

PERCEPTION OF YOUNGSTERS ON INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE

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DECLARATION

I, **PRIYANKA PADMAKUMAR P S** , hereby declare that the dissertation titled “PERCEPTION OF YOUNGSTERS ON INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE” is based on the original work carried out by me and submitted to the Department of Sociology , Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous) , University of Kerala during the year 2024-2026 towards partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Sociology Degree Examination. It has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship, or other similar title of recognition before.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “PERCEPTION OF YOUNGSTERS ON INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES” is a record of genuine work done by **PRIYANKA PADMAKUMAR P S**, a fourth-semester Master of Sociology student of this college under my supervision and guidance, and that it is hereby approved for submission.

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ABSTRACT

Inter-caste marriage has emerged as an important indicator of social change and equality in contemporary India. Although education, urbanization, globalization, and constitutional provisions have encouraged greater acceptance of inter-caste marriages, caste continues to influence marital decisions through family expectations, cultural traditions, and social norms. While young people are increasingly exposed to diverse social environments that promote equality and individual choice, the practice of inter-caste marriage remains limited due to social pressure and resistance from families and communities.

This research attempts to examine the perceptions of youngsters toward inter-caste marriages in Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala. The study focuses on understanding how socio-demographic factors such as gender, education, place of residence, family type, and socio-economic status influence attitudes toward inter-caste marriage. It also explores the gap between the ideological acceptance of inter-caste marriage and the practical challenges faced by youngsters in exercising their marital choices. The study is guided by Modernization Theory, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, and structural perspectives on caste and social exclusion to understand the interaction between individual agency and traditional social structures. Using a quantitative research approach, data were collected from 61 respondents through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The study examines the influence of education, urbanization, family expectations, and social stigma on youngsters' perceptions of inter-caste marriage. It also analyses the extent to which changing values among youth challenge traditional caste boundaries while identifying the barriers that continue to discourage inter-caste unions. This research contributes to the understanding of changing youth attitudes toward caste and marriage in contemporary India. It highlights that although youngsters increasingly support equality and personal choice in marriage, family opposition, social prestige, and cultural expectations continue to influence their decisions. The study emphasizes the need for greater social awareness, inclusive education, and supportive community interventions to promote acceptance of inter-caste marriages and strengthen social integration in Indian society.

KEY WORDS: Perception, Social change, Inter-caste Marriage, Youngsters

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The sociological landscape of contemporary India continues to be anchored by the "invisible rulebook" of the caste system, a structure that exerts its most profound influence on the institution of marriage. Historically, the mechanism of endogamy—the practice of marrying strictly within one's social group, has served as more than just a tradition; it was a deliberate strategy for maintaining social capital, ritual purity, and lineage (Desai & Dubey, 2012). While our constitutional framework champions individual liberty, the "on-ground" reality remains a complex tug-of-war between legal rights and deep-seated social pressures. For many, deviating from these ancestral scripts still risks significant domestic friction or social ostracization.

However, for Gen Z and younger Millennials, a palpable shift is occurring. The convergence of higher education, professional migration to urban hubs, and the omnipresence of digital subcultures is recalibrating our "social compass." For many of us in the sociology track, "caste" is increasingly viewed through an academic or historical lens rather than a romantic one. We are seeing a transition where affective compatibility—shared vibes, professional synergy, and aligned values is beginning to outweigh the traditional checklist of surnames and sub-castes. This suggests a pivotal move toward individual agency over inherited social hierarchies.

The Structural Weight of Tradition

To analyze this shift, one must acknowledge the historical function of these boundaries. The caste system relied on a rigid hierarchy, and marriage was the primary gatekeeper of these divisions. If endogamy collapses, the structural integrity of the entire system is compromised. This explains the persistent, often aggressive, resistance to inter-caste unions.

Legally, India's Special Marriage Act of 1954 provides a secular pathway for couples to bypass religious and caste-based constraints. Yet, the gap between *de jure* (legal) and *de facto* (actual) practice is wide. In several regions, the concept of "honor" remains inextricably linked to women's matrimonial choices. This creates a paradox for the modern Indian youth: we are legally empowered to choose our partners, yet we remain socially haunted by the potential "cost" of that freedom, which can range from emotional alienation to more severe forms of retribution.

