



Mental and Emotional Trauma Faced by Women after Marriage: Educational Aspect

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Abstract

The article explores how Indian societal structures—rooted in patriarchy and socio-economic stratification—contribute to the mental and emotional trauma experienced by women after marriage. It highlights how rigid gender roles and the institution of marriage often confine women to submissive domestic roles, leading to exploitation and psychological distress. Education is presented as a potential tool for empowerment, yet many women lack access or are conditioned to prioritise family over personal growth. Even educated women may internalise gender inequality, worsening their mental health. Empirical studies show high rates of verbal, emotional, financial, and even physical abuse among married women, with limited access to therapy or support systems. The article concludes that meaningful change must begin within families, emphasising the need for education, awareness, and legal support to help women recognise and resist abuse. It calls for pre-marital counselling, legal education, and a shift away from sacrificial mindsets that perpetuate patriarchal norms.

Keywords: Education, society, awareness, educated women, patriarchy, gender roles

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Introduction

Indian society is complex and stratified (Weber et al., Marx et al., Sorokin et al.) at multiple levels. ("Intersectionality in Women's Mental Health", 2024) Dominant groups (Kirby & Spence, 1826) have created these categories to benefit themselves. (Mintz, 2025) People are categorised into groups based on socio-economic factors such as wealth, income, education, gender, occupation, and social status (Durkheim et al., Weber et al., 1890s). ("Three-component theory of stratification", n.d.) Two significant reasons play a crucial role in the mental and emotional trauma of women. First, gender is the main factor affecting women's mental health, given the societal division of male and female roles. Second, marriage, defined as a legally and socially recognised union, is one medium to get 'settled' (Deshpande, 2020). Women are domesticated in family and marriage, taught to be 'loyal' and submissive, where

cooking, cleaning, and house chores are their duties. This makes marriage exploitative for women.

The exploitation of women has a long history in India. Stratification involves various strata that are not only de jure entities but operate hierarchically in Indian society. The division of roles between men and women is a major cause of trauma among women. Women are expected to do everything perfectly yet are treated as the "second sex" (de Beauvoir, 1949). (de Beauvoir, 1949) Marriage legally perpetuates the exploitation of women, who suffer mental, physical, emotional, and financial abuse and dowry exploitation yet often fail to recognise it. Despite laws against dowry, women are educated to perpetuate generational baggage. (Alina, 2025) Many women face exploitation by in-laws, husbands, or their own parents. Educated women often choose to suffer,

prioritising family values over laws meant for their protection.

We cannot ignore the educational aspect because education is a powerful tool. One can fight against exploitation if aware of their rights. Laws exist against inequality, discrimination, abuse, and dowry, but many women lack awareness due to insufficient knowledge or social conditioning to remain silent (Mead, 1935).

("Dowry system in India") Studies show married women suffer more depression than unmarried women. (Akhouri, 2019) A comparative study on 100 working women (equal married/unmarried) concludes married women have higher depression rates. Another study on 320 participants revealed similar findings. Conversely, one study reports married women are less likely than unmarried women to report depressive symptoms (Sultan et al., 2023).

Gender-based discrimination and marginalisation structure society and vice versa.

Role of Gender

India is patriarchal; traditional gender roles burden women with domestic and external responsibilities. Women are viewed as sources of cheap labor, responsible for childbearing. Though all women work, few are salaried (Bedi et al., 2023). (Rajora, 2023) Women have limited educational access and public participation. Denial of paid work and personal development opportunities strengthens patriarchal, androcentric structures (Gilman, 1911), still regressive. ("Women and Economics", 1911) Women are still treated as "sexual commodities" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). (Fredrickson, 1997) While school and college curricula now address gender roles and sensitivity, education alone cannot change society. Even highly educated individuals witness mistreatment of women, which varies culturally.

Gender roles differ among societies, shaped by culture. Anthropologist Margaret Mead studied gender foundations. In *Coming of Age in Samoa*(1928), she found gender roles in Samoa more fluid and less restrictive than in the West, concluding that gender expectations reflect cultural rather than biological factors. (Mead, 1928) In her seminal work, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*(1935), studying the Arapesh, Mundugumor, and Tchambuli tribes in New Guinea, she found: (Mead, 1935)

Arapesh: Both genders nurturing and peaceful.

Mundugumor: Both genders aggressive and competitive.

