

**PERCEPTION OF MARRIAGE AMONG  
POSTGRADUATE WOMEN STUDENTS IN  
TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT**

*A Dissertation submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the Masters in Social Work Degree Examination*

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## **CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled “Perception Of Marriage Among Postgraduate Women Students In Trivandrum District” is a record of genuine work done by Mr. Joel K Sathyadas, fourth semester Master of Social Work student of this college under my supervision and guidance and that it is hereby approved for submission.

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## **DECLARATION**

I, JOEL K SATHYADAS do hereby declare that the dissertation titled “**Perception Of Marriage Among Postgraduate Women Students In Trivandrum District**” is the result of my original research conducted during the academic years 2024-2026. This work is submitted to the University of Kerala as part of the requirements for the **Master of Social Work** Degree Examination. I confirm that it has not been previously submitted for any other degree, diploma, fellowship, or similar academic recognition.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research focuses on understanding the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district, with particular attention to the way career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations shape their views. In a social context where marriage continues to be an important institution but is increasingly being re-evaluated by educated young women, the study examines how postgraduate women balance traditional expectations with aspirations for autonomy, equality, emotional security, and professional growth. Although marriage is still widely valued, it is also viewed critically because of concerns related to women's career continuity, social pressure, and changing gender roles.

The study was conducted in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala among 63 postgraduate women students. A quantitative descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire prepared through Google Form. The questionnaire included socio-demographic details and a 30-item five-point Likert scale divided into five dimensions: perception of marriage, career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations. The collected responses were analysed using SPSS through reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, and Pearson correlation to examine the relationships between the study variables.

The findings show that the respondents hold a moderate and cautious perception of marriage rather than an extremely positive or negative one. Career goals emerged as the strongest influencing factor, with respondents giving high priority to education, employment, and professional stability before marriage. Media exposure had a moderate influence, especially through social media and entertainment content that create both unrealistic expectations and concerns about marriage. Peer influence was limited, while family and societal expectations remained strong in shaping the social environment in which marriage is viewed. The correlation analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between career goals and perception of marriage, while media exposure, peer influence, and family expectations did not show significant direct relationships with the overall perception score.

This study highlights that postgraduate women students are not rejecting marriage, but are reinterpreting it in relation to their aspirations, identity, and future planning. The research suggests the need for greater awareness, counselling, media literacy, and family sensitivity so that marriage is understood as a personal and equal partnership rather than a compulsory social obligation. The findings are expected to contribute to social work practice, women's studies, counselling, and broader discussions on marriage, career, and gender equality in contemporary society.

Keywords: perception of marriage, postgraduate women students, career goals, media exposure, peer influence, family expectations, Thiruvananthapuram district

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

## **1.1 Introduction**

Marriage has long been considered one of the most important social institutions in human life. It is not only a personal relationship between two individuals, but also a social institution shaped by culture, family values, gender roles, emotional expectations, and economic conditions. In Indian society, marriage continues to carry deep social meaning, often being linked with adulthood, family honour, social approval, and long-term security. At the same time, contemporary social change has altered the way young people, especially educated women, understand marriage. For many young women today, marriage is no longer seen only as a customary life event, but as a decision connected with autonomy, emotional compatibility, equality, career planning, and future stability (Beri & Beri, 2013; Chacko, 2003; Sonkaya & Öcal, 2024; Tamizarasi & Jecinth, 2023).

This changing meaning of marriage becomes especially important in the case of postgraduate women students. They are placed in a stage of life where higher education, emerging professional identity, peer interaction, media exposure, and family expectations strongly influence personal decisions. Unlike earlier generations, many young women now assess marriage in relation to self-development, independence, and long-term life goals. Studies have shown that women's marital attitudes are increasingly shaped by concerns regarding individuality, emotional security, equality in relationships, and the possibility of balancing marriage with education and career aspirations (Beri & Beri, 2013; Krishnan & Ahmed, 2025; Sonkaya & Öcal, 2024). This makes the study of marriage perception among postgraduate women students socially and academically relevant.

The importance of studying marriage perception becomes clearer when viewed against the larger social context of marital distress and violence. At the national level, the National Crime Records Bureau reported about 4.48 lakh crimes against women in 2023, and cruelty by husband or his relatives remained the largest single category, accounting for nearly 29.8 percent of all such crimes. This shows that violence within marriage continues to be one of the most visible and serious forms of gender-based violence in India (National Crime Records Bureau, 2023). These figures suggest that

marriage cannot be viewed only as a private family matter, but must also be understood as a social relationship that may include conflict, control, and emotional strain.

Kerala too reflects this contradiction between social development and women's vulnerability within intimate relationships. Kerala Police crime statistics show that the number of crimes against women has remained consistently high in recent years. Cases of cruelty by husband or relatives increased sharply from 2,707 in 2020 to 4,997 in 2021 and remained around 4,500 to 5,000 cases annually in the years that followed (Kerala Police, 2024). These figures indicate that domestic violence remains one of the most persistent forms of violence experienced by women in the state. This is particularly significant in a state like Kerala, which is often recognised for its high literacy, health achievements, and social development. The persistence of such violence suggests that educational advancement alone does not necessarily ensure equality, safety, or emotional well-being within marriage.

The local context of Thiruvananthapuram gives the study further importance. Reports have shown that divorce petitions in Kerala have risen considerably over the years, and Thiruvananthapuram recorded 3,282 divorce petitions in 2022, one of the highest figures in the state. In addition, the district has also reported a high number of complaints related to violence against women and husband-related harassment, showing that marital distress is not an isolated issue but a visible social concern in the district. These realities indicate that the institution of marriage is undergoing significant strain, and they justify the need to understand how educated young women perceive marriage before entering it (Times of India, 2021).

Research evidence from Kerala also supports the need for this topic. Mundodan et al. (2021) found that spousal violence among married women in Kerala includes emotional, physical, sexual, psychological, and controlling forms of abuse. Their study further showed that violence is associated with factors such as alcohol use by husbands, poor communication, financial strain, controlling behaviour, and weak social support. The study highlights that marriage-related problems do not begin only after severe conflict appears, but are often linked with unhealthy relational patterns and imbalances within marriage itself. This makes it socially important to understand how young

women think about marriage, what they expect from it, and how they evaluate its risks and possibilities before marriage takes place (Mundodan et al., 2021).

Literature on marriage perception also shows that women's views are shaped by multiple personal and social influences. Beri and Beri (2013) showed that single women often connect marriage with career, education, and personal identity. Chacko (2003) argued that women's status in Kerala cannot be understood without examining marriage within a broader development framework. Krishnan and Ahmed (2025) pointed out that many unmarried young adults in Kerala increasingly fear that marriage may limit their independence or personal aspirations. Similarly, Tamizarasi and Jecinth (2023) and Sonkaya and Öcal (2024) found that attitudes toward marriage are closely related to gender roles, relationship expectations, and social values. These studies suggest that marriage perception is not a fixed attitude but a response shaped by social environment, personal ambition, and lived cultural realities.

District-level research also shows that women's vulnerability and crime patterns differ across local contexts. Pooja et al. (2024) demonstrated that crimes against women are not evenly distributed across India and that district-level evidence is crucial for understanding local differences in gendered risk and social conditions. This is important for a study focused on Trivandrum District, because it indicates that local social realities matter and that broad national or state-level generalisations may not fully explain the experiences, concerns, and expectations of women in a specific district. Therefore, studying postgraduate women students in Trivandrum allows for a more context-sensitive understanding of how marriage is perceived within a district shaped by both educational advancement and visible marriage-related social concerns (Pooja et al., 2024).

Another important dimension that makes the present study relevant is the growing transformation in the aspirations and life priorities of educated women. Over the past few decades, women's participation in higher education has increased significantly, leading to greater awareness regarding career opportunities, financial independence, gender equality, and personal rights. As a result, many young women are no longer willing to accept traditional marital expectations without careful consideration. Instead, they evaluate marriage alongside several other life goals, including professional

achievement, emotional compatibility, personal freedom, and psychological well-being. This change reflects a broader social transition in which women increasingly seek equal partnerships rather than relationships based solely on conventional gender roles. In contemporary society, marriage is therefore viewed not only as a cultural institution but also as a personal decision requiring emotional maturity, mutual respect, shared responsibility, and support for individual aspirations. For postgraduate women students, who are preparing to enter professional careers and independent adult life, this period becomes particularly significant because it is often during these years that important decisions regarding marriage, employment, higher studies, and family life are considered simultaneously. Their perceptions are therefore shaped by a combination of educational experiences, exposure to diverse viewpoints, social interactions, and reflections on their future roles within both family and society. Understanding these perceptions becomes increasingly important because the expectations formed during this stage are likely to influence not only marital decisions but also future marital satisfaction, family relationships, and individual well-being. Moreover, studying these perceptions contributes to a broader understanding of the changing status of women in Indian society, where traditional cultural values continue to coexist with modern ideas of equality, autonomy, and self-determination. The present study therefore recognises marriage as a multidimensional social institution whose meaning continues to evolve alongside educational advancement, changing gender relations, and the aspirations of young women who seek to balance personal fulfilment with family life.

In this context, the present study on the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District becomes important. It seeks to understand marriage not merely as a cultural institution, but as a life decision shaped by career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations. Since postgraduate women students stand at the intersection of education, social change, and future family life, their perceptions offer valuable insight into how marriage is being reimagined by educated young women in contemporary Kerala. Such understanding is important not only for academic purposes, but also for counselling, awareness programmes, and broader discussions on women's well-being, marital preparedness, and family life in society today.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Marriage is widely regarded as a central institution in society, yet it is also a site where many forms of strain, conflict, and inequality become visible. In recent years, domestic violence, cruelty by husband or relatives, and increasing divorce petitions have shown that marriage does not always function as a stable and supportive relationship. National and state-level statistics indicate that violence within marriage continues to affect a large number of women, and many cases remain hidden due to fear, stigma, economic dependence, and family pressure (National Crime Records Bureau, 2023). At the same time, young women are increasingly entering higher education and preparing for professional careers, which may influence how they think about marriage, marital roles, and the place of marriage in their future lives.

Although many studies have discussed attitudes toward marriage, marital expectations, women's status, gender roles, and fear of marriage, fewer studies have focused specifically on postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District. Existing literature shows that women's perceptions of marriage are influenced by changing social values, education, autonomy, and family expectations, but these factors have not been sufficiently examined together within the local context of Trivandrum (Beri & Beri, 2013; Chacko, 2003; Krishnan & Ahmed, 2025; Ramsheena, 2015). In a district where marital conflict, domestic violence complaints, and divorce cases have become matters of public concern, understanding how educated young women perceive marriage becomes important. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is the need to understand the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District and the factors that shape these perceptions.

## **1.3 Background of the Study**

Marriage has historically been treated as a socially expected and culturally valued institution in India. It has been associated with family continuity, emotional support, social recognition, and gendered responsibilities. However, social change has influenced how this institution is understood. Education, urbanisation, economic independence, digital media, and changing gender roles have gradually reshaped the expectations attached to marriage. For many young women today, marriage is no longer viewed only as a duty or a traditional marker of adulthood. Instead, it is increasingly

evaluated in relation to equality, emotional compatibility, career continuity, self-respect, and individual freedom (Beri & Beri, 2013; Tamizarasi & Jecinth, 2023).

The background of the present study is also shaped by the continuing gap between the ideal image of marriage and the lived realities experienced by many women. National statistics on crimes against women show that cruelty by husband or his relatives remains the largest reported category, revealing that violence within marriage is still widespread (National Crime Records Bureau, 2023). Kerala, despite its relatively high literacy and development indicators, also reports a high number of cases of domestic violence and other crimes against women. These patterns suggest that marriage in practice may involve control, emotional stress, and power imbalance in ways that are not always visible in idealised social narratives.

Research studies in Kerala further reveal that marital distress has multiple dimensions. Mundodan et al. (2021) found that married women experience various forms of violence, including emotional and controlling abuse, and that such experiences are linked with poor communication, alcohol use, low social support, and financial pressure. Chacko (2003) also argued that women's status in Kerala cannot be understood without looking at the role of marriage within larger social and developmental processes. More recent work by Krishnan and Ahmed (2025) shows that unmarried young adults in Kerala increasingly question whether marriage may restrict their individuality and long-term aspirations. These studies indicate that marriage is being critically re-examined by young adults, particularly women.

The district context also adds to the background of the study. Thiruvananthapuram has reported a high number of divorce petitions and significant levels of complaints related to violence against women, which shows that marriage-related distress is locally relevant and socially visible (Times of India, 2021). Pooja et al. (2024) have also shown that crimes against women vary across districts and that district-level evidence is necessary for understanding local vulnerability. This is important for the present study because it justifies focusing specifically on Trivandrum District rather than relying only on state or national patterns.

Within this context, postgraduate women students form an important study group. They are young adults who are socially aware, educationally advanced, and actively negotiating future roles related to employment, family, and marriage. Their perception of marriage may be shaped by the interaction of career aspirations, peer culture, media narratives, and family expectations. Understanding these perceptions is important because such views influence not only the decision to marry, but also the expectations and conditions under which marriage is accepted or questioned. The present study is therefore located within a broader background of changing women's roles, visible marital distress, and the need to understand marriage from the perspective of educated young women in a specific social setting.

#### **1.4 Relevance and Significance**

The present study is relevant because it examines the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students at a time when marriage is being redefined by education, autonomy, career planning, and gender expectations. Previous studies show that young women's attitudes toward marriage are increasingly shaped by aspirations for self-development, concerns about identity, and changing views of marital roles rather than by tradition alone (Beri & Beri, 2013; Krishnan & Ahmed, 2025; Sonkaya & Öcal, 2024). Studies by Chacko (2003), Tamizarasi and Jecinth (2023), and others indicate that marriage is now often understood through the ideas of personal choice, equality, emotional security, and future planning. In this context, postgraduate women students become an especially important group because they are situated at a stage of life where higher education, future careers, peer influence, media exposure, and family expectations together shape how marriage is imagined and evaluated.

The study is also socially significant in the context of Kerala and Thiruvananthapuram, where marital distress and family conflict have become increasingly visible. National data show that cruelty by husband or relatives continues to be the most common reported crime against women in India (National Crime Records Bureau, 2023). Kerala Police statistics similarly indicate that approximately 4,500 to 5,000 women report cruelty by husband or relatives every year in the state. At the same time, divorce petitions have increased in Kerala, and Thiruvananthapuram has recorded one of the highest numbers in the state. Research by Mundodan et al. (2021) also shows that

domestic violence in Kerala includes emotional, psychological, and controlling forms of abuse, along with serious consequences for women's mental health and well-being. These patterns show that marriage cannot be understood only as a private or cultural institution, but must also be studied as a social relationship shaped by expectation, adjustment, strain, and power. Therefore, the present study is significant because it offers a focused understanding of how educated young women in Trivandrum District perceive marriage, and this understanding may be useful for future research, counselling, education, and broader discussions on women's well-being and family life in contemporary Kerala.

### **1.5 Chapterization**

The thesis is organised into five chapters. Chapter I presents the introduction, statement of the problem, background of the study, relevance and significance, and chapterization. Chapter II deals with the review of literature, theoretical framework, and research gap analysis. Chapter III explains the research methodology adopted for the study. Chapter IV presents the analysis and interpretation of data. Chapter V includes the findings, discussion, conclusion, and suggestions.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

## **2.1 Introduction**

A review of literature is one of the most important parts of a research study because it provides the intellectual foundation on which the present investigation is built. It helps the researcher understand how a topic has already been examined, what major findings have emerged, what concepts and variables are repeatedly discussed, and what gaps still remain to be addressed. In this sense, the review of literature is not merely a summary of earlier works, but a structured and analytical examination of knowledge that gives direction, justification, and clarity to the present study. It enables the researcher to locate the present topic within the wider academic discussion and to explain why the study is necessary in the current social context. For a study on the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District, such a review becomes especially important because attitudes toward marriage are no longer simple, fixed, or uniform; they are shaped by education, changing gender roles, personal aspirations, and the social environment in which young women live and make decisions.