Drivers of Modernity, several catalysts are accelerating this departure from tradition:

Educational Integration: Universities serve as "social melting pots." When you spend years collaborating with peers on complex intellectual tasks, you begin to perceive them as individuals with shared aspirations rather than representatives of a specific social stratum.

Urbanization and Anonymity: The "big city" environment offers a degree of social invisibility. In metropolitan spaces, the scrutiny of the extended kinship network is diluted, giving nuclear families more autonomy.

Media and Narratives: The shift in our "mental scripts" is heavily influenced by pop culture. From Bollywood to global streaming platforms, the prevailing narrative celebrates the "defiant couple," framing the breaking of caste barriers as a pursuit of authentic love.

The Persistence of Social Capital, despite this "modern" veneer, caste hasn't vanished; it has morphed. Matrimonial algorithms still thrive on "caste filters," proving that even the tech-savvy are not immune to traditional preferences. Many young people advocate for inter-caste marriage in the abstract but hesitate when faced with the prospect of familial conflict. The fear of "hurting" parents or damaging the family's social standing remains a formidable barrier.

Furthermore, this experience is not uniform. There is a distinct gendered dimension to this struggle; women are often burdened as the "symbolic carriers" of a community's reputation, making their transgression of caste boundaries more socially expensive. Similarly, the stakes of inter-caste marriage differ vastly depending on whether one belongs to a privileged or a marginalized background.

The Current Inquiry as we look at the data for 2026, the central question of this research is whether we are witnessing a genuine systemic evolution or merely a sophisticated rebranding of old prejudices. By analyzing variables such as educational attainment, geographic location, and the influence of digital echo chambers, we aim to quantify this transition. Ultimately, this study isn't just about matrimonial trends—it's an investigation into whether India is successfully moving toward a more egalitarian social fabric where individual happiness finally trumps the "rulebook" of the past (Verma, 2021). Marriage is one of the oldest and most universal social institutions. It forms the foundation of family life and plays a significant role in regulating social relationships, inheritance, kinship, and the continuity of society. Every society develops its own customs and norms governing marriage, reflecting its cultural values, religious beliefs, and social structure. In India, marriage has traditionally been regarded not merely as a relationship between two individuals but as a sacred union between two families.

It is deeply embedded in customs, traditions, and social expectations, making it one of the strongest institutions through which social order is maintained.

Among the various factors that influence marriage in India, caste has historically occupied a central position. The caste system, which has existed for centuries, has shaped social interactions, occupational divisions, and patterns of marriage. One of the defining features of the caste system is endogamy, the practice of marrying within one's own caste or sub-caste. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar identified endogamy as one of the most important mechanisms through which the caste system has been preserved across generations. By restricting marriage within caste boundaries, communities have maintained social hierarchy, ritual purity, cultural identity, and inherited privileges.

Although the Constitution of India guarantees equality, freedom, and protection against discrimination, caste continues to influence many aspects of everyday life. Social interactions, educational opportunities, political affiliations, residential patterns, and marriage decisions continue to reflect caste identities in different forms. While legal provisions have created opportunities for greater social equality, deeply rooted social attitudes often limit the practical realization of these constitutional ideals. Consequently, marriage remains one of the strongest areas where caste continues to exercise considerable influence.

India has undergone remarkable social, economic, and cultural transformations during the past few decades. Globalization, urbanization, industrialization, technological advancement, expansion of higher education, and increasing migration have significantly altered the lifestyles and aspirations of young people. These changes have created opportunities for interaction among individuals from diverse social, religious, linguistic, and caste backgrounds. Universities, workplaces, coaching centres, professional institutions, and digital platforms have become spaces where youngsters build friendships and relationships that often transcend traditional social boundaries.

