



## UNDERSTANDING THE PATRIARCHY AND ITS IMPACT ON MARRIAGE ANXIETY AMONG POST-GRADUATE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

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### **Abstract:**

This study is trying to analyse and understand the perceived attitude towards patriarchy and its influence on marriage anxiety among a state university campus post-graduate students. Perceived attitude refers to an individual's tendency to act in a particular situation which is evolved out of his/her temperament, knowledge and experience. Patriarchy is a visible as well as invisible ruling mechanism of almost every society, which has diverse negative impact on the life of every woman. London Feminist Network (2013) describes Patriarchy as the societal framework characterised by current and historic unequal power relations between women and men whereby women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed. The system of patriarchy evolved mainly from the gender role classification. In every patriarchal system male plays prominent role on every aspects of life. The importance of the present study relies on discovering the influence of patriarchy among post graduate class representatives as they are supposed to reflect the attitudes of the class concerned. It is hypothesised that if post graduate students have positive or negative attitude towards patriarchy and if have they developed any marital anxiety towards marriage. There are 26 departments in the university and by convenience sampling the student representatives of each departments (1 male and 1 female) were selected; thus a total of 52 were approached for the study. Then, a semi structured interview following content analysis were adopted to understand and quantify the data and thereby the orientation and pattern of the attitude and marital anxiety were discussed incorporating the theories of Patriarchy.

**Key Words:** Perceived Attitude, Patriarchy, Marriage Anxiety & London Feminist Network

### **Introduction:**

The present day society is in a historical transition as more and more women are graduating out with distinction and joining the workforce and are started holding powerful positions in the industry, academia etc. However this quantum is not in proportion to their population. Moreover, almost all epics, literature etc. have very stringent social and cultural rules and procedures for being and behaving like a female while males are given independency, freedom of speech, clothing and movement in public. In this circumstances understanding patriarchy which has subjected women into slavery, bondage and abyss is obligatory for a chaste and dutiful social scientist.

"Patriarchy is a social system in which the father or eldest male is head of the household, having authority over women and children. Patriarchy also refers to a system of government by males, and to the dominance of men in social or cultural systems" (patriarchy sucks, 2010). It is a society where women are dominated by men. According to Roberta Hamilton (2012), "*The feminist analysis has addressed itself to patriarchal ideology, that patriarchal mode which defines the system of male domination and female subjugation in any society. But the ideology is predicated on biological differences between the sexes, giving it a historical basis of its own*". The male domination or sexism is something which exists not just as a product of capitalism but as something quite separate from the capitalist mode of production. The six structures of existing patriarchy are the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relation in paid work, patriarchal relation in the state, male violence, patriarchal relation in sexuality and patriarchal relation in cultural institutions. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century also "Patriarchy" is one of the major cause of women's oppression. It is the system which oppresses all areas of women through its social, economic and political institutions. As we know, throughout history men have had greater power in both the public and private spheres. To maintain this, men have created boundaries and obstacles for women, which make harder for women to hold power. There is an unequal access to power. In ancient times, the patriarch's power was derived from his possession of the wealth produced and his ownership of land. There is always a connection between the economic basis of a society and the ideas which arise within that society. Though the ideas about sex and sexuality changed, the old view of woman as wife and mother still persist. The reason behind this is that the common myth that the women should be deemed under male and for the household work as well as culture based ideas. In this complexity the concept of marriage is used a tool to achieve the goals of patriarchy and it has evolved as an institution with unwritten laws, procedures and taboos.

Marriage is a bond by which two people make their relationship in all the aspects (public, official, and permanent) until death. Again, the concept of marriage is changing in the present day due to multicultural and multi-ethnic factors. Increasing rate of divorce gives more anxiety to enter into marriage. Despite of many

changes in the individual's surroundings, in the course of civilization such as modernization, urbanization and educational development, the responsibilities of women and rules for women have not been minimized.

In this ultra-modern world we realise that some of the ill-factors of patriarchy like violence, domestic abuse, and spousal rape are found to show how the patriarchy operate even now within marriage to subjugate women. Women are considered as victims in most of the places such as household and work place. The subjugation of women leads them to be men's private property. So that their sexual activity, income and labour are systematically controlled. Though the male domination is appeared to be reduced, actually it has evolved into modern forms like Cyber (Online) stalking of women.

These circumstances warrant a study to understand Patriarchy and its impact on marriage. Hence, the present study focusses on Patriarchy and its impact on marriage anxiety using qualitative content analysis among student community.

**Methodology:**

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the interview reply from 52 P.G student representatives of 26 departments in a state university situated in Tamilnadu, India. Since the age and qualification of the participants were similar, the responses elicited by them can be considered as representative of the population. From this, we will get to know the pulse of the old attitude structure in the new generation mind. Based on the review and subject experts' suggestions, 12 structured questions, which probe the objectives of the study, were framed. The 'structured' interview was used as in literature it has been proved that they provide straightforward and systematic replies. The focussed group, the student representatives, were interviewed on these questions. Each representatives were approached in their department allotted room and their replies were mobile recorded. Then the contents were screened for the themes and identical themes were grouped together and theme varieties were also observed.