Marriage has traditionally occupied a central place in Indian society as a socially approved, culturally valued, and institutionally regulated relationship. For a long time, it was understood mainly in terms of family formation, social duty, continuity of kinship, and fulfilment of gendered roles within society. However, contemporary research shows that this understanding has been undergoing visible change, especially among younger and educated populations. Today, many young adults continue to value marriage, yet they increasingly associate it with emotional compatibility, mutual respect, communication, stability, and equality rather than with tradition alone. This change is particularly significant in the case of women students and educated young women, because marriage is now often evaluated alongside higher education, professional identity, autonomy, self-respect, and long-term life planning.

The existing literature clearly indicates that women's perceptions of marriage are shaped by more than one factor. Studies on women and youth show that marriage is often viewed in relation to educational advancement, career ambitions, personal freedom, partner expectations, peer discussions, media images, and family pressure. Beri and Beri's work points out that single women often weigh marriage in relation to

career and education, rather than viewing it as an isolated life event. Ramsheena's study also shows that women students increasingly seek participation, voice, and personal choice in marital decisions. These findings suggest that marriage is no longer perceived simply as a compulsory milestone, but as a decision negotiated within a wider framework of aspirations, constraints, and social meanings.

Another important trend visible in the literature is that the younger generation is not necessarily rejecting marriage, but is reinterpreting it. Studies on young adults show that attitudes toward marriage remain generally positive, yet these attitudes are more cautious, conditional, and expectation-based than in earlier times. Tamizarasi and Jecinth found that general attitudes toward marriage are related to important aspects such as emotional support, companionship, and stability. Yadav and Rakhee similarly observed that young adults in India continue to value marriage, while also expecting equality, understanding, and healthier communication within it. Such findings are important because they indicate that marriage continues to matter, but the basis on which it is accepted, delayed, or questioned has changed significantly.

The issue becomes even more relevant when the focus shifts specifically to postgraduate women students. This group represents a significant section of young women who are at a stage of life where questions of education, employment, self-development, and future planning become more prominent. Postgraduate women students often occupy a transitional social position: they are close to what society may define as marriageable age, but they are also actively engaged in academic growth, career preparation, identity formation, and the pursuit of independence. Because of this dual position, their perception of marriage is likely to be more layered and reflective. They may value marriage, but they may also question its timing, its implications for career, and the extent to which it allows room for equality and selfhood.

The literature also makes it clear that perceptions of marriage are influenced by broad social and cultural changes. Media exposure, digital platforms, films, web series, and social media discussions have expanded the range of meanings attached to relationships and marriage in the minds of young people. Peer groups and campus environments have also become important spaces in which marriage is discussed, compared, delayed, idealised, or criticised. At the same time, family and society continue to exert pressure

through expectations about age, respectability, family honour, gender roles, and the social status attached to marriage. Therefore, the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students must be understood as the result of a continuous interaction between personal aspirations and social structures.

The Kerala context adds further relevance to this discussion. Kerala is often viewed as a state with high literacy, social development, and better indicators related to education and health, yet studies have shown that women's lives within marriage continue to be shaped by gender norms, social expectations, and unequal cultural arrangements. Chacko's work on marriage, development, and the status of women in Kerala demonstrates that the institution of marriage remains deeply connected to broader questions of women's position, family control, and social inequality. More recent Kerala-based studies also indicate that unmarried young adults and women increasingly express concerns about autonomy, self-identity, loss of freedom, and the burdens associated with marriage. This makes it necessary to examine the issue not only at a national level, but also in relation to the lived realities of young women in Kerala.

The present study, therefore, takes up a topic that is socially relevant as well as academically meaningful. It seeks to understand how postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District perceive marriage and how that perception is shaped by career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations. These dimensions are not random; they emerge from the recurring concerns visible across the literature and from the conceptual structure already identified in the study design. Reviewing earlier studies under these dimensions helps establish the rationale for selecting these variables and clarifies how the present research is connected to, yet distinct from, previous work. In this way, the literature review serves as the bridge between the broader field of knowledge and the specific focus of the present investigation.

This chapter is therefore intended to present a thematic and analytical review of the available literature relevant to the present study. It examines studies related to general attitudes toward marriage, women's perceptions of marriage, marital expectations among young adults, career aspirations, media influences, peer influence, family and societal expectations, and the Kerala-specific social context. It also helps identify the

theoretical directions and research gaps that justify the need for studying postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District as a distinct category. By doing so, the chapter lays the conceptual and empirical base for the rest of the study and prepares the ground for the later discussion of theoretical framework, research gap, and methodological choices.

## **2.2 Review of Literature**

### **Career Goals**

#### **Beri and Beri (2013): *Perception of Single Women towards Marriage, Career and Education***

Beri and Beri (2013), in their study *Perception of Single Women towards Marriage, Career and Education*, examined how unmarried women understand marriage in relation to their educational aspirations and career development. The study is highly relevant to the present research because it does not treat marriage as an isolated social institution, but as one part of a broader life plan shaped by ambition, self-development, and the desire for future stability. Using a survey-based approach, the researchers explored how single women positioned marriage alongside education and professional goals, and the findings showed that many women gave greater importance to higher education and career development before marriage. This is an important contribution because it reveals a visible shift in priorities among educated women: marriage is no longer viewed only as an immediate or compulsory life stage, but as something to be considered in relation to readiness, opportunity, and long-term aspirations.

The study helps clarify that for many women, career is not merely an economic concern but also a source of identity, confidence, autonomy, and social mobility. When women begin to define themselves through achievement, professional competence, and educational progress, marriage may be evaluated more carefully, especially in terms of whether it supports or interrupts those goals. Beri and Beri's findings suggest that women may delay marriage not because they reject it, but because they want to complete education, gain employment, and establish a secure sense of self before taking

on marital responsibilities. This creates a more thoughtful and conditional perception of marriage, in which timing becomes deeply connected to career planning. Their work is especially useful for the present study because postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District are also likely to be in a stage of life where higher studies, employment preparation, and questions of future independence are central concerns. Therefore, this study gives strong support to the idea that **career goals** are a major factor shaping how educated young women perceive marriage today.

**Chaturvedi and Singh (2015): *Attitude of Indian Youth towards Marriage and Family Relations***

Chaturvedi and Singh (2015), in the study *Attitude of Indian Youth towards Marriage and Family Relations*, examined how Indian youth understand marriage in relation to changing family relations and social expectations. This study can be placed under the dimension of **career goals** because changing youth attitudes toward marriage are closely connected with educational advancement, future planning, and the desire to establish personal stability before entering married life. The study is useful for the present research because it suggests that young people no longer approach marriage only as a compulsory social event, but increasingly evaluate it in relation to their own priorities, responsibilities, and long-term aspirations. In the context of postgraduate women students, this is especially important because career planning, higher education, and the wish for self-development can influence whether marriage is viewed as supportive, delaying, or restrictive. Therefore, Chaturvedi and Singh's study strengthens the career-goals dimension by showing that youth attitudes toward marriage are shaped not only by tradition, but also by emerging personal goals and changing expectations about the future.

**Chacko (2003): *Marriage, Development and the Status of Women in Kerala, India***

Chacko (2003), in the study *Marriage, Development and the Status of Women in Kerala, India*, examined the relationship between marriage, women's social position, and the broader development context of Kerala. This study is especially important

because it shifts the discussion of marriage away from being only a personal or family matter and places it within larger structures such as education, development, labour-force participation, and gender inequality. Chacko's work suggests that the status of women in Kerala cannot be understood without examining the institution of marriage and the expectations embedded within it. Even in a state widely recognised for its literacy and social development, marriage continues to shape women's opportunities, freedoms, and responsibilities in significant ways. This makes the study highly relevant to the present topic, since postgraduate women students in Kerala are likely to think about marriage not only emotionally, but also in relation to its consequences for their future roles and life chances.

One of the major strengths of Chacko's work is that it reveals the tension between development and persistent gendered structures. Women may gain access to education and aspire toward career advancement, yet marriage can still remain a site where traditional expectations, restrictions, and unequal burdens continue to operate. From this perspective, career goals become deeply connected to marital perception because women may assess marriage in terms of whether it will allow them to continue growing, working, and participating fully in social life. If marriage is seen as limiting professional opportunity or reducing autonomy, women may approach it with caution or postpone it until they feel more established. For the present research, this is very significant because it helps explain why postgraduate women students may not look at marriage as a simple cultural milestone, but as a major life decision tied to personal growth and social position. Chacko's study therefore provides an important structural foundation for understanding why **career goals** must be treated as a separate and meaningful dimension in the present study.

**Krishnan and Ahmed (2025): *Marriage Should Not Mean Losing Myself: Changing Expectations and Relationship Concerns among Unmarried Young Adults in Kerala***

Krishnan and Ahmed (2025), in their study *Marriage Should Not Mean Losing Myself: Changing Expectations and Relationship Concerns among Unmarried Young Adults in Kerala*, explored how unmarried young adults in Kerala think about relationships and

marriage in a changing social environment. The title itself reflects a major concern of contemporary youth, especially young women: marriage should not result in the loss of identity, freedom, autonomy, or self-respect. The study paid particular attention to autonomy and self-identity, and the findings showed that career aspirations, independence, and personal growth strongly shape marital expectations. It also found that many young women prefer to establish themselves professionally before considering marriage. This is a highly relevant finding for the present study because postgraduate women students are also in a transitional stage where self-development and future planning are central to how they think about marriage.

The study is particularly valuable because it captures the emotional and psychological dimension of marital perception in contemporary Kerala. It shows that young adults are not merely deciding whether they like or dislike marriage; instead, they are evaluating whether marriage can coexist with their sense of self, long-term goals, and professional aspirations. This is especially important in understanding how career goals influence marriage perception. When young women feel that marriage may interrupt career-building, restrict independence, or demand self-sacrifice, they may become more selective, delayed, or cautious in their attitude toward marriage. At the same time, the study also suggests that women are not necessarily rejecting marriage altogether; rather, they want marriage to take place under conditions that respect individuality and growth. For the present study, this insight is highly useful because it closely matches the social reality of postgraduate women students, who are likely to think of marriage in relation to both selfhood and career establishment. Thus, Krishnan and Ahmed strongly reinforce the importance of **career goals** as a major theme in understanding the perception of marriage among educated young women in Kerala today.

**Yadav and Rakhee (2018): *Exploring the Attitudes of Young Adults towards Marriage in India***

Yadav and Rakhee (2018), in the study *Exploring the Attitudes of Young Adults towards Marriage in India*, examined the broader attitudes of young adults toward marriage in the Indian context. The researchers found that marriage continues to be valued by young

adults, but the expectations attached to it have changed considerably. Their findings showed that expectations regarding equality, communication, and emotional understanding have increased among young adults, and the study concluded that social change and educational advancement have influenced modern attitudes toward marriage. This study is relevant to the present topic because it shows that contemporary perceptions of marriage are no longer based only on tradition or social duty, but also on the quality of the relationship and the possibility of balance within married life.

The contribution of this study to the theme of career goals lies in the way it links educational advancement with changing marital expectations. As young adults become more educated, they begin to expect marriages based on mutuality, dialogue, and partnership rather than unquestioned gender hierarchy. For young women, such expectations are closely related to career aspirations, because a woman who values education and work is also more likely to desire a marriage that recognises her ambitions and allows room for professional development. In this sense, the study shows that career-oriented women may assess marriage not only in terms of emotional suitability, but also in terms of whether it supports a balanced and respectful life. This has direct relevance for postgraduate women students in the present study, since they are likely to compare marriage with their own aspirations for stability, equality, and future growth. Yadav and Rakhee thus provide a wider national-level understanding of how changing education and modern expectations influence the way young adults, especially women, think about marriage.

### **Media Exposure**

#### **Anbalagan and Ganesan (2018): *Marital Expectations among Unmarried College Students***

Anbalagan and Ganesan (2018), in their study *Marital Expectations among Unmarried College Students*, examined the expectations that students hold regarding future marriage and the qualities they associate with a successful marital relationship. The study is relevant to the present research because it helps explain how young adults form ideas about marriage long before they actually enter it. Their findings showed that

emotional support, mutual respect, understanding, and stability were among the most expected qualities in marriage. This is important because such expectations do not arise in a vacuum; they are shaped by the social environment in which students live, learn, and consume ideas about relationships. In the present context, media exposure becomes a meaningful factor because popular media often presents idealised, romanticised, or conflict-driven images of marriage that may influence what students come to expect from married life. When unmarried college students repeatedly encounter portrayals of perfect relationships, troubled marriages, or emotionally satisfying partnerships, they begin to compare these images with their own beliefs and hopes. As a result, media can shape not only what marriage means to them, but also what standards they use to judge whether marriage will be desirable, balanced, or fulfilling. The study therefore supports the view that the media environment contributes indirectly to marital perception by shaping expectations, preferences, and assumptions about intimacy and family life. For the present study, this is especially important because postgraduate women students are likely to be exposed to the same media narratives while forming their own ideas about marriage. Their perception of marriage may therefore reflect not only personal or family views, but also the influence of broader cultural messages communicated through films, social media, and entertainment content.

**Fu, Z. (2025). The effect of social media engagement and understanding on adolescents' marriage attitude**

Fu (2025) examined how social media engagement and social media understanding relate to adolescents' attitudes toward marriage. The study is especially relevant to the present research because it shows that digital media is not just a source of entertainment, but also an important social environment where young people form opinions about marriage, relationships, and future family life. Using established scales for social media engagement, social media awareness, and marriage attitude, the study found a significant relationship between social media-related variables and marriage attitudes among adolescents aged 14 to 24. The findings suggest that greater awareness of social media context can negatively influence marriage attitudes, indicating that digital spaces may increase caution, questioning, and critical thinking about marriage. This supports the present study because postgraduate women students are also active users of digital

media and are exposed to relationship content, influencer culture, and idealised or negative portrayals of married life. In such a context, media exposure can shape expectations, doubts, and emotional responses toward marriage, making it a meaningful dimension in the current research. The study therefore provides strong support for examining how social media affects the perception of marriage among educated young women in contemporary society.

**Siddhaiah et al. (2024): *Attitude towards Marriage among Students***

Siddhaiah et al. (2024), in the study *Attitude towards Marriage among Students*, explored how student attitudes toward marriage are shaped within a changing social environment. The significance of this study lies in its focus on students as a group whose perceptions are still developing and are therefore especially open to social influence. The findings suggest that students' attitudes toward marriage are not fixed, but are influenced by contemporary cultural messages and changing social values. This is highly relevant to media exposure because students today are constantly surrounded by digital media, online discussions, films, and other forms of communication that shape how they think about relationships, gender roles, and family life. The study helps show that modern attitudes toward marriage are closely connected to the social narratives that young people consume. In many cases, media does not directly tell students what to think, but it creates a background of repeated images and ideas that gradually shape how they evaluate marriage. This may include ideas about romance, independence, equality, emotional compatibility, and the balance between personal freedom and family responsibility. Such influences are especially important for postgraduate women students, who are likely to encounter varied and sometimes conflicting messages about marriage through their academic, social, and digital environments. Siddhaiah et al. therefore provide useful support for understanding media exposure as a theme, because their study shows that student attitudes toward marriage are developed within a wider cultural setting where media plays a silent but powerful role. For the present research, this helps explain why media exposure cannot be ignored when studying the perception of marriage among educated young women.