The increasing exposure to diverse cultures and ideas has encouraged many young people to question long-standing social practices. Values such as equality, individual freedom, human rights, gender justice, and personal autonomy are becoming more prominent among the younger generation. Consequently, partner selection is gradually shifting from family-controlled arrangements toward individual choice in many urban and semi-urban contexts. Shared educational background, emotional compatibility, professional aspirations, and mutual understanding are increasingly viewed as more important than caste identity by many young adults. Despite these changes, the influence of caste has not disappeared. Instead, caste has

adapted to modern social conditions. In many families, parents continue to consider caste compatibility as one of the primary criteria while selecting a life partner for their children. Marriage is frequently viewed not only as a personal relationship but also as an alliance between families sharing similar customs, traditions, values, and social status. Consequently, many youngsters experience a conflict between their personal preferences and their obligations toward family expectations.

The persistence of caste in marriage demonstrates that modernization alone does not automatically eliminate traditional social structures. Rather, traditional institutions often coexist with modern values, creating a complex social reality. Youngsters may support equality in educational institutions, workplaces, and public spaces while simultaneously accepting caste-based restrictions in matters of marriage. This contradiction reflects the continuing influence of socialization, family norms, community expectations, and cultural traditions.

Inter-caste marriage represents one of the most significant indicators of social integration in a democratic society. When individuals belonging to different caste groups marry, they challenge inherited social boundaries and contribute to reducing social distance between communities. Such marriages encourage mutual understanding, weaken rigid caste identities, and promote social cohesion. Sociologists have therefore regarded inter-caste marriage as an important instrument for reducing caste discrimination and promoting equality.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar strongly argued that the annihilation of caste could not be achieved without breaking the practice of caste endogamy. According to him, inter-caste marriage serves as one of the most effective means of dismantling caste barriers because it creates kinship ties that transcend inherited social divisions. His vision continues to influence contemporary discussions on caste, equality, and social justice in India.

To promote social integration, the Government of India and several State Governments have introduced schemes encouraging inter-caste marriages. Financial assistance programmes, legal protection under the Special Marriage Act, 1954, and various welfare measures have been implemented to support couples choosing to marry outside their caste. Nevertheless, the number of inter-caste marriages remains relatively limited compared with caste-endogamous marriages. This indicates that legal reforms alone cannot transform deeply rooted social attitudes without corresponding changes in cultural values and public perception.

Family continues to play a decisive role in marriage decisions. Parents often view marriage as an event affecting the honour, reputation, and social standing of the entire family. Consequently, youngsters choosing partners from different caste backgrounds may face emotional pressure, opposition, social isolation, or even threats of violence. In some parts of India, honour-based crimes continue to occur when individuals challenge caste norms through marriage. Such incidents reveal the continuing strength of caste ideology despite constitutional guarantees of equality. Gender further complicates the issue of inter-caste marriage. Women frequently experience greater restrictions regarding partner selection because they are often viewed as carriers of family honour and cultural identity. Their decisions are subjected to greater scrutiny, and they may encounter stronger resistance than men when choosing partners outside their caste. Thus, the experiences of inter-caste marriage cannot be understood without considering the intersection of caste and gender.

The expansion of digital technology has introduced new dimensions to partner selection. Social media platforms, online dating applications, and digital communication have enabled interactions among people belonging to diverse social backgrounds. These platforms provide opportunities for developing relationships based on common interests rather than traditional identities. However, digital spaces also reproduce caste boundaries. Matrimonial websites commonly include caste as one of the primary search filters, allowing users to select partners within their own communities. Thus, technology simultaneously promotes social openness and reinforces traditional social divisions.

Educational institutions occupy a particularly significant position in shaping youth attitudes toward inter-caste marriage. Colleges and universities expose students to diverse perspectives through classroom learning, extracurricular activities, and peer interactions. Sociology, political science, law, and other social science disciplines encourage critical thinking regarding inequality, discrimination, and constitutional values. Such educational experiences often influence students to question traditional prejudices. Nevertheless, intellectual acceptance does not always translate into practical behaviour, especially when family expectations conflict with personal beliefs.

Urbanization has also contributed to changing marriage patterns. Metropolitan cities provide greater anonymity, occupational mobility, and social diversity than rural areas. Young professionals living independently may enjoy greater autonomy in selecting life partners compared with those residing in closely knit rural communities. However, urban residence

alone does not guarantee acceptance of inter-caste marriage, as family influence frequently extends beyond geographical boundaries.