Tchambuli: Women were primary providers and decision-makers; men were more decorative.

Mead argued masculine and feminine traits are culturally constructed, challenging fixed Western views. (Mead, 1935)

Marriage

Marriage is legally and socially recognised and a medium to get 'settled'. Women are domesticated, taught to be loyal and submissive, performing duties like cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing. This leads to exploitation. Economic enslavement results from lack of educational opportunity and dependency on men, causing financial problems. After daughters marry (regarded as 'paraya-dhan'), women receive little spousal support. Women are often treated as childbearing machines, pressured to produce male heirs due to son preference in Hindu society, linked to salvation. Sexual division of labour is repressive, with women responsible for childrearing, cooking, cleaning, and caregiving, normalised through socialisation. Men mostly care about lineage.

Marriage patterns differ culturally and socially. Arranged marriages dominate in

India; parents mostly choose partners for girls, while boys have more choice. Patriarchal norms cement this structure. Rural areas lag educationally, with practices like honour killings and restrictions on girls' education, perpetuating these values generation after generation.

Urban areas show rising love marriages based on education, career, and compatibility. Western societies focus on love, companionship, and mutual values in marriage. Same-sex marriage is now legal in many countries, reflecting acceptance of LGBTQ+ rights (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, US, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Thailand, South Africa). ("Thailand legalises same-sex marriage, allows couples to wed starting in January", 2024) Cohabitation without marriage is common in Nordic countries and tribal societies such as the Garasia tribe in Rajasthan and Gujarat. ("Cohabitation in the Nordic countries: From deviant phenomenon to social institution", 1981) Despite changing norms, women's conditions worsen, facing verbal, emotional, financial, physical abuse, and marital rape. Sociological research shows women are often raised to have no voice, taught silence, leading to accumulated sadness and depression. ("Mental Health of Women in India: A Silent Epidemic", 2024) Married women's lives are complex with physical and mental problems ranging from alienation to depression. ("Indian child marriage crackdown leaves families in anguish", 2023) This research assumes married women suffer greater emotional trauma than unmarried women. ("Prevalence and determinants of emotional violence faced by married women in Delhi, India: A cross-sectional study", 2023)

Literature Review

Nancy Cott (*Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*, 2002) shows

marriage as a tool for governmental political and social control in the U.S., regulating gender and race through Christian monogamous norms. (Cott, 2000)

Cicely Hamilton (*Marriage as a Trade*, 1909) critiques marriage economically and socially, highlighting women's roles confined to marriage as primary survival. (Hamilton, 1909)

Alaka Malwade Basu and Sneha Kumar's study ('Bride Price, Dowry, and Young Men with Time to Kill') explores economic causes of delayed marriages among Indian men due to unemployment, with bride prices and dowry practices persisting. (Basu, 2022)

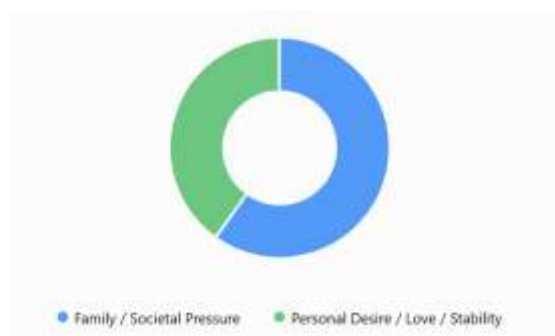
The Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) prohibits giving/taking dowry, yet dowry deaths remain high (6450 in 2022; 7000 in 2024, as per NCRB). ("2022 NCRB Data Show Over 6,000 Women Killed In Dowry-Related Cases In India", 2022) Regions such as Bihar, UP, and Madhya Pradesh report many cases. ("Bihar tops list in domestic violence", 2007)

Marital rape is uncriminalised despite recognition as domestic violence (Domestic Violence Act, 2005). ("Marital Rape Isn't a Crime in India. This Lawyer Is Fighting to Change That", 2022) Husbands' conjugal rights limit women's criminal protections, causing depression. (Agarwal, 2022)

Empirical Research Findings

A qualitative study of 20 highly educated married women reveals: ("Violence against Educated Women by Intimate Partners in Urban Karnataka, India", 2017)

Reason for Marriage: 60% cited family/societal pressure; 40% personal desire/love/stability.