**Sonkaya and Öcal (2024): *Young Peoples Attitudes toward Marriage, Gender Roles, and Related Factors***

Sonkaya and Öcal (2024), in the study *Young Peoples Attitudes toward Marriage, Gender Roles, and Related Factors*, examined the relationship between young people's views on marriage and their understanding of gender roles. The study found that individuals with more egalitarian gender role attitudes had a more balanced and modern perception of marriage. This is highly significant for the present study because media exposure is one of the main ways through which young people encounter new ideas about gender equality, role-sharing, independence, and partnership. Media today frequently presents women as professionally active, independent, and self-determining, which can influence how they think about marriage and the roles expected within it. At the same time, media can also present traditional or contradictory gender images, creating a mixed field of influence. Sonkaya and Öcal's study is therefore useful because it shows that attitudes toward marriage are not separate from the social messages young people receive about what it means to be a man or a woman in contemporary society. When media repeatedly supports more egalitarian gender roles, it may encourage young women to imagine marriage as a partnership based on respect, fairness, and shared responsibility. When it presents restrictive or unequal roles, it may lead them to view marriage more cautiously. This study is especially relevant for postgraduate women students because their exposure to digital media, online content, and public discussions about gender may directly shape how they interpret marriage in relation to equality and autonomy. In this way, the study strengthens the case for including media exposure as an important theme in the present research.

**Tamizarasi and Jecinth (2023): *Relationship between General Attitude towards Marriage and Aspects of Marriage in Young Adults***

Tamizarasi and Jecinth (2023), in the study *Relationship between General Attitude towards Marriage and Aspects of Marriage in Young Adults*, explored how general attitudes toward marriage are connected to specific aspects such as emotional support, companionship, and stability. The study found that most young adults had a moderately positive attitude toward marriage and that there was a significant relationship between overall attitude and these major aspects of marital life. This study is relevant to media

exposure because the qualities that young adults associate with marriage are often shaped by repeated cultural representations in media. Ideas such as companionship, emotional closeness, and stability are frequently highlighted in films, serials, and online relationship narratives, and these repeated themes may influence what young people expect from marriage. Tamizarasi and Jecinth's findings suggest that attitudes toward marriage are not based on one broad impression alone, but are formed through a combination of specific expectations and emotional ideas. Media exposure plays an important role here because it helps construct these expectations by normalising certain relationship ideals and highlighting certain forms of intimacy. For postgraduate women students, this is especially relevant because they are likely to encounter media messages that present marriage either as emotionally rewarding, personally restrictive, or ideal in ways that may not fully match real life. Such exposure may influence whether they see marriage as stable and supportive or as demanding and uncertain. The study therefore supports the present research by showing that attitudes toward marriage are built through a network of social and symbolic influences, among which media exposure is an important one.

### **Peer Influence**

#### **Adhikari (2017): *Attitudes of Present Generation towards Marriage: A Survey of Marriageable College Students***

Adhikari (2017), in the study *Attitudes of Present Generation towards Marriage: A Survey of Marriageable College Students*, examined how college students in the marriageable age group perceive marriage in the present social context. The study is relevant to peer influence because college students do not form their views in isolation; they are continuously exposed to friends' opinions, shared experiences, and informal discussions about relationships and future life choices. The findings suggest that the present generation holds changing attitudes toward marriage, which indicates that peer environments may play an important role in shaping those attitudes. When students regularly hear classmates talk about marriage as something to delay, question, or approach cautiously, they are likely to absorb some of those ideas into their own thinking. In this sense, peer influence can affect not only whether marriage is seen positively, but also when it is considered appropriate and what expectations are attached

to it. Adhikari's study is valuable for the present research because postgraduate women students are also situated in peer networks where marriage-related ideas are exchanged, compared, and evaluated. Their perception of marriage may therefore reflect a mixture of personal belief and the views circulating within their social circle. This makes peer influence a significant factor in understanding how educated young women construct meaning around marriage.

**Yadav and Rakhee (2018): *Exploring the Attitudes of Young Adults towards Marriage in India***

Yadav and Rakhee (2018), in the study *Exploring the Attitudes of Young Adults towards Marriage in India*, explored how young adults' views on marriage have changed in response to social development and educational advancement. The study found that marriage continues to be valued, but expectations around equality, communication, and emotional understanding have increased. This is relevant to peer influence because such changing expectations are often reinforced and negotiated within peer groups, especially among educated young adults. Friends and classmates often become the first space where new ideas about marriage are discussed openly, questioned, or normalised. When a peer group values delayed marriage, professional stability, or equality in relationships, it can strongly shape an individual's own perception of marriage. Yadav and Rakhee's findings suggest that marriage is increasingly viewed through the lens of modern standards rather than only through tradition, and peers are often the medium through which these new standards circulate. For postgraduate women students, this is especially important because they are likely to interact with peers who are at similar life stages and who may share similar uncertainties about marriage, career, and independence. Their conversations can either strengthen confidence in marriage or deepen caution about it. Thus, the study supports the inclusion of peer influence as a separate theme in the present research.

**Ramsheena (2015): *Marital Choices and Perception among Women Students***

Ramsheena (2015), in the study *Marital Choices and Perception among Women Students*, focused on how women students view marriage and marital decision-making. The study is relevant to peer influence because women students often shape their ideas

about marriage through discussion, comparison, and observation of one another's choices and aspirations. The findings revealed that women's perceptions were influenced by education, personal beliefs, family values, and future aspirations, and that women increasingly seek participation and personal choice in decisions related to marriage and family life. This is significant for the present study because peer groups in educational settings can either reinforce or challenge traditional expectations surrounding marriage. For example, when women observe peers delaying marriage for study or career, considering non-traditional partner choices, or expressing the desire for greater autonomy, these patterns can influence how they think about their own future. Peer interaction becomes a space where norms are tested and redefined. Ramsheena's study helps show that women students do not simply inherit fixed beliefs about marriage; they actively negotiate those beliefs through social interaction with friends and classmates. This makes peer influence particularly relevant among postgraduate women students, whose perceptions are likely to be shaped by the collective climate of their educational and social circles. The study therefore provides important support for including peer influence as a major dimension in the present research.

**Siddhaiah et al. (2024): *Attitude towards Marriage among Students***

Siddhaiah et al. (2024), in the study *Attitude towards Marriage among Students*, examined how students' attitudes toward marriage are formed and maintained in a contemporary social setting. The study is useful for understanding peer influence because students are among the most peer-sensitive groups, often relying on friends and classmates for informal ideas about social life, relationships, and future plans. The findings suggest that attitudes toward marriage among students are shaped by changing social values and by the broader cultural environment in which they live. This implies that peer groups are likely to act as one of the main channels through which these changing values are discussed and shared. When students hear their peers express concern about responsibility, freedom, compatibility, or work-life balance, those concerns can become part of their own marital thinking. On the other hand, supportive peer views can also encourage more positive and balanced perceptions of marriage. Siddhaiah et al.'s study is especially important for the present research because postgraduate women students are likely to interact with peers who have strong and

evolving opinions about marriage. These opinions may influence whether marriage is seen as desirable, necessary, risky, or compatible with future goals. The study therefore strengthens the argument that peer influence is not a minor factor but a meaningful part of how marriage perceptions are built among students.

### **Family and Societal Expectations**

**Rao, V. V., & Bhanot, A. (1997).** *Assessment of marital and family expectations of a group of urban adults*

Rao and Bhanot (1997) examined the marital and family expectations of a group of urban adults in India, making this study highly relevant to the present research because it focuses on what young adults expect from marriage before entering it. The study is important in understanding that marriage is not merely an institution based on social approval, but also a relationship shaped by personal expectations regarding emotional support, partner behaviour, family involvement, and future responsibilities. The findings show that young Indian adults increasingly prefer greater autonomy in marital choice, and they often want marriage to be based on emotional compatibility rather than only on family arrangement or social duty. This is useful for the present study because postgraduate women students, like the respondents in this research, are also in a life stage where they are likely to compare marriage with education, independence, and future career plans. The study supports the idea that perceptions of marriage are formed not only by tradition but also by the expectations young adults bring to it, which makes it a strong background source for understanding how educated women think about marriage in contemporary society. It also helps justify why family and societal expectations must be studied as a separate factor, because family involvement continues to shape how marriage is imagined, discussed, and evaluated by young adults. Overall, this article adds depth to the present research by showing that marriage-related expectations are tied to individual aspirations, emotional needs, and social context, all of which are central to the current study.

**Chacko (2003):** *Marriage, Development and the Status of Women in Kerala, India*

Chacko (2003), in the study *Marriage, Development and the Status of Women in Kerala, India*, examined how marriage is tied to women's social position, development,

and life opportunities in Kerala. The study is highly relevant to family and societal expectations because it shows that marriage is not shaped only by personal preference, but also by wider social structures such as dowry, gender norms, family honour, and expectations about women's roles. Chacko's work highlights that even in a state known for education and social progress, marriage continues to be influenced by traditional pressures that affect women's choices and freedom. This is important for the present study because postgraduate women students may view marriage not simply as a personal event, but as a social institution carrying obligations from family and society. The study suggests that family expectations can strongly shape when women marry, whom they marry, and how they judge the meaning of marriage itself. It also implies that social development does not automatically remove pressure from women, because cultural expectations may continue even when educational opportunities increase. For the present research, this provides a strong foundation for treating family and societal expectations as a separate dimension in understanding perceptions of marriage among educated young women.

**Pavithran and Hani (2025): *Fear of Marriage among Women in Kerala***

Pavithran and Hani (2025), in the study *Fear of Marriage among Women in Kerala*, explored anxieties and concerns related to marriage in the lives of women. The study is very important for understanding family and societal expectations because many of the fears it identifies are connected to the pressure women face from traditional marital roles and social norms. The findings showed that many women expressed fear about loss of freedom, increased responsibilities, and lifestyle changes after marriage. This suggests that marriage is often viewed not only as a personal relationship, but also as a stage where family duties and social expectations intensify. Women may fear marriage when they feel that it will require them to fit into rigid ideas of being a good wife, daughter-in-law, or homemaker. Such anxieties are closely linked to societal expectations that define women's worth through compliance, sacrifice, and adjustment. For postgraduate women students, these concerns are particularly relevant because they may be balancing education, career plans, and personal independence while still facing pressure to conform to marital norms. Pavithran and Hani's study therefore supports the present research by showing that fear of marriage is often rooted in the wider social

environment rather than in marriage alone. It makes clear that family and society can shape marriage perception through pressure, expectation, and the possibility of losing autonomy.

**Ramsheena (2015): *Marital Choices and Perception among Women Students***

Ramsheena (2015), in the study *Marital Choices and Perception among Women Students*, focused on how women students understand marriage and make decisions related to marital life. The findings revealed that women's perceptions were influenced by education, personal beliefs, family values, and future aspirations, and that women increasingly seek participation and personal choice in decisions related to marriage and family life. This study is relevant to family and societal expectations because it shows that women students do not make marital decisions in a vacuum; they negotiate between personal desires and the values of the families and communities around them. Family approval, cultural norms, and social expectations can strongly affect what kinds of marriages are considered acceptable, what timing is seen as appropriate, and how women imagine their future role after marriage. Ramsheena's study is especially useful for the present research because postgraduate women students are likely to experience similar tensions between their own preferences and the expectations placed on them by parents, relatives, and society. The study suggests that women may support marriage in principle but still want more room for self-choice and personal agency. This makes family and societal expectations a highly relevant dimension, since it captures the external pressures that shape how women students think about marriage, responsibility, and future family life. Ramsheena therefore provides direct support for examining this factor separately in the present study.

**Safiya and Hameed (2023): *How Married and Unmarried Female Students of Kerala Differ in Their Academic Confidence and Subjective Well-Being?***

Safiya and Hameed (2023), in the study *How Married and Unmarried Female Students of Kerala Differ in Their Academic Confidence and Subjective Well-Being?*, examined differences between married and unmarried female students in Kerala. The study is relevant to family and societal expectations because it reflects the wider social realities that surround women's educational and personal lives, including marriage-related

pressure, adjustment, and expectations about female roles. Although the study focuses on academic confidence and well-being, it indirectly shows that marriage status can affect how women experience their education and personal life in a society where women's roles are often judged against family and marital expectations. This makes the study valuable for the present research because it helps show that marital expectations do not exist in isolation from social treatment of women. Married and unmarried women may experience different forms of approval, scrutiny, or pressure from family and society, which in turn can influence how they think about marriage. For postgraduate women students, this is significant because they may observe how marriage changes the way women are treated in both academic and social settings. Such observations can shape whether marriage is seen as desirable, burdensome, or restrictive. The study therefore supports the inclusion of family and societal expectations as a dimension, because it reflects the social environment in which women's marital decisions and perceptions are formed.

**Sonkaya and Öcal (2024): *Young Peoples Attitudes toward Marriage, Gender Roles, and Related Factors***

Sonkaya and Öcal (2024), in the study *Young Peoples Attitudes toward Marriage, Gender Roles, and Related Factors*, examined how gender role attitudes shape young people's views on marriage. The findings revealed that individuals with more egalitarian gender role attitudes had a more balanced and modern perception of marriage, showing that changing gender expectations strongly influence views on marriage. This study is relevant to family and societal expectations because gender roles are one of the most important social expectations placed on women within families and communities. When traditional ideas expect women to prioritise marriage, caregiving, and domestic responsibility, marriage may appear more restrictive. When gender roles become more equal, marriage may be seen as a partnership with shared responsibility. Sonkaya and Öcal's study therefore helps explain why family and social expectations matter so much in shaping marital perception. It suggests that women's opinions about marriage are influenced by whether the surrounding culture supports equality or continues to enforce traditional roles. For postgraduate women students, this is particularly significant because they are likely to be thinking about marriage while also

negotiating ideas about autonomy, work, and personal growth. The study therefore strengthens the present research by showing that societal expectations about gender remain central to how marriage is perceived.

### **2.3 Research Gap**

Although a considerable body of literature has examined attitudes toward marriage among young people and women, important gaps remain in relation to the present study. Existing studies such as those by Beri and Beri, Chaturvedi and Singh, Yadav and Rakhee, Siddhaiah et al., Tamizarasi and Jecinth, and Sonkaya and Öcal have largely focused on general attitudes toward marriage, marital expectations, gender roles, and related aspects among youth and student populations. While these studies provide useful insight into the changing perceptions of marriage among young adults, they do not sufficiently analyse how specific and interacting factors such as career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations shape those perceptions within a single analytical framework.

Kerala-focused and women-centred studies, including those by Chacko, Krishnan and Ahmed, Pavithran and Hani, Ramsheena, and Safiya and Hameed, have highlighted important issues such as women's status, autonomy, fear of marriage, family pressure, and the changing meaning of marriage in contemporary society. These studies are particularly relevant because they show that women's perceptions of marriage are increasingly influenced by education, independence, gender expectations, and social transformation in Kerala. However, they do not specifically focus on postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District as a distinct group, nor do they systematically examine how multiple social and personal factors operate together in shaping their perception of marriage.

Another important gap in the reviewed literature is methodological in nature. Many existing studies discuss factors influencing marriage perception in a descriptive, thematic, or isolated manner, but relatively few adopt a multidimensional quantitative approach to test the relationship between these factors and perception of marriage using standardized measures and statistical analysis. In particular, there is limited empirical

research that brings together career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations in one model and examines their relationship with perception of marriage among postgraduate women students.

Thus, there remains a clear gap in context-specific empirical knowledge on how postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District perceive marriage while negotiating higher education, emerging career aspirations, personal independence, and strong social expectations. No reviewed study has quantitatively assessed these four dimensions together within this specific population or analysed their relative influence on perception of marriage through a structured and correlational framework. The present study seeks to address this gap by generating data-based insight into the factors shaping the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District, thereby contributing to Kerala-based scholarship on marriage and to broader discussions on young women's marital attitudes and decision-making in contemporary India.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter explains the **research methodology** adopted for the present study on the **perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District**. Research methodology refers to the systematic process followed by a researcher to collect, organise, analyse and interpret data in order to achieve the objectives of the study. It serves as the foundation of any research by providing a clear and logical framework that ensures the study is conducted in a scientific, objective and ethical manner. A well-planned methodology helps the researcher select appropriate methods and techniques for data collection and analysis, thereby improving the reliability and validity of the research findings. It also enables other researchers to understand the procedures followed in the study and provides transparency throughout the research process.

