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## “Changing Views on Dowry: A Study of Graduate Learners in Pratapgarh District”

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### Abstract

*The present study investigates graduate students' attitudes toward the dowry system, a persistent social evil in India despite decades of legal prohibition. Using a survey method, data were collected from 100 B.A. and B.Sc. students (50 male, 50 female) in Pratapgarh, Uttar Pradesh, through a standardized Attitude Scale on Dowry (DAS). Statistical analysis employing mean, standard deviation, and t-tests revealed no significant differences in attitudes across academic streams or urban-rural backgrounds. However, gender emerged as a critical factor, with female students expressing stronger opposition to dowry practices. Findings highlight the importance of gender perspectives in shaping social change.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Reports indicate that over 6,000 dowry-related deaths occur annually in India, with dowry harassment cases numbering in the tens of thousands. The NCRB highlighted that dowry deaths and related crimes remain a persistent social evil despite decades of legal prohibition. Indian society continues to grapple with domestic violence; a problem rooted in cultural traditions that elevate men as household authorities while relegating women to dependent roles. Social expectations and cultural pressures reinforce this hierarchy, compelling women

to accept and maintain such unequal roles. Among the various forms of violence faced by women, physical abuse by husbands—commonly referred to as wife-beating—continues to be the most widespread. It is frequently dismissed as a routine matter of domestic conflict rather than recognized as a serious violation of women's rights. Data from the National Crime Records Bureau indicates that approximately 4-5 lakh cases of crimes against women are reported annually, with nearly 2.55 lakhs of these directly linked to domestic violence occurring within the home.

Another pervasive issue is sexual harassment. Women who resist unwanted advances, often involving demands for money or favours, are subjected to harassment and intimidation. This problem is not confined to marginalized or lower caste groups; it is equally prevalent among affluent and upper-class families, highlighting its deep-rooted presence across social strata in India.

The dowry system, though legally prohibited since 1961 under the Dowry Prohibition Act, continues to thrive in many regions. Despite the law forbidding the giving, taking, or demanding of dowry, husbands and their families often pressure brides' families for financial or material contributions. In extreme cases, this leads to extortion or violence against women. To address such cruelty, Section 498A was introduced into the Indian Penal Code in 1983, alongside Section 198A in the Criminal Procedure Code, specifically targeting offences committed by husbands or their relatives against wives. While Section 498A has provided legal recourse for many women, it has also faced criticism for alleged misuse. The provision was challenged in court but ultimately upheld by the Supreme Court of India in 2005.

Historically, over the past century, the dowry system has gradually replaced the earlier practice of bride price. Today, dowry has become deeply entrenched in communities that traditionally practiced it, further solidifying its role in marriage customs despite legal prohibitions (Bhat 1999; Rao 1993; Srinivasan 2005).

## **2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

India, often celebrated as a land of rich cultural heritage and spiritual traditions, continues to be admired globally for its mythology and deep-rooted faith in the divine. These values have shaped a society that prides itself on being cultured

and morally grounded. Yet, alongside these strengths, certain regressive practices persist as blemishes on our social fabric.

Marriage, regarded as one of the most sacred and joyous institutions in Indian society, has unfortunately been overshadowed by the continuing menace of the dowry system. What was once considered sinful and unacceptable in ancient times has now entrenched itself as a widespread practice. Despite being legally prohibited under the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, dowry demands remain common, often leading to harassment, violence, and even deaths.

In contemporary India, the dowry system is not only a moral injustice but also a violation of women's rights and dignity. It has become a subject of intense public debate, with frequent reports of dowry-related crimes highlighting its destructive impact on families and society. The persistence of this practice, despite widespread condemnation, reflects the deep cultural and social challenges that still need to be addressed.

Recognizing the seriousness of this issue, the present study seeks to examine the **attitudes of graduate students towards the dowry system**, as the perspectives of educated youth are critical in shaping future social change. Their views can provide insight into whether education and awareness are contributing to a shift away from this harmful tradition, or whether societal pressures continue to reinforce it.

### 3. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

- **Dowry:** Dowry refers to the transfer of money, property, or material goods from the bride's family to the groom at the time of marriage.
- **Attitude:** Attitude can be understood as a psychological construct that reflects an individual's beliefs, values, emotions, and predispositions, which collectively influence how they respond or behave toward a particular issue or situation.
- **Graduate Student:** Graduate students, in this context, are individuals enrolled in undergraduate degree programs such as Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.), or equivalent courses in colleges affiliated to a recognized university.

### 4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine how graduate students' attitudes towards the dowry system vary across academic streams (Science and Arts).
2. To analyse the differences in attitudes towards the dowry system among graduate students based on gender (male and female).
3. To investigate the attitudes of graduate students towards the dowry system in relation to their place of residence (urban and rural backgrounds).

## 5. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant difference between in mean scores of attitudes of art and science group graduate students towards dowry system.
2. There is no significant difference between in mean scores of attitudes of male & female graduate student towards dowry system.
3. There is no significance difference between in mean scores of attitudes urban and rural graduate students towards dowry system.

