions is scanty. Study of Waheed (2009) revealed that Indian Muslims justify the dowry practice in terms of Jahez-e-Fatimi which comprises some essential articles for the outfit of the bride as well as for conjugal life and valuable goods, clothes, an amount of money settled on after bargaining, and lavish food and hospitality for the barat. Study by Ambrus *et al.* (2010) explains trends in dowry levels in Bangladesh by drawing attention to an

institutional feature of marriage contracts previously ignored in the literature: mehr or traditional Islamic bride-price. Data further revealed that attitude of respondents from either religion in any stage of life had no significant association to the dowry system.

**Girls number in family and their attitude towards dowry :**

It is evident from Table 4 that more number of respondents with 0-2 and 3-4 girls in family had most unfavourable attitude towards dowry in all three stages of life (early adulthood, middle adulthood and senescence age). On the other hand none of the respondents having a girl in family had most favourable attitude towards dowry, while very less number (3.33-5.71%) of respondents with girls in family had favourable attitude towards dowry. Neither the respondent’s stage of life nor the number of girls in family had significant favourable

**Table 4 : Attitude of respondents according to number of girls in family**

Stage	Girls	Most favourable	Favourable	Moderate	Unfavourable	Most unfavourable
Early adulthood	0 - 2	0	2 (5.71)	3 (8.57)	5 (14.28)	19 (25.71)
	3 - 4	0	0	0	2 (5.71)	4 (11.42)
	4 - 5	0	0	0	0	0
		$\chi^2 = 2.084$		$\chi^2 = 1.605$		
Middle adulthood	0 - 2	0	1 (2.85)	3 (8.57)	8 (22.25)	20 (57.14)
	3 - 4	0	0	0	1 (2.85)	2 (5.71)
	4 - 5	0	0	0	0	0
		$\chi^2 = 2.016$		$\chi^2 = 0.088$		
Senescence age	0 - 2	0	1 (3.33)	4 (13.33)	7 (23.33)	10 (33.33)
	3 - 4	0	0	4 (13.33)	3 (10)	1 (3.33)
	4 - 5	0	0	0	0	0
		$\chi^2 = 1.983$		$\chi^2 = 0.524$		

**Table 5 : Respondent’s attitude towards dowry according to number of boys in family**

Stage	Boys	Most favourable	Favourable	Moderate	Unfavourable	Most unfavourable
Early adulthood	0 - 2	0	2 (5.71)	4 (11.48)	4 (11.48)	22 (62.85)
	3 - 4	0	0	0	2 (5.71)	1 (2.85)
	4 - 5	0	0	0	0	0
		$\chi^2 = 2.016$		$\chi^2 = 14.379^*$		
Middle adulthood	0 - 2	0	0	3 (8.57)	8 (22.85)	21 (65)
	3 - 4	0	0	1 (2.85)	2 (5.71)	0
	4 - 5	0	0	0	0	0
		$\chi^2 = 4.282$		$\chi^2 = 2.982$		
Senescence Age	0 - 2	0	1 (3.33)	1 (3.33)	10 (33.33)	9 (30)
	3 - 4	0	0	5 (16.66)	2 (6.66)	0
	4 - 5	0	0	0	0	2 (6.66)
		$\chi^2 = 10.285^*$		$\chi^2 = 6.018$		

and unfavourable association to dowry as evident from the chi square values. A study from Tamil Nadu, by Smith *et al.* (2008) found that aversion of having girls in family was associated with their concern to dowry. These workers further observed that more number of girls in family means multiple dowries. Many past studies (Gupta, 2003 and Srinivasan, 2005) have reported that dowry is the prime deterrent to have girls in India. Anecdotal evidence of dowry-related abuse, including burning and domestic violence (Amin and Suran, 2005) is other reason of girl's aversion in family.

### Boys number in family and attitude to dowry :

In Table 5 data revealed that majority respondents of early adult hood (62.85%) and middle adult hood (65.0%) having 0-2 boys in family had most unfavourable attitude towards dowry, while equal number of respondents in senescence age group had unfavourable and most unfavourable attitude to dowry. Number of boys from early adulthood and middle adult hood age respondent's found to have significant association to dowry system as evident from chi square values. Most unfavourable attitude to dowry of more respondents from early adulthood and middle adult hood age group may be attributed to their modern thinking and broad mindedness and less belief in old social systems. There is no relationship of boys' number in family with attitude to dowry system.

### Conclusion:

It is concluded from the results that respondents of both sex in early adulthood and boys in family in senescence age had significant favourable association with dowry, while respondent's religion and number of girls in family had no association with attitude towards dowry.

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