The present study seeks to understand the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students and to examine how **career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations** influence their perceptions towards marriage. As marriage is a multidimensional social institution influenced by various personal and environmental factors, it is important to adopt a systematic methodology that can effectively examine these factors in an organised and objective manner. The methodology provides a step-by-step plan that guides the researcher from identifying the research problem to analysing and interpreting the findings, ensuring that the study addresses the research objectives accurately and meaningfully.

The study adopted a **quantitative research approach** and a **descriptive research design**, as these were considered most suitable for collecting measurable information regarding the attitudes and perceptions of the respondents. The research was conducted among postgraduate women students in Trivandrum district using a **structured questionnaire**. The questionnaire consisted of **socio-demographic questions** and a **30-item five-point Likert scale** covering different dimensions of the study, including perception of marriage, career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations. The questionnaire was administered through **Google Forms**, enabling respondents to participate voluntarily and conveniently. The responses obtained from the participants were systematically organised and coded before being

entered into the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)** for analysis. Appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed to analyse the data and interpret the findings in relation to the objectives of the study.

Throughout the research process, ethical principles such as **voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and respect for the respondents** were maintained to ensure the integrity and credibility of the study. Every stage of the research, from planning and data collection to analysis and interpretation, was carried out systematically to ensure that the findings accurately reflect the perceptions of the respondents.

This chapter presents the methodological framework adopted for the study in a detailed and systematic manner. It includes the **title of the study, objectives of the study, research design, study area, population and sample, sampling technique, tools for data collection, variables of the study, conceptual and operational definitions, data collection process, methods of data analysis**, and the ethical considerations followed during the conduct of the research. These methodological procedures collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of how the study was planned and executed to achieve its objectives and answer the research questions effectively.

### **3.2 Title of the Study**

The title of the present study is “**Perception of Marriage among Postgraduate Women Students in Trivandrum District**”. The title reflects the focus of the study, which is to understand how postgraduate women students perceive marriage in the context of changing social conditions, educational advancement, career aspirations, and social expectations. It also clearly identifies the target group and the geographical area covered by the research.

### **3.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study provide direction to the research and help in examining the factors influencing perception of marriage among postgraduate women students.

### **3.4 General Objective**

To study the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District.

### **3.5 Specific Objectives**

- To examine the perceptions of postgraduate women students regarding the influence of marriage on their career goals.
- To analyse the influence of media exposure on the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students.
- To study the influence of peer groups on the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students.
- To understand the role of family and societal expectations in shaping the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students.

### **3.6 Variables**

The present study contains one dependent variable and four independent variables.

Dependent Variable : Perception of Marriage

Independent Variables :

- Career goals
- Media exposure
- Peer influence
- Family and societal expectations

### **3.7 Research Design**

The present study adopted a **quantitative research approach** to understand the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District.

A **descriptive research design** was used because the study aimed to describe the respondents' perceptions and the factors influencing them, rather than to manipulate variables or establish cause-and-effect relationships. Descriptive design is appropriate when the researcher intends to systematically present the characteristics, attitudes, and opinions of a selected group.

The study was conducted using a **structured questionnaire** consisting of socio-demographic questions and a 30-item five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire covered five major areas: **perception of marriage, career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations.**

The collected data were analysed using **SPSS**, and the results were interpreted through **frequency analysis, mean, standard deviation, and correlation** where required.

The research design was considered suitable because it helped in collecting reliable information from a defined group of respondents in a systematic way. It also made it possible to examine the relationship between the independent variables and perception of marriage in a clear and organized manner.

### **3.8 Universe and Unit of Study**

The universe of the present study consists of postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District. Since the study focuses on understanding the perception of marriage among a specific educational and gender group, postgraduate women students formed the broader universe of the research.

The **unit of study** is the individual postgraduate woman student. Each respondent was treated as a separate unit for collecting information regarding marriage, career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations.

### **3.9 Sampling Design**

The study adopted **purposive sampling** to select respondents who were relevant to the research topic. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the study specifically required postgraduate women students from Trivandrum District who could provide meaningful responses related to the objectives of the study.

The sample consisted of **63 postgraduate women students** from Trivandrum District. The respondents were selected on the basis of their relevance to the study, availability, and willingness to participate.

### **3.10 Data Collection**

The present study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected directly from the respondents in order to obtain first-hand information regarding their perception of marriage and the factors influencing it. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, research articles, dissertations, reports, and relevant online sources related to marriage, women's status, youth attitudes, career aspirations, media influence, peer influence, and family and societal expectations. These secondary sources helped the researcher build the conceptual background of the study, understand the existing body of knowledge, and frame the data collection tool in a meaningful manner.

The main instrument used for collecting primary data was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was selected as the most suitable tool because the study followed a quantitative approach and aimed to obtain uniform responses from a specific group of respondents. A structured format helped in collecting data systematically and made the responses easier to classify, compare, and analyse. Since the topic of the study involved attitudes, opinions, and perceptions, the questionnaire method was considered appropriate for measuring the degree and direction of respondents' views in an organised way.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section collected socio-demographic details of the respondents. This part included basic background information such as age, course of study, college, religion, type of family, and area of residence. These details were important because they provided social context to the respondents' views and helped in understanding the background within which their perception of marriage was formed.

The second section of the questionnaire consisted of a 30-item five-point Likert scale designed to measure the major variables of the study. The items were grouped under five areas, namely Perception of Marriage, Career Goals, Media Exposure, Peer

Influence, and Family and Societal Expectations. Each area contained six statements, making it possible to assess the respondents' attitudes in a more balanced and systematic manner. This grouping was done in line with the objectives of the study so that each major dimension influencing marriage perception could be examined separately and clearly.

The five-point Likert scale included the response categories **Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree**. This scaling technique helped to measure the degree of agreement or disagreement of respondents toward each statement related to the study variables. It was useful in converting subjective opinions into quantifiable data, thereby making statistical analysis possible. The Likert format also gave respondents the freedom to express varying levels of opinion instead of forcing them into simple yes-or-no answers.

The questionnaire was prepared in simple and clear language so that respondents could understand the statements easily and respond without confusion. Care was taken to ensure that the questions were directly related to the objectives of the study and that the wording remained relevant to the experiences and social realities of postgraduate women students. Since the topic dealt with a personal and socially sensitive issue, the language was framed carefully so as to avoid ambiguity and encourage honest responses.

The questionnaire was administered through Google Form, which made the process of data collection more convenient and systematic. The online mode was useful because it was economical, easy to circulate, and accessible to postgraduate students. It also helped in storing the responses in an organised digital format, which reduced the chances of data loss and made later classification and analysis easier. The responses collected through Google Form were later transferred to an Excel sheet and then prepared for statistical analysis.

In addition to the close-ended items, the tool also included one open-ended question at the end. This question gave respondents an opportunity to express their overall view of marriage in their own words, based on their personal beliefs, experiences, and future expectations. Although the main study was quantitative in nature, this question helped

add a small qualitative dimension by allowing a more personal insight into respondents' perspectives.

Data were collected from 63 postgraduate women students selected for the study. Before collecting the responses, the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and the academic use of the information provided by them. Participation in the study was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection process. The respondents were assured that the information shared by them would be used only for research purposes. This helped create a sense of trust and encouraged genuine responses.

Overall, the data collection process was carried out in a systematic and careful manner to ensure clarity, consistency, and relevance. The use of both primary and secondary data, along with a well-structured questionnaire, helped the researcher gather sufficient and meaningful information for analysing the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district.

### **3.11 Data Collection Method**

Data collection is a central part of any research study because it provides the information required for analysis and interpretation. In the present study on the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Trivandrum District, data were collected in a systematic manner to ensure relevance, clarity, and reliability. Since the study followed a quantitative approach with a descriptive research design, the survey method was used as the main method of collecting primary data. This method was suitable because it helped gather uniform responses from a specific group of respondents within a limited time.

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used in the study. Primary data were collected directly from postgraduate women students through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, previous studies, dissertations, and other materials related to marriage, women's attitudes, career goals, media influence, peer influence, and family and societal expectations. These sources

helped the researcher develop a better understanding of the topic and frame the tool appropriately.

The main instrument used for primary data collection was a **structured questionnaire prepared through Google Form**. The online form was chosen because it was convenient, economical, and easy to distribute among postgraduate students. It also helped in collecting responses in an organized digital format, reducing the need for manual entry at the initial stage. The responses submitted through Google Form were automatically stored and later organized in an **Excel sheet**, which made the raw data easier to review, classify, and prepare for analysis.

The questionnaire consisted of two major parts. The first part collected socio-demographic information of the respondents, such as age, course, college, religion, type of family, and area of residence. This information helped in understanding the background of the respondents and gave context to their views on marriage. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of a **30-item five-point Likert scale** with response options such as Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. This format was used to measure the intensity of respondents' attitudes in a clear and quantifiable way.

The 30 items were divided into five areas based on the variables of the study. Items 1 to 6 focused on perception of marriage, items 7 to 12 on career goals, items 13 to 18 on media exposure, items 19 to 24 on peer influence, and items 25 to 30 on family and societal expectations. In addition to these close-ended questions, the form also included one open-ended question at the end, which asked respondents to describe their overall perception of marriage based on their personal beliefs, experiences, and future plans. This gave some scope for personal expression beyond fixed-choice responses.

The questionnaire was prepared in simple and understandable language so that the respondents could answer it without confusion. Care was taken to ensure that the items were directly connected to the objectives of the study and reflected the major dimensions identified in the research. Since the topic relates to personal and social attitudes, the structured format helped the researcher collect responses in a consistent manner from all respondents.

The data were collected from **63 postgraduate women students** selected for the study. Before collecting responses, the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and the academic use of the information provided. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the process. The information gathered through the Google Form and stored in the Excel sheet was used only for the purpose of the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for the study on the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district. The data were analysed using SPSS, and the analysis is based strictly on the available outputs such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, reliability analysis, and Pearson correlation. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the respondents' perception of marriage and to understand how career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations are related to it.

The total sample for the study consists of 63 respondents. The chapter is organised into the following parts: profile of the respondents, reliability of the tool, descriptive statistics of the major variables, objective-wise analysis, testing of hypothesis, and summary of the findings.

### 4.2 Profile of the Respondents

*Table 1: Age of respondents*

| Age (years)  | Frequency | Percent      |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| 18           | 1         | 1.6          |
| 20           | 2         | 3.2          |
| 21           | 5         | 7.9          |
| 22           | 20        | 31.7         |
| 23           | 21        | 33.3         |
| 24           | 8         | 12.7         |
| 25           | 2         | 3.2          |
| 26           | 1         | 1.6          |
| 27           | 2         | 3.2          |
| 29           | 1         | 1.6          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>63</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

The mean age is **22.81 years**, with a standard deviation of **1.674**.

## **Analysis of Age**

The age distribution shows that the respondents are concentrated mainly in the early twenties, which is a typical age group for postgraduate women students. The largest proportion of respondents is **23 years old**, accounting for **33.3 percent** of the sample, followed closely by those aged **22 years**, who form **31.7 percent** of the sample. Together, these two age groups make up nearly two-thirds of the total respondents, which indicates that the sample is strongly clustered around the usual postgraduate age range.

The mean age of **22.81 years** confirms that the respondents are mostly young adults who are likely to be at a stage of life where education, career preparation, and future family planning are all important. This age stage is particularly relevant to a study on perception of marriage because women in their early twenties are often beginning to think seriously about marriage timing, professional development, and personal independence. At this stage, views about marriage may still be forming and can be influenced by family expectations, media messages, peer discussions, and career ambitions.

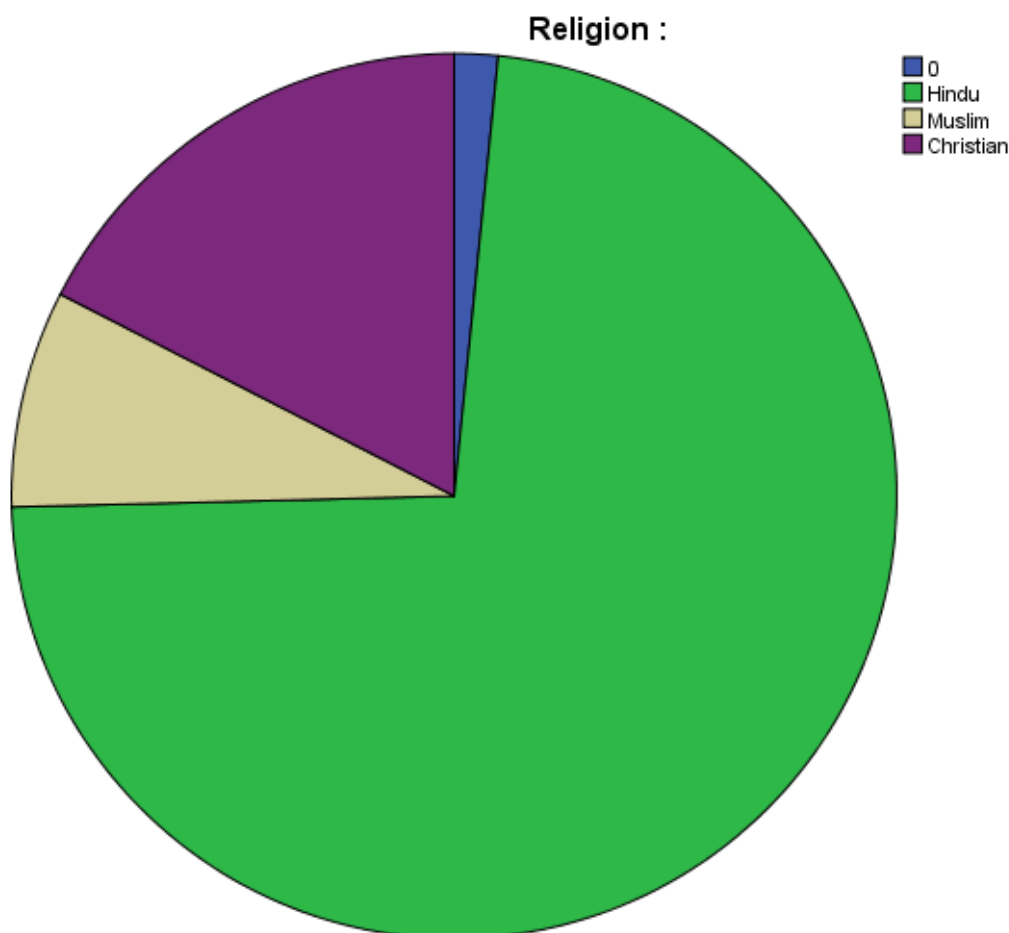
The distribution also shows that only a small number of respondents fall outside the 22–24 age range. There is one respondent each at ages **18, 26, and 29**, and two respondents each at ages **20, 25, and 27**. This narrow age spread suggests that the sample is relatively homogeneous in terms of life stage, which is useful for analysing shared perceptions of marriage among postgraduate women students. Because most respondents are in similar age brackets, their responses are more likely to reflect common educational and social experiences rather than highly varied life situations.

From a social perspective, this age pattern is important because marriage expectations often begin to intensify in the early twenties, especially for women in Indian society. Respondents in this age group are usually experiencing increasing pressure about future roles, marriage timing, and career planning. Therefore, the age profile of the sample strengthens the relevance of the study, since it captures the views of women who are close to the stage at which marriage decisions often become socially visible and personally significant.