## 6. DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The investigation is restricted to B.A. and B.Sc. students enrolled in colleges situated in Pratapgarh, (UP).
2. The sample size is confined to 100 graduate students, comprising 50 male and 50 female participants.
3. The research design is limited to the use of the survey method.
4. A simple random sampling technique is employed for the selection of participants.

## 7. METHOD OF THE STUDY

The present investigation employed the **survey method** as the primary research approach for data collection. Information was systematically gathered from the selected participants through structured questionnaires, enabling the researcher to obtain quantifiable insights into their attitudes and perceptions.

## 8. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The target population for this study comprised B.A. and B.Sc. students enrolled in degree colleges situated in both urban and rural areas of Pratapgarh district, Uttar Pradesh. 100 graduate-level students were chosen through a simple random sampling method, ensuring equal representation of gender—50 male and 50 female students. The sampling technique was designed to ensure representativeness of the broader student population, while the sample size was considered adequate for the objectives of the study.

## 9. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED

To analyse the collected data, the researcher utilized statistical methods including the **Mean**, **Standard Deviation**, and the **t-test**. These techniques were applied to determine the significance of differences in the attitudes of various student groups towards the dowry system.

## 10. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT USED

For the purpose of gathering relevant data aligned with the study's objectives, the investigator employed a **standardized Attitude Scale on Dowry (DAS)** developed by **Dr. R. R. Sharma**. This tool was selected for its reliability and validity in measuring students' attitudes toward the dowry system.

## 11. ANALYSIS OF DATA, DISCUSSION AND RESULT

**Table No.1: Comparison of attitude towards dowry system between arts and science group graduate students.**

GROUP	N	MEAN	S.D.	't' test	Remarks
Arts	50	204.03	23.05	1.44	Not Significant*
Science	50	210.45	19.80		

\*not significant at 0.05 level of significance

The obtained *t*-value was 1.44, which is less than the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the difference observed between the two groups is not statistically significant. Hence the hypothesis “There is no significant difference between in mean scores of attitudes of art and science group graduate students towards dowry system” is accepted. It can be said that any variation in their mean scores may be due to chance rather than a genuine difference in attitudes.

**Table No.2: Comparison of attitude towards dowry system between male and female group graduate students.**

GROUP	N	MEAN	S.D.	't' test	Remarks
Male	50	208.50	22.50	2.23	Significant*
Female	50	218.05	20.25		

\*significant at 0.05 level of significance

The obtained *t*-value was 2.23, which is greater than the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the difference in mean scores between male and female students is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference between in mean scores of attitudes of male & female graduate student towards dowry system” is rejected.

**Table No.3: Comparison of attitude towards dowry system between Urban and Rural group graduate students.**

GROUP	N	MEAN	S.D.	't' test	Remarks
Urban	50	212.02	21.06	1.39	Not Significant*
Rural	50	206.50	18.50		

\*not significant at 0.05 level of significance

The obtained *t*-value was 1.39, which is less than the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the difference observed between the two groups is not statistically significant. Hence the hypothesis “There is no significant difference between in mean scores of attitudes of Urban and Rural group graduate students towards dowry system” is accepted. It can be said that any variation in their mean scores may be due to chance rather than a genuine difference in attitudes.

## FINDINGS

1. Arts and Science graduate students do not differ significantly in their attitudes towards the dowry system. Both groups appear to hold similar perspectives, and the null hypothesis stating that there is no difference between them is accepted.
2. male and female graduate students differ significantly in their attitudes towards the dowry system. The result shows that gender plays an important role in shaping attitudes, and the perspectives of male and female students are not the same regarding this social issue. The mean

attitude score for female graduates exceeds that of males, suggesting that women are more strongly opposed to dowry

3. Urban and Rural graduate students do not differ significantly in their attitudes towards the dowry system. Both groups appear to hold similar perspectives, and the null hypothesis stating that there is no difference between them is accepted.

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals that gender plays a significant role in shaping attitudes towards the dowry system among graduate students, with female students expressing stronger opposition compared to their male counterparts. However, no significant differences were found in the attitudes of students based on their academic stream (Arts vs. Science) or residential background (Urban vs. Rural). This suggests that while educational discipline and locality do not influence students' views on dowry, gender remains a key factor in determining their stance on this social issue.

## EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Curriculum Integration: Social issues like dowry should be included in all streams (Science and Arts) to build awareness equally among students.
2. Gender-Sensitive Programs: Since gender differences were significant, institutions should design value education and sensitization programs that particularly engage male students to promote equality.
3. Uniform Awareness Campaigns: As urban and rural students showed similar attitudes, anti-dowry awareness initiatives can be implemented uniformly across institutions regardless of locality.
4. Value-Based Education: Colleges should strengthen moral and ethical education to encourage students to critically oppose harmful practices like dowry.
5. Teacher Training: Educators should be trained to address gender-based attitudinal differences and promote inclusive classroom discussions on social reform.

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