**Content Analysis of an Interview Text:**

Table 1: Demographic Profile the Sample

Age	Sex	Education	Family System	Domicile
20 to 32 - 52	Males - 26 Females - 26	PG Students	Nuclear Families - 37 Joint Families - 15	Rural - 23 Urban - 29

Table 1 display the distribution of the sample and it reveals that the sample predominantly consists of students from nuclear urban families.

Table 2: Examples of Theme, Category, Codes

Theme	Understanding Patriarchy and its impact on Marriage Anxiety		
Category	Feelings (Number of Students)	Actions	Cognitions
Codes	Subjugation or subordination of women (28), no freedom (44), no voice of opinion (51), too much restrictions of do's and don'ts (50)	Verbal and non- verbal expression of anger, Voice raising	Authoritarian
	Irritation(39), Anger(16) Helplessness(33), Sense of arguing(49), Loss of control(40)	Raising voice, Shouting, Repression	Opposing male dominance, Cursing the fate
	Based on performed duties and actions (52)	Financial support, Emotional support	Equal importance, Fulfilling the needs
	Frustration(50), Anger(48), Helplessness(36), Lack of freedom(29), Feeling of uneasiness(11)	Expression of anger, Fatigue	Right to take proper decision
	Still Existing(52)	Confidently Saying	Adapting the traditional background, Can't resist violence against male dominance
	Anxious(49), Fear(43), Worry(10)	Accepted	Facing the reality
	Equalance of responsibility (37)	Confidence, Involvement	Role orientation more entrusted in female part
	Duty and responsibility (26), Burden (41)	Acceptance, Resistance	Adaptable, Dissonance

	Loss of freedom (52), Restricted to be in a circle or boundary (45)	Incapability to show the real self, Lack of effective communication	Slavery, Degradation of the identity
	No acceptance and recognition of individuality (52)	Adjustment, Suppression of view	Knowing limitation
	Insecure (41), Anxiety (46), Loneliness (11)	Bounce the problem	Men are made for eachother
	Understanding (52), Acceptance (33), Adjustment (37), Sharing (29), Caring (18), Commitment (17)	Love, care, concern, affection, respect, protection	We feeling, Cohesion, Belongingness

Table 3: Examples of Meaning Units, Condensed Meaning Unit, Theme

Meaning Unit	Condensed Meaning Unit Description Close to the Text	Condensed Meaning Unit Interpretation of the Underlying Meaning	Theme
“In this modern era, male dominance is decreasing because of mass media, education, job, empowering the women by awareness programmes”.	Women empowerment, Higher education and job attainment	Crossing the prejudiced line.	Perception of individuality and process of respecting each other
“Male dominance is still existing in different way. Since I am a girl child I have no right to go to professional studies”. “Opinions are not accepted. No freedom to take decision. Also we have no voice to raise our opinion against female violence. Parents restricted us not to go out after 6p.m”.	Lack of freedom, Discrimination	Pre-occupation of traditional bias	
“My mother’s voice is like male dominance. I advised my mother to give respect to him”.	Changing thought pattern and female up gradation	Overcome the traditional boundaries	
“From my own family and some of my cousins and friends bitter experience, I am so confused and anxious about marriage”.	Fear of acceptance and discrimination	Pre – occupation of marital issues	

The unit of analysis in this example is interview text about experiences of male dominance. The contexts consist of a larger study aimed at describing patriarchy and its impact on marriage anxiety. Fifty two students participated in this study. Interviews were performed addressing various aspects of male dominance and its impact on marriage anxiety. The interview text was sorted mainly into two content areas with twelve structured questions: a) experience related to patriarchy or male dominance; b) ideas about the future based on marriage anxiety. Experience related to patriarchy or male dominance were evoked by asking: ‘What do you know about patriarchy or male dominance?’

The recorded interviews were read through several times to obtain a sense of a whole. Then the text about the participants’ experiences of male dominance was extracted and brought together into one text, which constituted the unit of analysis. The condensed meaning unit of the text were abstracted and labelled with a code. From the coding of content analysis it is revealed that the discrimination of the weaker section is still remaining in this present scenario in a different way. The existence of male dominance even today may be because of traditional influence as well as the concept about the head of the family system. Also women are not boldly reacting towards their suppression.

Table 4: Percentage Analysis of the Structured Interview Questions

S.No	Item	Yes	%	No	%	Mixed	%
1	What do you know about male dominance?	Subjugation or subordination of women, no freedom, dominance in all aspects such as property, sexuality, no voice of opinion, too much restrictions of do’s and don’ts					
2	Did you ever raise your voice against male dominance in the family system?	42	80.7%	10	19.2%		