Overall, the age table shows that the respondents are mainly young postgraduate women, with most of them between **22 and 24 years** old. This makes the sample suitable for studying the perception of marriage at a stage where educational progression, employment aspirations, and marital expectations are all actively interacting. The concentration of respondents in this age band provides a useful basis for interpreting the findings on career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family expectations in the later parts of the analysis.

**Table 2 :Religion of the Respondents**

| <b>Religion</b>       | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Hindu                 | 46               | 73.0           |
| Muslim                | 5                | 7.9            |
| Christian             | 11               | 17.5           |
| Missing/invalid entry | 1                | 1.6            |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>63</b>        | <b>100.0</b>   |



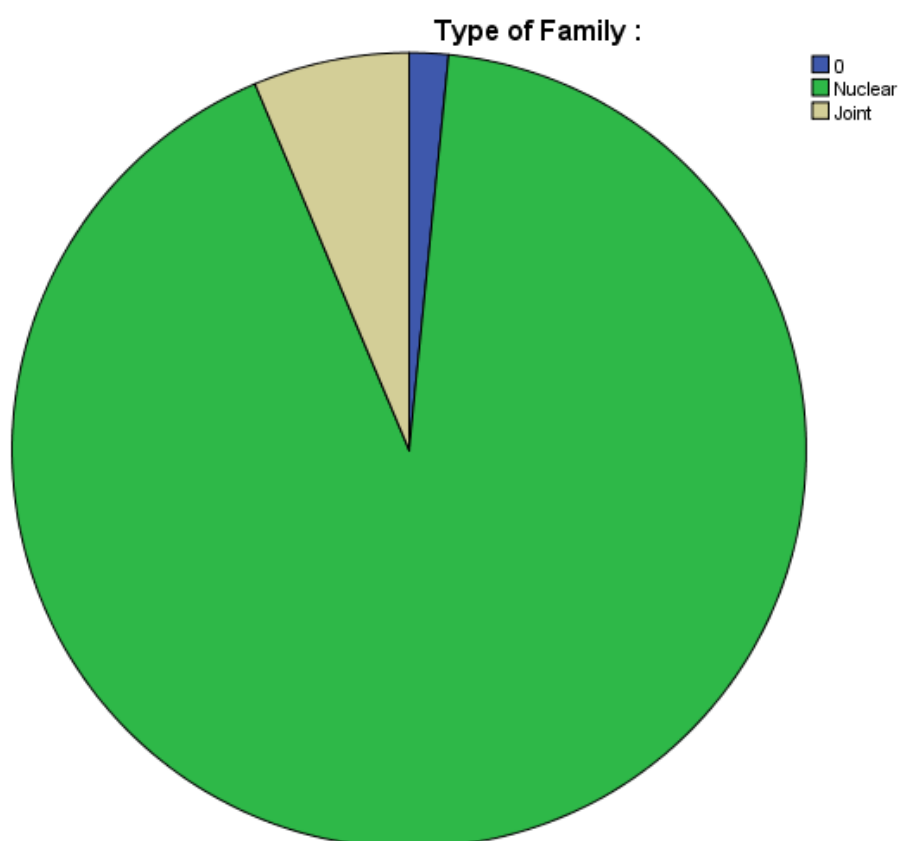
**Figure 1 : Religion of the Respondents**

The sample is dominated by Hindu respondents, who make up **73.0 percent** of the total. Christian respondents account for **17.5 percent**, while Muslim respondents account for **7.9 percent**. There is also **one invalid/missing entry** shown as “0,” which appears in the SPSS output and is best treated as a coding issue rather than a real religion category.

In analysis terms, this means the respondents come from a religiously mixed sample, but with a clear majority from one group. Since the study is about perception of marriage among postgraduate women students, this distribution may matter because family values and social expectations around marriage can vary across religious backgrounds. Even so, the sample still reflects the broader local context of Trivandrum, where marriage perceptions are shaped by education, family expectations, and social environment.

**Table 3 : Type of Family**

| Type of Family        | Frequency | Percent      |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Nuclear               | 58        | 92.1         |
| Joint                 | 4         | 6.3          |
| Missing/invalid entry | 1         | 1.6          |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>63</b> | <b>100.0</b> |



**Figure 2 : Type of Family**

The table shows that the vast majority of respondents come from **nuclear families**, which account for **92.1 percent** of the sample. Only **6.3 percent** of the respondents belong to joint families, so the sample is strongly tilted toward nuclear-family backgrounds.

This is relevant because family structure can shape women's autonomy, decision-making, and expectations about marriage. In a nuclear-family setting, young women may have more direct personal space in thinking about career and marriage, while also still experiencing family expectations in more concentrated forms. The result also fits the broader profile of the sample, which is mainly young, rural, and focused on higher education.

**Table 4 : Reliability of the Tool**

| Dimension              | Items      | Cronbach's Alpha | Interpretation                                                  |
|------------------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Perception of Marriage | Item 1–6   | 0.662            | Acceptable for an exploratory scale Output-Stats.pdf            |
| Career Goals           | Item 7–12  | 0.564            | Below the usual acceptable level; needs cautious interpretation |
| Media Exposure         | Item 13–18 | 0.732            | Acceptable internal consistency                                 |
| Peer Influence         | Item 19–24 | 0.866            | Very good internal consistency                                  |

| Dimension                        | Items      | Cronbach's Alpha | Interpretation                                   |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Family and Societal Expectations | Item 25–30 | 0.794            | Good internal consistency                        |
| Overall Scale                    | Item 1–30  | 0.940            | Excellent reliability for the full questionnaire |

The reliability analysis shows that the **overall questionnaire is highly consistent**, with a Cronbach's alpha of **0.940**, which indicates excellent internal consistency across all 30 items. This means that, as a full scale, the instrument is dependable for measuring the perception of marriage and its related dimensions among postgraduate women students. In general terms, reliability coefficients closer to 1.0 indicate stronger consistency among items in a scale.

Among the sub-dimensions, **Peer Influence** produced the strongest reliability at **0.866**, followed by **Family and Societal Expectations** at **0.794** and **Media Exposure** at **0.732**. These values suggest that the items within these dimensions are measuring a fairly coherent construct. The **Perception of Marriage** dimension recorded **0.662**, which is acceptable in an exploratory social science study, though still slightly moderate.

The weakest dimension is **Career Goals**, with a Cronbach's alpha of **0.564**. This suggests that the items in this section may not be as tightly aligned as the other dimensions, possibly because respondents interpret career-related statements in different ways depending on personal aspiration, professional interest, and expectations about balancing work and marriage. In a thesis, this should be reported honestly rather than hidden, because a lower alpha does not invalidate the entire study; it only indicates that this dimension may need refinement in future research.

The reliability analysis of the scale indicates that the instrument used in the study is overall highly reliable, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of **0.940**, which shows excellent internal consistency. Among the individual dimensions, **Peer Influence** had the highest reliability coefficient (**0.866**), followed by **Family and Societal Expectations (0.794)** and **Media Exposure (0.732)**. The **Perception of Marriage** dimension showed moderate reliability (**0.662**), which is acceptable for an exploratory study in the social science field.

However, the **Career Goals** dimension recorded a comparatively lower alpha value of **0.564**. This suggests that the items in this dimension are not as strongly interrelated as those in the other dimensions, and the construct may be somewhat broad or multidimensional in nature. Since career goals can include diverse ideas such as professional ambition, delay of marriage, and balancing work with family life, responses may naturally vary more across items. Even so, the dimension still remains useful for interpretation because the broader scale shows excellent reliability overall.

**Table 5 : Descriptive Statistics of the Main Variables**

| Variable    | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Interpretation                                              |
|-------------|--------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| PercepScore | 2.7275 | 0.61150        | Moderate and somewhat cautious perception of marriage.      |
| CareerGoal  | 3.9952 | 0.49386        | Strong emphasis on career goals and professional stability. |
| MedExp      | 3.3725 | 0.65239        | Moderate influence of media on perception of marriage.      |
| PeerInf     | 2.7804 | 0.76190        | Limited influence of peers; close to neutral.               |

| Variable  | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Interpretation                                            |
|-----------|--------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| FamilyExp | 3.4048 | 0.80250        | Noticeable influence of family and societal expectations. |

For detailed analysis, composite scores were created for the five major study variables: PercepScore, CareerGoal, MedExp, PeerInf, and FamilyExp. These composite scores were formed by combining the items under each dimension so that the broader pattern of the respondents' views could be understood more clearly. The descriptive statistics of these variables help to show the average tendency of the respondents and the extent of variation in their responses.

#### Codes used:

- **PercepScore** = overall perception of marriage
- **CareerGoal** = views on career and marriage
- **MedExp** = influence of media exposure
- **PeerInf** = influence of peer group
- **FamilyExp** = family and societal expectations about marriage

The mean score for **PercepScore**, which represents the overall perception of marriage, is **2.7275**, with a standard deviation of **0.61150**. Since this mean is slightly below the neutral value of 3 on the five-point scale, it suggests that the respondents' perception of marriage is moderate and somewhat cautious rather than strongly positive. This indicates that the postgraduate women students in the study do not reject marriage, but they also do not view it in a highly idealistic or uncritical way.

The mean score for **CareerGoal** is **3.9952**, with a standard deviation of **0.49386**, which is the highest among all the variables. This indicates that the respondents place strong importance on career goals and future professional stability when thinking about marriage. It suggests that education, employment, and career development are central concerns in their lives, and that marriage is often evaluated in relation to these aspirations.

The mean score for **MedExp** is **3.3725**, with a standard deviation of **0.65239**, which suggests that media has a moderate influence on the respondents' perception of marriage. This means that social media, movies, web series, and other forms of online content shape their views to some extent, especially by influencing their expectations and ideas about married life. However, the influence is not extremely strong, indicating that media is only one among several factors affecting their perception.

The mean score for **PeerInf** is **2.7804**, with a standard deviation of **0.76190**. This value is close to the neutral point and indicates that peer influence plays only a limited role in shaping the respondents' views on marriage. Friends and peer discussions may have some effect, but they do not appear to be the strongest factor in the formation of attitudes toward marriage.

The mean score for **FamilyExp** is **3.4048**, with a standard deviation of **0.80250**, showing that traditional family and social expectations continue to have a noticeable influence in the lives of the respondents. This suggests that even though the respondents are pursuing higher education and thinking seriously about their future, family pressure and societal expectations regarding marriage still remain important. Overall, the descriptive statistics show that career goals are the strongest influence, while family and media also play meaningful roles, whereas peer influence remains comparatively limited.

#### **4.3 Objective-wise Analysis**

The objective-wise analysis was carried out to understand how different factors shape the **perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district**. The present study was guided by one general objective

and four specific objectives, which focused on examining the influence of **career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations** on the respondents' perception of marriage. To achieve these objectives, the questionnaire was organised into different sections, with each section representing one dimension of the study. This classification enabled the researcher to analyse each objective separately while also understanding its contribution to the respondents' overall perception of marriage.

For each objective, **item-wise descriptive statistics**, including the **mean and standard deviation**, were computed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The mean values provide an understanding of the average level of agreement or disagreement of the respondents towards each statement, while the standard deviation indicates the extent of variation in their responses. Together, these statistical measures help to identify the response pattern of the participants and provide meaningful insights into the different dimensions influencing their perception of marriage.

The first objective examines how **career goals** influence the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students. The analysis focuses on understanding whether respondents consider career achievement a priority before marriage, whether they believe marriage affects career growth, and how they perceive the balance between professional aspirations and married life. This objective helps to identify the importance attached to career development in shaping contemporary attitudes towards marriage.

The second objective analyses the influence of **media exposure** on the perception of marriage. In the present digital era, social media platforms, television, movies, web series and online relationship-related content play a significant role in influencing the attitudes and expectations of young people. The objective-wise analysis therefore examines how exposure to these media platforms contributes to respondents' understanding, expectations and opinions regarding marriage.

The third objective focuses on **peer influence** and its role in shaping the respondents' perception of marriage. Friends and peer groups often serve as important sources of information, discussion and emotional support during young adulthood. The analysis

explores whether the opinions, experiences and discussions among peers influence respondents' views, expectations and decisions related to marriage.

The fourth objective examines the influence of **family and societal expectations** on the perception of marriage. Family members, relatives and society often play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards marriage through cultural values, traditions and social expectations. The analysis therefore investigates the extent to which respondents perceive family expectations, societal pressure and cultural norms as influencing their thoughts and decisions regarding marriage.

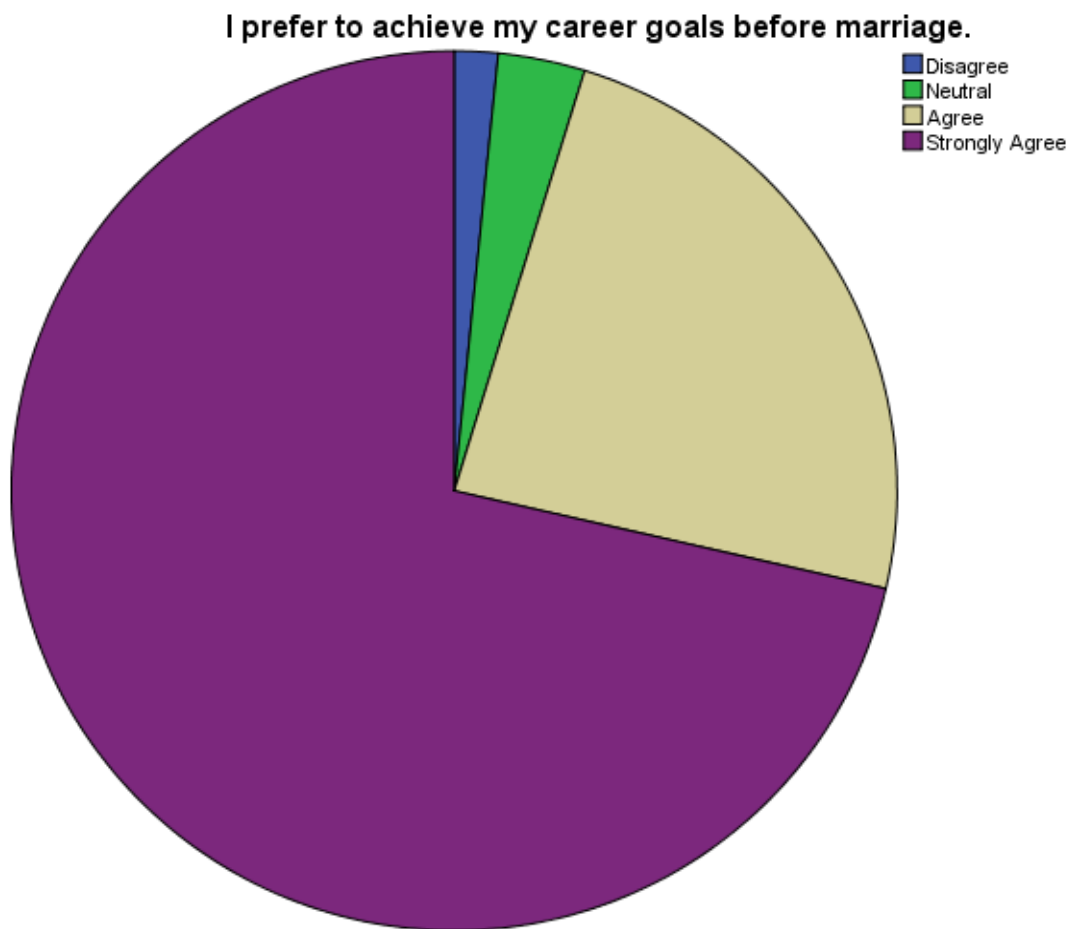
Following the analysis of individual items under each objective, **composite scores** were calculated for each dimension to obtain an overall understanding of the respondents' perceptions. The item-wise analysis, together with the composite scores, provides a comprehensive picture of how each factor contributes to the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students. This systematic approach not only enables the researcher to address each specific objective individually but also facilitates a better understanding of the overall research problem. The findings presented in the following sections are interpreted in relation to the objectives of the study and provide the basis for the discussion, conclusions and recommendations presented in the subsequent chapters.