Post-Marriage Adjustment: All faced issues; 50% reported in-law dominance and control.

Life Changes: 50% found increased household responsibilities; 25% experienced loss of autonomy; 25% saw positive or no change.



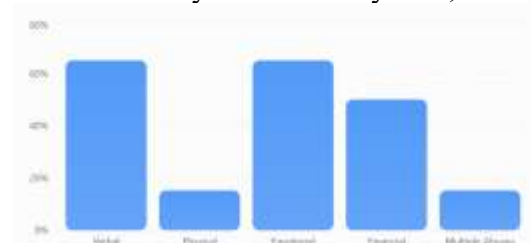
Detachment: 70% frequently/occasionally felt detached from in-laws;



40% disconnected from husbands due to lack of support and anger.



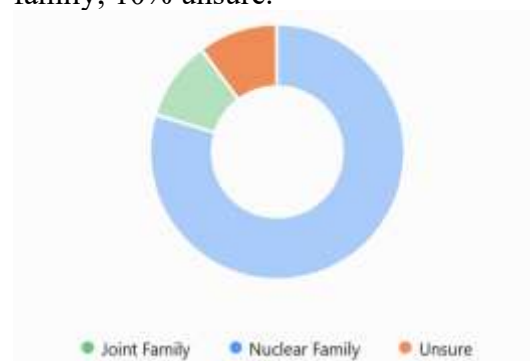
Abuse Types: Verbal – 65%; Physical – 15% (including marital rape); Emotional – 65%; Financial – 50%; Multiple abuses – 15%. ("Prevalence of intimate partner violence among Indian women and their determinants: a cross-sectional study from national family health survey – 5", 2023)



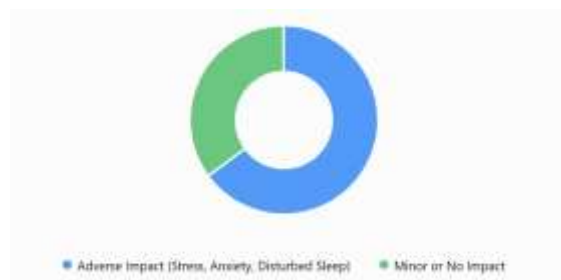
Considering Leaving Marriage: 55% had thought about leaving due to distress; 45% showed strong commitment.



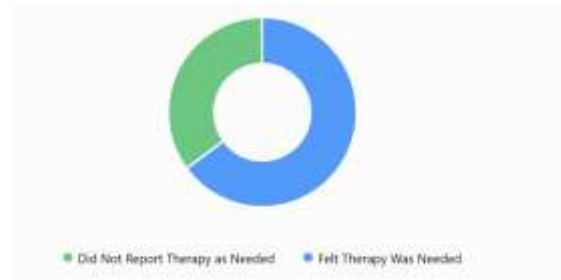
Family Preference: 80% preferred nuclear family for freedom/privacy; 10% joint family; 10% unsure.



Mental Health Impact: 65% believed marriage affected mental health adversely (stress, anxiety, disturbed sleep); 35% reported minor or no effect. (M.K., 2010)



Mental Health Management: 65% felt therapy was needed; only one accessed it; others used self-care and family support due to financial barriers.



Views on Marriage: 35% saw positive aspects (support, mutual effort); 35% mixed/conditional views; 30% negative (forced marriage, mental health, societal pressures).



Conclusion

Most women marry under family pressure; some by choice. Most are unhappy, facing in-law problems and lacking spousal support. Nuclear family preference is high for autonomy. Abuse and trauma—including verbal abuse, emotional trauma, anxiety, and depression—are common, yet therapy remains largely inaccessible. Women are socialised into restrictive roles, showing persistent patriarchal structures that confine women to the household. Few report physical abuse due to patriarchal pressures; three women disclosed marital rape. Despite celebrating women's

empowerment, realities remain grim. Women need education, awareness, and courage to speak up about adverse circumstances.

Suggestions

- Change must start within families, the fundamental societal unit, recognising women as independent entities. Prioritise women's education above marriage.
- Organise educational camps on marital problems. Pre-marriage counselling and legal counselling post-distress can prevent disaster.
- Educate women to reject and report verbal, emotional, and financial abuse. Legal recourse must be encouraged in extreme cases of cruelty.
- Women must change sacrificial mentalities ("izzat carriers") and cease perpetuating such values.

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