3	According to you who should be the head of the family?	14	26.9%	18	34.6%	20	38.4%
4	Do you believe that woman have all the right to take decision regarding divorce if needed?	46	88.4%	6	11.5%		
5	Do you believe that the system of patriarchy still exist even in the fast modern era of 21 <sup>st</sup> century?	52	100%	-	-		
6	Do you feel anxious when you think of marriage?	38	73.1%	14	26.9%		
7	Do you feel that it is woman responsibility to maintain family affairs in a healthy way?	49	94.2%	3	5.7%		
8	If yes, whether it create an extra burden women hold	20	38.4%	32	61.5%		
9	Do you feel that women lost her individual freedom after marriage?	49	94.2%	3	5.7%		
10	Do you believe that woman are being a private property of their partner once they get marry?	46	88.4%	6	11.5%		
11	Do you think that it is better to remain unmarried rather than being under the control of male dominance?	12	23.1%	40	76.9%		
12	According to you what are the primary duties of man and woman in a marriage life?	Understanding, Acceptance, Adjustment, Sharing, Caring of the parents, Look after the children, Financial stability					

The sample of this study constitutes post graduate student representatives from a state university in the economically and educationally backward district. In the existing system of male dominance, 80.7% of the participants were found to raise their voice against male dominance in the family as well as in the society. The remaining 19.2% were not so as few of them had a thought such as male dominance is needed, others had no chance of raise their voice. Even though they raised, they were suppressed by their parents and grand parents. Majority of the participants told about both parents should be the head of the family, because both have equal responsibility to maintain the family. 34.6% of them preferred mother as the head because she has enough patience, presence of mind and planning capacity to handle the situations and remaining 26.9% preferred father because he has the economic power and freedom and independency.

Mentioning about the right of divorce, majority (88.4%) said “yes, they can”, because it is their own life. By the traditional background of insecurity, rest of them (11.5%) said “no”. The 100% of the participants said that it is still existing but it is decreasing gradually in this modern era of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

73.1% of participants said yes for whether they feel anxious when they think of marriage and in that women participants expressed it is not only because of male dominance but also the fear of new circumstances, new relations, leaving of their parents and the male participants said about the fear on getting job and well settlement. The rest of the participants did not convey anxiety about their marriage.

Only 5.7% stated that it is not only women’s responsibility but majority (94.2%) accepted that it is women’s responsibility because they have more patience and mental stability than men. Though it is women responsibility, 61.5% quoted it is not a burden because, it’s their duty to maintaining, supporting and taking care of their family in a healthy way. At the same time 38.4% said “yes” because working women have enough stress in their field as well as they have to concentrate household activities and maintaining the family. Some of the participants expressed that in the joint family system they have to look after all the members of their family, so they will not get more time to spare for their personal matters than nuclear family. Simultaneously majority expressed that it would be better if both of them can handle the responsibility.

94.2% said that individual freedom will be lost after marriage because they might have inconvenience of adapting new circumstances and new relations. Sometimes, they cannot move more freely to their friends and relatives than as they do before marriage. Few of them (5.7%) discoursed that they were having more freedom than before marriage. According to the male participants, women misuse their advantages.

88.4% of the participants agreed to the statement on women as private property of men, because they opined that in this new era also one cannot lead a smooth life without cultural and traditional practices. Except sexuality, 11.5% of the participant strongly disagreed to this statement. 76.9% of them did not accept because in our culture women cannot survive without the security and support (belittling, mocking, helplessness etc.) from men. Also, if there is any kind of male dominance she has to be aware of her capacity to face the challenges and

shortcomings. Rest of the 23.1% expressed strongly that it is better not to marry instead of facing such kind of crucial / brutal situation.

Majority of the participants in the present study supported that they believe the very practice of patriarchy has been showing a decreasing trends since last few years. This finding is in line with the work done by Golombisky, K. (2010) who revealed that 10% of married men do the same amount of household work as if their wives do.

Our study noted that in this modern world where women are found to tap more opportunities (which are their due) and go ahead by their merit, patriarchy creates obstacles for women to go forward in society. Because in our Indian culture, patriarchal institutions give only inferior or secondary status to women and limit their rights, so they are more worried about their future. So this finding strongly asserts the view of Walby (1990) who stated “patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”.

The revolution of industrialization across the world in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries did lead to new forms of patriarchal procedures, for instance, even if the wife goes to the work and has work related strict responsibilities at the office the husband expects her to also be strictly bound by household chores and duties making men still remain as the dominant gender.

**Implications:**

- ✓ Women should be allowed to socialise with people from different strata of society rather than being confined as a homemaker.
- ✓ Women should express readiness to actively participate in social events.
- ✓ Giving more preference to women’s education and job opportunities helps to develop a society with gender equality.
- ✓ Support from both family and society can be useful to materialise her visions.

**Conclusion:**

The main purpose of this study is to understand patriarchy and its impact on marriage anxiety. From the research we found that in our country women are victims of subordination. Violence against women, unequal power relations between men and women etc. are the multiple oppressions faced by women. It is found that when the children oppose male dominance, they are suppressed and their rights are denied. Youngsters express marriage anxiety not only with respect to patriarchy but also other reasons like loss of freedom, relationship with friends and relatives, character of the spouse, financial security etc. The functions and impact of traditional patriarchal system are now limited as the society changes every day. However it still exists in a different form. These kinds of disadvantages and oppressions show that patriarchy has not disappeared but it has merely changed into other form. It is very essential to establish equality in rights between men and women in all respects of life.

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