### **Perception of Marriage and Career Goals**

This objective examined how respondents viewed the relationship between marriage and career, focusing on whether they prioritise career achievement, perceive marriage as a possible constraint on women's work, and believe that women can manage both roles successfully if adequate support is available.

**Table 6 : Perception of Marriage and Career Goals**

| <b>Statement</b>                                                  | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std.<br/>Deviation</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| I prefer to achieve my career goals before marriage.              | 4.65        | 0.63                      |
| Marriage may affect my career growth.                             | 3.35        | 0.92                      |
| Career is more important than marriage for me.                    | 4.30        | 0.98                      |
| Marriage creates limitations for working women.                   | 3.68        | 0.84                      |
| I may delay marriage for my career.                               | 4.06        | 1.01                      |
| I believe women can manage both career and marriage successfully. | 3.90        | 0.75                      |



**Figure 3 : Preference about career goals**

The highest mean score in this section is for the statement **“I prefer to achieve my career goals before marriage”** (mean 4.65), indicating very strong agreement and showing that the majority of respondents clearly wish to stabilise their careers before entering marriage. The items **“Career is more important than marriage for me”** (mean 4.30) and **“I may delay marriage for my career”** (mean 4.06) also have high mean values, confirming that career aspirations occupy a central place in their life plans and that marriage is often seen as a secondary consideration that can be postponed if necessary.

At the same time, the mean score of 3.90 for **“I believe women can manage both career and marriage successfully”** suggests that respondents are not rejecting marriage as an institution; rather, they expect that marriage should not interrupt

women's professional development and that it can coexist with a strong career when proper support from partners, families and workplaces is available. The moderate mean of **3.35** for **“Marriage may affect my career growth”** and **3.68** for **“Marriage creates limitations for working women”** reflects a cautious awareness that current social and organisational conditions may place extra burdens on married women and sometimes restrict their career progression.

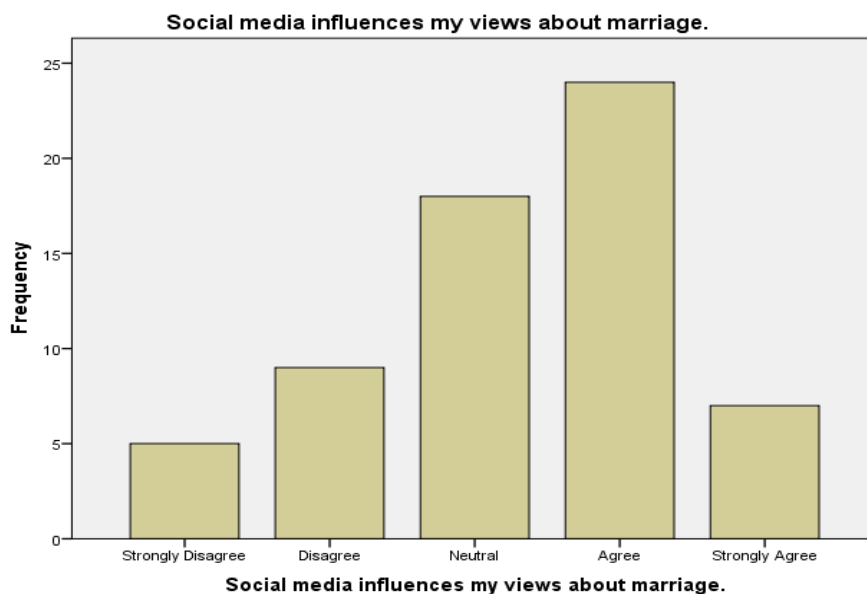
These findings are consistent with research on Indian marriage markets, which shows that women who wish to continue working are often penalised in matrimonial preferences and may receive less interest than non-working women. Experimental studies using matrimonial platform data in India have found that men are significantly less likely to contact women who are employed or express a desire to work after marriage, suggesting that labour market participation can reduce a woman's perceived suitability as a spouse in traditional settings. Likewise, intervention studies on improved labour market opportunities for young women in rural India show that when career options increase, women tend to delay marriage and childbearing, indicating that stronger career aspirations translate directly into postponed marital transitions. In this context, the present sample's strong emphasis on completing career goals before marriage and willingness to delay marriage for professional reasons reflects broader trends among educated young women who seek economic independence and stable employment before entering a marital relationship.

### **Influence of Media Exposure**

This objective explored the extent to which media exposure—particularly social media, movies, web series, influencers and online relationship content—shapes the respondents' perception of marriage. The items focused on both the positive and negative aspects of media influence, including idealised representations and fear generated by negative content.

**Table 7 : Influence of Media Exposure**

| <b>Statement</b>                                                                  | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std.<br/>Deviation</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Social media influences my views about marriage.                                  | 3.30        | 1.10                      |
| Relationship content on Instagram and YouTube affects my thoughts about marriage. | 3.05        | 1.08                      |
| Movies and web series shape my expectations about marriage.                       | 2.97        | 1.02                      |
| Social media creates unrealistic ideas about married life.                        | 3.60        | 0.93                      |
| Influencers and celebrities affect how young people view marriage.                | 3.63        | 0.83                      |
| Negative relationship content on social media creates fear about marriage.        | 3.65        | 0.85                      |



**Figure 4 : Social media influence**

The results show that media exposure has a **moderate** influence on marriage-related attitudes. Respondents generally agree that **social media, influencers and celebrities affect how young people view marriage**, with mean scores above 3.5 for items on unrealistic portrayals and fear induced by negative relationship content. However, the means for items about movies and web series shaping expectations (2.97) and relationship content influencing thoughts (3.05) remain close to the neutral point, suggesting that although media is an important background factor, it does not fully dominate their perceptions.

The relatively high means for “**Social media creates unrealistic ideas about married life**” (3.60), “**Influencers and celebrities affect how young people view marriage**” (3.63) and “**Negative relationship content on social media creates fear about marriage**” (3.65) indicate a critical awareness among respondents. They recognise that social media often presents idealised or extreme images of relationships—either very glamorous or very problematic—which can distort expectations and increase anxiety about marriage. Instead of passively accepting these portrayals, many respondents appear to interpret them cautiously and use them as a point of comparison rather than as direct models for their own relationships.

These observations are in line with international studies which show that higher engagement with social media and deeper understanding of its dynamics can be associated with more sceptical or negative attitudes toward marriage, especially among adolescents and emerging adults. Research on “liquid love” and media also suggests that intensive exposure to social and mass media can transform patterns of intimacy and commitment, contributing to changing views about marriage and long-term relationships among university students. The present findings fit within this broader picture: media is clearly present and influential in the respondents’ environment, but its effect is moderate and filtered through their own critical reflection and lived experiences.

### **Influence of Peer Group**

This objective focused on the role of peers—friends, classmates and wider peer networks—in shaping perceptions of marriage. The items examined whether discussions with friends, peer comparisons and peers’ experiences exert strong pressure or only limited influence on respondents’ attitudes and decisions.

***Table 8 : Influence of Peer group***

| <b>Statement</b>                                            | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. Deviation</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| My friends influence my thoughts about marriage.            | 2.98        | 1.07                  |
| Discussions with friends affect my opinions about marriage. | 3.03        | 0.97                  |
| I compare my future plans with my peers.                    | 2.76        | 1.04                  |
| My peer group influences my decision about marriage.        | 2.62        | 1.01                  |

| Statement                                                       | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| Friends' experiences affect my perception of marriage.          | 3.16 | 0.99           |
| I feel pressure from peers regarding relationships or marriage. | 2.13 | 0.81           |



**Figure 5 : Peer group influence**

The means in this section are generally close to the neutral value of 3, indicating **limited** peer influence. Respondents moderately agree that **friends' experiences affect their perception of marriage** (mean 3.16), suggesting that they do pay attention to what happens in their peers' relationships and may adjust their expectations based on those narratives. They also show mild agreement that **discussions with friends affect their opinions** (mean 3.03). However, the lower means for **peer group influencing decisions** (2.62) and **peer pressure regarding relationships or marriage** (2.13) suggest that, while peers are an important source of information and conversation, they do not substantially dictate personal decisions about when or whom to marry.

In other words, the respondents seem to treat peer input as one among several factors rather than as a determining force. They listen to friends, compare future plans to some extent, and observe peer experiences, but final decisions about marriage appear to be governed more by individual priorities (particularly career) and by broader family and societal expectations than by direct peer pressure. This pattern is consistent with research on social influences and marriage, which notes that peers and social networks shape the dialogue around marriage and provide reference points, but do not always override family norms or personal aspirations, especially in collectivist contexts where family plays a stronger role.

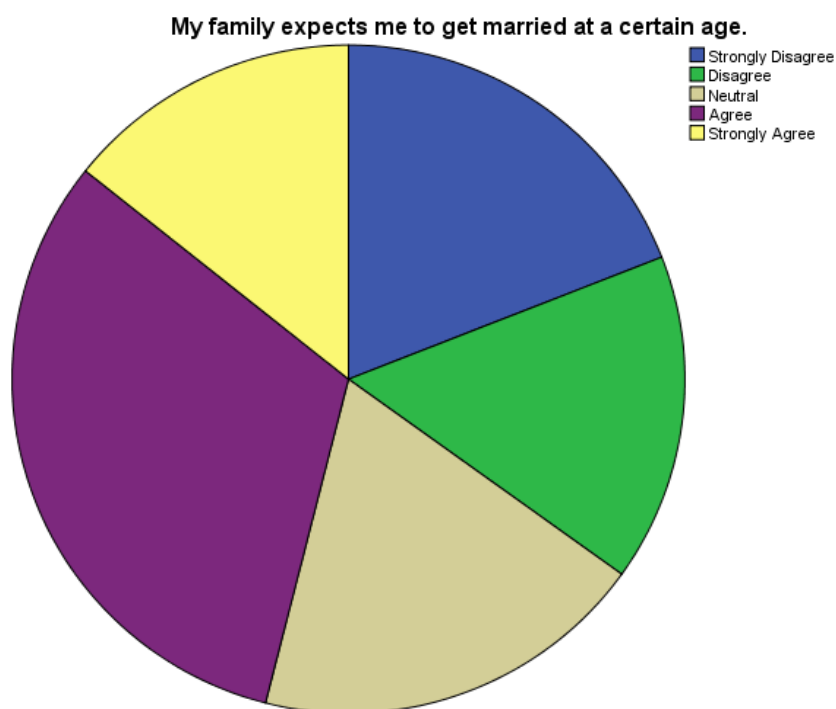
### **Family and Societal Expectations**

This objective investigated how family and societal expectations influence respondents' perception of marriage. The items covered pressure to marry at a particular age, social judgments about unmarried women, the view of marriage as a family responsibility, and the extent to which family opinions shape individual attitudes.

***Table 9 : Family and Societal Expectations***

| <b>Statement</b>                                      | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. Deviation</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| My family expects me to get married at a certain age. | 3.06        | 1.35                  |

| Statement                                          | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| Society puts pressure on women to get married.     | 4.40 | 0.64           |
| Family opinions influence my views on marriage.    | 2.76 | 1.10           |
| I feel social pressure regarding marriage.         | 2.89 | 1.35           |
| Marriage is seen as a responsibility by my family. | 3.32 | 1.28           |
| Society judges unmarried women negatively.         | 4.00 | 0.97           |



**Figure 5 : Family expectations**

The results show that **family and societal expectations remain very strong** in the respondents' environment, even though they are pursuing postgraduate education and forming independent views. The highest mean in this section is **4.40** for **“Society puts**

**pressure on women to get married**”, indicating that respondents overwhelmingly recognise intense social pressure on women to marry, regardless of their personal preferences or career situation. The mean of **4.00** for **“Society judges unmarried women negatively”** further underscores that remaining unmarried beyond a certain age is still socially stigmatised, reinforcing traditional norms that equate a woman’s social status with her marital status.

The mean score of **3.06** for **“My family expects me to get married at a certain age”** and **3.32** for **“Marriage is seen as a responsibility by my family”** suggests that families continue to view marriage as an important milestone and duty, and often hold expectations about timing and suitability of partners. However, the relatively lower mean of **2.76** for **“Family opinions influence my views on marriage”** and **2.89** for **“I feel social pressure regarding marriage”** implies that respondents are aware of these pressures but do not always internalise them fully. They recognise the external norms and expectations, yet their personal perception of marriage may be more nuanced, shaped by their own experiences, education and aspirations.

These findings are supported by wider evidence from Indian social research, which indicates that marriage is still treated as a social and familial contract rather than purely an individual choice, and that family and community expectations often override personal preferences. Studies on marital and family expectations among urban youth in India also highlight that many young women feel the burden of traditional norms, such as pressure to marry early and conform to gendered roles, even as they strive for education, career development and greater autonomy. The strong agreement in the present study regarding social pressure and negative judgment of unmarried women reflects this broader tension between modern aspirations and enduring cultural expectations.

#### **4.4 Overall Interpretation of Objective-wise Analysis**

The objective-wise analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the various factors influencing the **perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district**. The findings indicate that the respondents' perception of marriage is not shaped by a single factor but rather by the combined influence of career aspirations, media exposure, peer interactions, and family and

societal expectations. The systematic analysis of each objective, supported by descriptive statistics and composite scores, highlights the relative importance of these dimensions in influencing the respondents' attitudes towards marriage. By analysing each objective separately and then examining the overall pattern, the study presents a holistic understanding of the changing perceptions of marriage among educated young women.

Among all the variables examined, **career goals** emerged as the most influential factor shaping the respondents' perception of marriage. The composite score for **CareerGoal** recorded the highest mean value, indicating that educational achievement, professional development, financial independence and career stability occupy a central position in the lives of postgraduate women students. The findings suggest that many respondents prefer to establish themselves professionally before entering marriage and believe that career development should not be compromised because of marital responsibilities. Although the respondents generally acknowledge that it is possible to balance career and married life, they also recognise the practical challenges that women may encounter after marriage, including increased family responsibilities and potential limitations in career progression. This reflects the growing importance attached to women's economic independence and self-development in contemporary society.

The analysis further reveals that **family and societal expectations** continue to exert a considerable influence on respondents' perceptions of marriage. The relatively high composite mean obtained for this dimension indicates that traditional social values and cultural expectations remain significant even among highly educated women. Many respondents reported experiencing expectations from family members regarding the appropriate age for marriage and recognised that society continues to place importance on marriage as an expected life event. The findings suggest that while young women increasingly value personal choice and autonomy, they continue to negotiate these aspirations within the broader framework of family values, cultural traditions and societal norms. This demonstrates that modern attitudes towards marriage coexist with enduring social expectations, creating a balance between individual preferences and collective cultural values.

The findings also indicate that **media exposure** has a moderate influence on the respondents' perception of marriage. The analysis suggests that respondents are aware of the role played by social media, television, films, web series and digital platforms in shaping public perceptions of relationships and marriage. Exposure to relationship-related content appears to influence expectations regarding companionship, marital roles and family life, while negative portrayals of marriage sometimes contribute to concerns and uncertainties. However, the findings also suggest that respondents do not rely solely on media representations when forming their opinions. Instead, media serves as one among several sources of information that interact with personal experiences, education and social influences in shaping attitudes towards marriage.

In comparison with the other dimensions, **peer influence** emerged as the least influential factor affecting the respondents' perception of marriage. Although discussions with friends and observations of peers' experiences contribute to respondents' thinking, the overall findings indicate that postgraduate women students tend to make independent decisions regarding marriage. The relatively lower composite mean for this variable suggests that respondents are less likely to allow peer opinions to determine their marital decisions. This finding reflects a growing sense of personal agency among educated women, who appear to evaluate marriage based on their own aspirations, experiences and priorities rather than external social comparisons alone.

The analysis of the **overall perception of marriage** further indicates that the respondents possess a balanced and thoughtful outlook towards marriage. The mean score for **PercepScore** falls below the higher end of the scale, suggesting neither a highly idealistic nor a strongly negative perception of marriage. Instead, respondents demonstrate a moderate and realistic attitude towards marriage, recognising both its potential benefits and its possible challenges. Marriage is viewed as an important social institution that can provide emotional support, companionship and stability, but respondents also acknowledge the responsibilities, adjustments and career-related implications that may accompany married life. This balanced perspective reflects the increasing tendency among educated women to evaluate marriage as one important aspect of life rather than as the sole indicator of personal fulfilment or social success.

The overall pattern of findings demonstrates that postgraduate women students adopt a rational and reflective approach when considering marriage. Rather than accepting traditional expectations unquestioningly, they carefully evaluate marriage in relation to their educational goals, career aspirations, financial independence, emotional well-being and future life plans. Their responses suggest that marriage is increasingly regarded as a partnership based on mutual respect, equality, understanding and personal compatibility rather than merely as a cultural obligation. This shift reflects broader social changes occurring within Indian society, where women are increasingly empowered to make informed decisions regarding their personal and professional lives.

The findings also indicate that the respondents successfully balance traditional cultural values with modern aspirations. While they continue to recognise the importance of marriage within family and society, they simultaneously express the desire to preserve their individuality, autonomy and career ambitions. This demonstrates that perceptions of marriage among contemporary postgraduate women are shaped by the interaction of multiple social, cultural and personal factors rather than by any single influence. The coexistence of traditional expectations and modern values creates a nuanced perception in which marriage is appreciated as a meaningful life choice but is expected to support, rather than restrict, women's personal growth and professional development.

Overall, the objective-wise analysis successfully addresses the objectives of the study and provides meaningful insights into the factors influencing the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district. The findings reveal that while respondents continue to value marriage as an important life event, they increasingly associate it with equality, shared responsibilities, mutual support and personal fulfilment. Career aspirations emerge as the strongest determinant of marital perceptions, followed by family and societal expectations, whereas media exposure plays a moderate role and peer influence remains comparatively limited. These findings collectively illustrate the changing attitudes of educated young women towards marriage and reflect the ongoing transformation of gender roles, family expectations and individual aspirations within contemporary Kerala society. They also provide a strong foundation for the discussion of findings, conclusions and recommendations presented in the subsequent chapters of the study.

#### 4.5 Testing of Hypothesis

The general null hypothesis of the study stated that there is no significant relationship between the main independent variables—career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations—and the overall perception of marriage among postgraduate women students. To test this hypothesis, Pearson product–moment correlation coefficients were computed between the composite score for overall perception of marriage (PercepScore) and the four composite scores representing CareerGoal, MedExp, PeerInf, and FamilyExp.

**Table 10 : Correlation table**

| Variable pair            | Pearson r | Sig. (2-tailed) | N  | Decision            |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------------|----|---------------------|
| PercepScore & CareerGoal | −0.313*   | 0.013           | 63 | Significant at 0.05 |
| PercepScore & MedExp     | 0.118     | 0.358           | 63 | Not significant     |
| PercepScore & PeerInf    | −0.015    | 0.907           | 63 | Not significant     |
| PercepScore & FamilyExp  | 0.022     | 0.864           | 63 | Not significant     |

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

The correlation table shows a **significant negative relationship** between **PercepScore** and **CareerGoal** ( $r = -0.313$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ), while the correlations between PercepScore and the other three variables—MedExp, PeerInf and FamilyExp—are small in magnitude and statistically non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). In practical terms, the significant negative correlation means that as the importance given to career goals increases, the overall perception of marriage tends to become **less positive**. Students who place very high priority on career achievement are more likely to view marriage with caution, doubts or a more critical lens.

The correlation coefficient of  $-0.313$  indicates a **low to moderate** inverse relationship, suggesting that career orientation is related to how marriage is perceived but does not fully determine it. This aligns with the descriptive findings that respondents strongly prefer to achieve their career goals before marriage and are willing to delay marriage for professional reasons. It also resonates with studies on Indian women's work and marriage, where strong career aspirations and labour market involvement can lead women to postpone marriage and adopt a more evaluative attitude towards marital commitments.

In contrast, the non-significant correlations between PercepScore and **MedExp** ( $r = 0.118$ ,  $p = 0.358$ ), **PeerInf** ( $r = -0.015$ ,  $p = 0.907$ ), and **FamilyExp** ( $r = 0.022$ ,  $p = 0.864$ ) indicate that, within this sample, **media exposure, peer influence, and family/societal expectations do not show a clear linear association** with the overall perception of marriage. Although the objective-wise analysis revealed that media, peers and family norms play various roles in shaping specific attitudes (such as awareness of social pressure or fear from negative media content), these influences do not translate into a simple monotonic increase or decrease in the overall perception score.

Based on the correlation analysis, the **null hypothesis is rejected with respect to career goals and retained for media exposure, peer influence and family/societal expectations.**

- The **significant negative correlation** between **CareerGoal** and **PercepScore** shows that career goals are meaningfully related to how marriage is viewed: higher career orientation is associated with a more cautious or less positive perception of marriage. This supports the idea that educated young women increasingly frame marriage in relation to their professional ambitions, and that concerns about career disruption, reduced autonomy or role conflict can temper enthusiasm about marriage.
- The **non-significant correlations** for **MedExp**, **PeerInf** and **FamilyExp** indicate that, in this sample, these factors do not exert a straightforward linear effect on the overall perception score. Respondents recognise social pressure,

media influence and peer experiences, but their overall perception of marriage appears to be shaped by a more complex combination of personal beliefs, critical reflection, and lived experiences rather than by a direct one-dimensional impact of any single factor. This finding is consistent with literature showing that while media, peers and family norms colour expectations and anxieties, young women often negotiate these influences in nuanced ways, integrating them with their own aspirations and values.

In summary, the hypothesis-testing results confirm that **career goals have a statistically significant and inversely directed relationship with the perception of marriage**, whereas **media exposure, peer influence and family/societal expectations do not show a significant linear relationship** with the overall perception in this study. This reinforces the central conclusion that for postgraduate women students, marriage is increasingly evaluated in light of their career plans and desire for economic independence, while other social influences operate more indirectly or in interaction with individual agency rather than determining their perception of marriage on their own.

#### **4.6 Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings of the present study provide valuable insights into the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district. The interpretation is based on the descriptive statistics, objective-wise analysis and correlation analysis carried out using the collected data. The findings indicate that the respondents' perception of marriage is influenced by multiple social, personal and cultural factors, reflecting the changing attitudes of educated young women in contemporary society. Rather than viewing marriage solely as a traditional social institution, the respondents appear to evaluate it in relation to their educational aspirations, career goals, personal independence and future life plans. This demonstrates that marriage is increasingly being perceived through a balanced and thoughtful perspective, where personal choice and self-development are considered alongside family and societal expectations.

The data indicate that postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district hold a **moderate and somewhat cautious perception of marriage**. Marriage is still

seen as meaningful by many respondents, especially in terms of emotional support, companionship and future family life, but it is not viewed uncritically or with complete enthusiasm. This suggests that the respondents are balancing traditional ideas about marriage with contemporary concerns regarding autonomy, work, financial independence and personal growth. Rather than rejecting marriage, they appear to recognise both its advantages and its challenges, demonstrating a realistic understanding of the institution in today's social context.

**Career** emerges as the most influential factor in the study. The high mean score for **CareerGoal** and its significant negative correlation with **PercepScore** together show that stronger career orientation is linked with a less positive or more careful perception of marriage. This indicates that respondents who place greater value on career achievement tend to think more critically about the possible responsibilities, restrictions or interruptions that marriage may bring. Many postgraduate women appear to prioritise educational attainment, professional success and financial independence before making decisions related to marriage. The findings reflect the growing importance of women's empowerment and economic self-sufficiency, suggesting that marriage is increasingly viewed as a life event that should complement, rather than hinder, career aspirations and personal development.

**Media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations** are present in the lives of respondents, but their direct statistical relationship with perception of marriage is not significant in this sample. This does not imply that these factors have no influence; rather, it indicates that their influence is not sufficiently strong in a statistical sense to independently predict the respondents' overall perception of marriage. Nevertheless, the descriptive analysis demonstrates that these factors continue to shape respondents' thoughts and experiences in meaningful ways. Family and social expectations remain particularly evident, as many respondents agreed that society continues to place pressure on women to marry at an appropriate age and often judges unmarried women negatively. These findings suggest that traditional cultural norms continue to influence young women's perceptions despite increasing educational attainment and changing social values.

Similarly, the findings indicate that **media exposure** contributes to respondents' perceptions by presenting both positive and negative portrayals of marriage. Social media platforms, films, web series and online relationship content expose young women to diverse perspectives regarding marital relationships, companionship, conflict and gender roles. While such exposure may broaden awareness and encourage critical thinking, it may also create unrealistic expectations or anxieties regarding married life. The respondents appear to evaluate these portrayals critically rather than accepting them unconditionally, indicating that media serves as one of several influences contributing to their overall perception of marriage.

The influence of **peer groups** was found to be comparatively lower than the other variables included in the study. Although discussions with friends and observations of peers' experiences contribute to respondents' understanding of relationships and marriage, the findings suggest that postgraduate women students generally prefer to make independent decisions regarding their future. Their responses indicate that while peer interactions provide information and opportunities for discussion, personal beliefs, individual aspirations and family values continue to play a more significant role in shaping marital perceptions. This finding reflects the increasing confidence and autonomy of educated young women in making important life decisions.

The overall findings also demonstrate that respondents possess a **balanced and rational outlook towards marriage**. They neither idealise marriage nor reject it entirely. Instead, they view marriage as an important life decision that should be entered into voluntarily, at an appropriate stage of life, and under circumstances that support personal happiness, mutual respect and equality. Their responses suggest that successful marriage is expected to provide emotional security, companionship and shared responsibilities while simultaneously allowing women to continue their education, pursue meaningful careers and maintain their personal identity. This reflects a shift away from traditional expectations where marriage was considered the primary life goal for women, towards a more contemporary understanding in which marriage becomes one aspect of a broader life journey.

Overall, the findings indicate that the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students is shaped by the interaction of modern aspirations and traditional social

expectations. Career development emerges as the strongest determinant influencing marital perceptions, while family and societal expectations continue to exert considerable influence despite ongoing social change. Media exposure contributes to the formation of attitudes by presenting diverse representations of marriage, whereas peer influence remains comparatively limited. Collectively, these findings suggest that educated young women increasingly perceive marriage as a partnership built on equality, mutual understanding and shared responsibility rather than merely as a social obligation. The study therefore reflects the changing realities of contemporary Kerala, where higher education, women's empowerment and evolving gender roles continue to reshape perceptions of marriage while preserving the importance of family, relationships and cultural values.

#### **4.7 Summary**

This chapter analysed the data collected from 63 postgraduate women students using SPSS. The tool showed acceptable overall reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.782. The descriptive analysis revealed that the respondents had a moderate and somewhat cautious perception of marriage, while career goals recorded the highest mean among the independent variables. Media exposure and family and societal expectations showed moderate influence at the descriptive level, whereas peer influence remained comparatively limited.

The hypothesis testing revealed that only career goals had a statistically significant relationship with the perception of marriage, and this relationship was negative. Media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations did not show significant correlation with the overall perception of marriage. Thus, the findings suggest that among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district, career orientation is the most important factor associated with how marriage is perceived.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS**

## **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the major findings, suggestions, and conclusion of the study on the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district. It brings together the results already discussed in the previous chapter and interprets them in a concise and organised way. The chapter is important because it provides the final outcome of the study by showing what the data reveals about how young women perceive marriage and what factors influence that perception.

Marriage continues to be an important social institution in Indian society, but its meaning is changing among educated young women. For postgraduate women students, marriage is no longer seen only as a traditional life event or social duty. Instead, it is increasingly understood in relation to career planning, self-development, emotional well-being, equality, and future security. Because of this, their perception of marriage is often thoughtful, selective, and shaped by both personal aspirations and social realities.

The earlier analysis in this study showed that the respondents hold a moderate and cautious view of marriage. They do not completely reject marriage, but they also do not accept it uncritically. Their views are influenced by a combination of factors such as career goals, media exposure, peer discussions, and family and societal expectations. Among these, career goals emerged as the most important factor affecting the perception of marriage, while the other factors played supporting or indirect roles.

This chapter therefore aims to present the findings of the study in a clear objective-wise manner, followed by practical suggestions and a concluding discussion. The purpose is not only to summarise the results, but also to show their broader meaning in the present social context where educated women increasingly evaluate marriage in relation to autonomy, dignity, and life goals. Thus, this chapter serves as the final part of the study, bringing together the central insights and implications of the research.

## **5.2 Findings and Discussion**

### **5.2.1 Perception of Marriage among Postgraduate Women Students**

One of the major findings of the study is that postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district hold a moderate and cautious perception of marriage. The respondents do not completely reject marriage as an institution, but they also do not approach it with unquestioned acceptance. Their responses show that marriage is seen as meaningful in terms of companionship, emotional support, and social recognition, but it is also viewed with caution because of concerns regarding gender inequality, loss of autonomy, emotional strain, and restriction of personal freedom. This indicates that marriage is no longer perceived only as a traditional life goal, but increasingly as a serious and conditional life decision.

This finding is significant because it reflects a larger change in the attitudes of educated young women. Marriage is no longer interpreted simply as a social duty to be fulfilled at a certain age. Instead, it is being re-evaluated in relation to personal readiness, emotional compatibility, equality, and life goals. The cautious view found in this study therefore justifies the importance of examining marriage perception among postgraduate women, since this group is positioned at a stage where education, self-development, and social expectations intersect strongly.

### **5.2.2 Perception of Marriage and Career Goals**

The study clearly reveals that career goals are the strongest factor influencing the perception of marriage among the respondents. A large number of students agree that they would like to achieve their career goals before marriage, that career is more important than marriage at this stage of life, and that they may delay marriage for professional reasons. This shows that career development, economic independence, and future stability occupy a central place in their lives.

This finding suggests that for many postgraduate women students, marriage is not viewed as the first or immediate priority. Rather, it is evaluated in relation to whether it will support or obstruct their educational and professional aspirations. The respondents appear to be highly aware that marriage can affect women's career growth, especially in social settings where women continue to bear unequal domestic and

emotional responsibilities. Therefore, many of them prefer to secure a stable personal and professional identity before considering marriage.

This is one of the most important contributions of the study because it highlights a major shift in priorities among educated women. It confirms that marriage is increasingly understood through the lens of self-reliance, ambition, and long-term planning. The hypothesis testing also supports this finding, as career goals were found to have a significant negative relationship with the perception of marriage. This means that women who place stronger importance on career tend to view marriage more cautiously. This finding gives strong justification to the study because it proves that career orientation is not merely a background factor, but a direct influence on how marriage is perceived.

### **5.2.3 Influence of Media Exposure**

Another important finding of the study is that media exposure has a moderate influence on how respondents perceive marriage. The respondents acknowledge that social media, movies, web series, and online relationship content shape their thoughts about marriage to some extent. Many of them also agree that media often creates unrealistic expectations about married life and may produce confusion, fear, or idealised images of relationships.

This finding suggests that media acts as a strong background influence in the lives of postgraduate women students. Since young adults today are constantly exposed to relationship narratives through digital platforms, it is natural that these messages affect the way they imagine marriage, partner expectations, and future family life. Media does not simply entertain; it also creates standards, comparisons, and fears that may influence personal attitudes.

At the same time, the study shows that the influence of media is not absolute. The respondents appear to be critically aware of the fact that much of what is shown in media is exaggerated, romanticised, or unrealistic. This means that media shapes the environment in which attitudes are formed, but it does not entirely control those attitudes. This finding strengthens the relevance of the study because it demonstrates

that the perception of marriage today cannot be understood without considering the digital and media context in which young women live.

#### **5.2.4 Influence of Peer Group**

The study also finds that peer influence plays a comparatively limited role in shaping the perception of marriage. Friends and peer discussions do have some effect on how respondents think about marriage, but this effect is not very strong. The respondents do not appear to make major marriage-related decisions based mainly on the opinions of peers, nor do they feel intense peer pressure regarding relationships or marriage.

This finding is important because it shows that even though peers are part of the social environment of postgraduate women students, their role remains secondary when compared with career priorities and family or societal expectations. Peer groups may offer conversation, support, and exposure to different viewpoints, but they do not strongly determine personal attitudes toward marriage. This suggests that respondents maintain a fairly independent decision-making pattern in relation to their marriage perception.

The limited role of peer influence also helps clarify the broader pattern of the study. It shows that marriage perception among postgraduate women students is not simply a result of youth culture or peer trends. Instead, it is formed through a deeper interaction between personal aspirations, educational advancement, and structural social expectations. This finding is useful because it helps distinguish between casual social influence and more serious underlying factors shaping women's perception of marriage.

#### **5.2.5 Family and Societal Expectations**

The study clearly shows that family and societal expectations continue to have a strong influence in the lives of the respondents. Many of them agree that society puts pressure on women to get married and that unmarried women are often judged negatively. They also report that families expect daughters to marry at a certain age and often treat marriage as an important family responsibility.

This finding indicates that even though postgraduate women students are educationally advanced and increasingly career-oriented, they still live within a cultural setting where marriage remains a major social expectation. Women are often expected to fulfil this

role within a socially approved time frame, and delay in marriage can attract pressure, criticism, or questioning. Therefore, marriage is not simply a personal matter, but also a social and family issue shaped by norms, values, and cultural expectations.

At the same time, the findings suggest that respondents do not passively accept these expectations. They seem to recognise the pressure, but they also evaluate it critically. This is significant because it shows the presence of tension between traditional expectations and modern aspirations. The respondents are aware of social judgment, but they also assert their own priorities regarding career, readiness, and independence. This finding strongly supports the value of the study because it reveals that educated young women are actively negotiating family and societal expectations rather than simply obeying them.

A major finding of the study emerges from the testing of the hypothesis. The study found that career goals have a significant negative relationship with the perception of marriage, while media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations do not show a statistically significant direct relationship with the overall perception score. This means that among the variables studied, career goals are the only factor that directly and significantly influence how marriage is perceived by postgraduate women students.

This is an important result because it gives statistical support to the descriptive findings. It confirms that career aspirations are central in shaping women's views about marriage. The lack of significant direct relationship for media, peer, and family variables does not mean that these factors are unimportant. Rather, it suggests that their influence may be indirect, situational, or more complex than a simple one-to-one relationship. This gives the study academic value because it moves beyond surface-level assumptions and shows exactly which factor has the strongest measurable effect.

### **5.3 Overall Findings of the Study**

The overall findings of the present study provide a comprehensive understanding of the **perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district**. Based on the descriptive statistics, objective-wise analysis and correlation analysis, it is evident that the respondents' perception of

marriage is shaped by the combined influence of personal aspirations, educational experiences, social interactions and cultural expectations. The study successfully achieved its objectives by examining how career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations contribute to the respondents' views on marriage. The findings reveal that while marriage continues to hold social and personal significance, the meaning attached to marriage among educated young women has undergone noticeable transformation in response to changing social realities.

One of the most significant findings of the study is that **career aspirations occupy a central position in the lives of postgraduate women students**. The respondents demonstrated a strong desire to achieve educational and professional goals before entering into marriage. They viewed financial independence, career stability and personal accomplishment as important prerequisites for married life. The statistical analysis further revealed that career orientation had the strongest influence among all the variables studied, indicating that career-related considerations are increasingly shaping marital decisions. This finding reflects the growing emphasis placed on women's empowerment, economic independence and self-reliance in contemporary society.

The study also found that **family and societal expectations continue to influence young women's perceptions of marriage**, despite the increasing importance of individual choice and autonomy. Many respondents acknowledged that families still expect women to marry at an appropriate age and that society often attaches social value to marital status. These findings suggest that traditional cultural norms continue to exist alongside modern aspirations. Educated young women therefore experience the challenge of balancing personal ambitions with family expectations and social responsibilities. Rather than completely rejecting traditional values, respondents appear to negotiate them thoughtfully while attempting to preserve their own aspirations and decision-making authority.

Another important finding relates to the influence of **media exposure**. The respondents recognised that social media platforms, television, films and other digital content influence public perceptions regarding marriage and relationships. Media representations contribute to the formation of expectations, ideals and concerns about

married life by presenting both positive and negative images of relationships. However, the findings indicate that respondents do not passively accept these portrayals. Instead, they critically evaluate media messages alongside their own experiences, educational background and family values before forming opinions about marriage. This demonstrates that media functions as an important source of information and reflection rather than as the sole determinant of marital attitudes.

The findings further indicate that **peer influence** exists but remains comparatively limited when compared with the other dimensions of the study. Discussions with friends and observations of peers' relationships contribute to respondents' understanding of marriage, but they do not appear to dominate personal decision-making. The respondents generally preferred to rely on their own judgement, future aspirations and family guidance while making decisions related to marriage. This suggests that postgraduate women students exhibit a considerable degree of independence and confidence in evaluating important life choices.

Taken together, the study presents a clear picture of how postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district perceive marriage. Their perception is neither fully traditional nor fully rejecting. Instead, it is balanced, critical and shaped by present-day realities. Marriage continues to be seen as a meaningful institution, particularly because of its potential to provide emotional support, companionship and family life. At the same time, respondents emphasise that marriage should be based on **mutual respect, equality, personal choice, emotional compatibility and shared responsibilities**. They expect marriage to support rather than restrict their educational, professional and personal aspirations.

The findings also suggest that postgraduate women students increasingly approach marriage as a **personal life decision rather than merely a social obligation**. They seek relationships that encourage equality, mutual understanding and emotional security while allowing them to continue pursuing their career goals and personal ambitions. This reflects the changing status of women in society, where higher education and increased opportunities have enabled women to make informed choices regarding their future. Marriage is therefore viewed as one component of a fulfilling life rather than as the sole measure of success or social acceptance.

The study overall shows that educated young women are redefining marriage in relation to their changing roles in society. They want marriage to fit into their life goals rather than replace them. Career aspirations, awareness created by media, limited but present peer discussions, and continuing family pressure together create a complex social environment in which marriage is carefully assessed. The findings clearly indicate that respondents adopt a thoughtful and rational approach while making decisions regarding marriage, carefully considering both the opportunities and challenges associated with married life. This demonstrates the emergence of a generation of women who value independence, informed decision-making and equal partnerships while continuing to appreciate the emotional and social significance of marriage.

Overall, the study makes an important contribution to understanding the changing perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Kerala. It highlights the gradual transition from traditional perceptions of marriage towards more balanced and contemporary viewpoints that recognise the importance of education, career development, gender equality and personal autonomy. At the same time, the findings acknowledge that family values, cultural traditions and societal expectations continue to influence women's decisions regarding marriage. By bringing together these multiple dimensions, the study provides a comprehensive picture of how marriage is being redefined by educated young women in today's society. These findings not only fulfil the objectives of the present research but also provide valuable insights for educators, families, social workers, policymakers and future researchers interested in understanding the evolving institution of marriage and the changing aspirations of young women.

#### **5.4 Suggestions**

One important suggestion from the study is the need to create greater awareness among students, families, and educational institutions about the changing meaning of marriage. Marriage should not be treated as a compulsory step to be completed within a fixed age. It should be understood as a personal decision based on readiness, mutual respect, emotional compatibility, and support for individual aspirations. Awareness programmes in colleges and communities can help normalise the idea that delaying marriage for education or career is a valid choice.

Another major suggestion is to strengthen counselling support for postgraduate women students. Since career goals strongly influence the perception of marriage, colleges should provide spaces where students can discuss marriage, career planning, family pressure, and emotional well-being. Such counselling can help young women make informed decisions with greater confidence. Premarital counselling can also be useful, as studies show it improves communication, emotional preparedness, and realistic expectations in marriage.

The findings also point to the need for family sensitisation. Parents and family members should understand that educated young women today often think differently about marriage than earlier generations. Rather than forcing daughters to marry at a certain age, families should support them in completing their education, building careers, and making independent decisions. Open communication within families can reduce pressure and lead to healthier marital choices.

The study further suggests the importance of media literacy. Since media has a moderate influence on marriage perception, students should be encouraged to examine social media and entertainment content critically. Much of this content creates unrealistic expectations or exaggerated fears about marriage. Educational institutions can therefore include discussions that help students distinguish between media representation and real-life marital relationships.

It is also suggested that colleges organise seminars, workshops, and group discussions on marriage, gender equality, emotional health, and women's rights. Even though peer influence is limited, such spaces can help students reflect on their own beliefs and reduce confusion created by conflicting social messages. In addition, promoting women's career growth and financial independence is essential, since the study shows that marriage is increasingly evaluated in relation to professional aspirations and personal autonomy.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The present study was undertaken to understand the **perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district** and to examine how career goals, media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations

influence their perceptions. The study successfully achieved its objectives through a quantitative research approach, using a structured questionnaire and appropriate statistical analysis. The findings provide a meaningful understanding of how educated young women perceive marriage within the context of changing social values, increasing educational opportunities and evolving gender roles. The study also reflects the realities faced by young women as they attempt to balance personal aspirations, professional ambitions and societal expectations while making important life decisions.

The study concludes that postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district hold a **moderate and cautious perception of marriage**. They neither reject marriage nor accept it unquestioningly. Instead, they approach marriage with careful consideration, recognising both its positive aspects and the responsibilities associated with it. Marriage continues to be valued as an important social institution that offers emotional support, companionship, security and opportunities for family life. At the same time, the respondents believe that marriage should be based on mutual respect, equality, understanding and shared responsibilities rather than traditional gender expectations alone. Their responses indicate that marriage is increasingly viewed as a partnership between equals, where both individuals are able to pursue personal and professional growth.

A major conclusion of the study is that **career goals emerge as the strongest factor influencing the perception of marriage**. The respondents attach considerable importance to higher education, career development, financial independence and professional stability. Many expressed a willingness to delay marriage until they had achieved their educational and career aspirations. This finding reflects the changing priorities of educated young women, who increasingly consider career success and economic independence as essential components of a fulfilling life. Rather than viewing marriage as the immediate or primary goal, respondents perceive it as one important aspect of their future that should complement, rather than limit, their personal ambitions. The findings demonstrate that women today seek a balance between career advancement and family life instead of sacrificing one for the other.

The study also concludes that **media exposure, peer influence, and family and societal expectations** continue to shape the context in which marriage is understood.

Media provides continuous exposure to different representations of relationships and marriage through social media platforms, films, television programmes and digital content. While these representations influence expectations and create awareness regarding different forms of relationships, respondents appear capable of evaluating such information critically rather than accepting it without question. Similarly, peers provide opportunities for discussion, sharing of experiences and exchange of opinions regarding marriage, but peer influence does not appear to dominate individual decision-making. Family and societal expectations continue to remain important influences, particularly in relation to cultural values, social norms and expectations regarding the appropriate age for marriage. However, the respondents demonstrate an increasing willingness to make independent decisions while balancing these external influences with their own aspirations and personal beliefs.

Another important conclusion drawn from the study is that **the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students reflects the gradual transformation of women's roles in contemporary society**. Higher education has not only improved women's knowledge and career opportunities but has also strengthened their confidence, decision-making ability and awareness of their rights and responsibilities. As a result, young women increasingly expect marriage to provide emotional security, mutual respect, equality and opportunities for personal growth. They no longer view marriage merely as a traditional obligation or social expectation but as a voluntary and meaningful partnership that should contribute positively to their overall quality of life. This changing perception reflects broader social developments, including women's empowerment, changing family structures, increased workforce participation and evolving gender roles within Indian society.

The study further concludes that **the institution of marriage itself continues to hold significance**, but the expectations associated with marriage have undergone considerable change. The respondents expect marriage to be built on trust, communication, emotional support and equal participation in family responsibilities. They believe that marriage should encourage both partners to achieve their individual goals while building a supportive family environment. This demonstrates a shift from

traditional role-based expectations towards relationship-based expectations centred on companionship, cooperation and shared decision-making.

Overall, the study shows that educated young women are redefining marriage in contemporary society. They seek marriages that respect their individuality, support their ambitions, and provide emotional safety, dignity and equality. Their perceptions are shaped by the interaction of educational experiences, career aspirations, media influences, peer discussions and continuing family and societal expectations. Rather than allowing any single factor to determine their attitudes, respondents appear to adopt a balanced and thoughtful approach when considering marriage, carefully evaluating both its opportunities and challenges before making future decisions.

In conclusion, the present study highlights the ongoing transformation in the perception of marriage among postgraduate women students in Thiruvananthapuram district. It demonstrates that marriage continues to remain an important institution, but its meaning is increasingly being redefined in accordance with contemporary social realities, changing gender roles and the aspirations of educated women. The findings of the study contribute to a better understanding of the evolving attitudes of young women towards marriage and provide useful insights for social workers, educators, counsellors, families and policymakers. Furthermore, the study serves as a valuable contribution to the field of social work research by documenting the changing perspectives of young women and emphasising the importance of promoting gender equality, informed decision-making and supportive social environments that enable women to pursue both meaningful relationships and successful professional lives. Through these findings, the study underscores the need to recognise marriage not merely as a social expectation but as a partnership based on mutual respect, shared responsibility, personal fulfilment and individual choice.

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## **Annexure**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **Section A: Socio-Demographic Details**

- Age : \_\_\_\_\_
- Course/Programme : \_\_\_\_\_
- Religion : \_\_\_\_\_
- Type of Family : Nuclear / Joint
- Area of Residence : Urban / Rural

#### **Section B: Perception of Marriage**

##### **Instructions**

Please select the option from below

##### **Options:**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

#### **Part 1: General Perception Towards Marriage**

1. Marriage is an important part of life.
2. I have a positive view towards marriage.
3. Marriage provides emotional support and security.
4. Marriage is a personal choice.
5. I believe marriage can bring happiness.

6. I look forward to getting married in the future.

## **Part 2: Marriage and Career Goals**

7. I prefer to achieve my career goals before marriage.
8. Marriage may affect my career growth.
9. Career is more important than marriage for me.
10. Marriage creates limitations for working women.
11. I may delay marriage for my career.
12. I believe women can manage both career and marriage successfully.

## **Part 3: Media Exposure and Marriage**

13. Social media influences my views about marriage.
14. Relationship content on Instagram and YouTube affects my thoughts about marriage.
15. Movies and web series shape my expectations about marriage.
16. Social media creates unrealistic ideas about married life.
17. Influencers and celebrities affect how young people view marriage.
18. Negative relationship content on social media creates fear about marriage.

## **Part 4: Peer Influence and Marriage**

19. My friends influence my thoughts about marriage.
20. Discussions with friends affect my opinions about marriage.
21. I compare my future plans with my peers.
22. My peer group influences my decision about marriage.

- 23. Friends' experiences affect my perception of marriage.
- 24. I feel pressure from peers regarding relationships or marriage.

**Part 5: Family and Societal Expectations**

- 25. My family expects me to get married at a certain age.
- 26. Society puts pressure on women to get married.
- 27. Family opinions influence my views on marriage.
- 28. I feel social pressure regarding marriage.
- 29. Marriage is seen as a responsibility by my family.
- 30. Society judges unmarried women negatively.

Considering your personal beliefs, experiences and future plans, how would you describe your overall perception of marriage?

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_