Media has emerged as another important factor influencing public opinion. Films, television programmes, newspapers, and digital content increasingly portray inter-caste relationships as expressions of equality, courage, and personal freedom. Positive media representations have encouraged public discussion on caste discrimination and individual rights. At the same time, reports of honour killings, family conflicts, and social exclusion remind society that caste remains a significant source of social inequality.

The present study, "Perception of Youngsters on Inter-Caste Marriages," seeks to examine how contemporary youth understand, evaluate, and respond to the idea of marriage across caste boundaries. It aims to identify the social, cultural, educational, familial, and economic factors that influence their attitudes. The study also attempts to explore whether modernization has genuinely transformed young people's perceptions or whether traditional caste values continue to shape their decisions. By analysing these perceptions, the study contributes to a better understanding of the changing relationship between caste, marriage, and social change in contemporary India.

Ultimately, this research extends beyond the institution of marriage. It seeks to understand the future trajectory of Indian society itself. If the younger generation increasingly values equality, mutual respect, and individual choice over inherited caste identities, it would indicate meaningful progress toward a more inclusive and democratic social order. Conversely, if caste continues to determine one of the most intimate decisions of human life, it suggests that traditional hierarchies remain deeply embedded despite rapid modernization. Examining the perceptions of youngsters, therefore, provides an important window into the evolving nature of caste, family, and social transformation in twenty-first-century India.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the contemporary Indian landscape, the institution of marriage remains one of the most resilient strongholds of the caste system. While the narrative of India as a burgeoning global superpower and a hub for technological innovation dominates the headlines, the sociological reality of our domestic fabric reveals a persistent adherence to ancestral hierarchies. Caste is far from a historical relic; it continues to function as a primary arbiter of intimacy and kinship. Despite decades of constitutional advocacy and social reform, endogamy—the practice of marrying strictly within one's social group—remains the "gold standard" for the Indian family unit. Research by Desai and Vanneman (2015) and Thorat and Newman (2010) underscores a

critical sociological finding: economic mobility does not automatically translate to social liberalization; caste continues to exert a profound influence over the most private of life decisions.

The Divergence of Law and Social Reality

While inter-caste unions are legally safeguarded under the Special Marriage Act (1954), for a couple navigating the complexities of the ground reality, the law often feels like a distant abstraction compared to the visceral pressures of their immediate social environment. Choosing a partner from a different caste is frequently framed not as an exercise of individual agency, but as an act of subversion or a betrayal of family "honor." This transgression of traditional boundaries often precipitates severe social sanctions, ranging from emotional coercion and domestic boycotts to the extreme manifestation of "honor-based" violence in more conservative enclaves (Khora, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2023). There exists a profound structural gap between our egalitarian constitutional promises and the entrenched expectations of kin and community.

Institutional Interventions and Their Limitations

The Indian state has attempted to bridge this divide through various policy instruments, such as the Dr. Ambedkar Scheme for Social Integration. These initiatives offer financial incentives to couples as a mechanism to encourage the dismantling of caste barriers. However, these top-down incentives have struggled to achieve significant momentum. Social acceptance remains disproportionately low, particularly in rural sectors where community "honor" and local customs carry more weight than legislative mandates (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2023). This highlights a fundamental sociological truth: social change cannot be merely "incentivized" through fiscal policy; it requires a systemic shift in the collective consciousness.

The Perspective of the Youth: Change or Continuity?

As researchers within this generation, it is imperative to scrutinize how the youth—often idealized as "agents of change"—negotiate this friction. We represent the most educated demographic in Indian history, characterized by high digital literacy and exposure to global discourses on egalitarianism. Superficially, it may appear that caste has lost its salience. Yet, a closer examination reveals that the gravity of family, tradition, and internalized peer pressure remains potent. Allendorf and Pandian (2016) and studies by the ICSSR (2022) suggest that

many of us are trapped in a sociological "tug-of-war" between individualistic desires and filial loyalty.

The persistence of caste is perhaps most visible in our "modern" digital tools. Matrimonial platforms, despite their advanced algorithms, often prioritize "Caste" as the primary filter, effectively utilizing modern technology to reinforce traditional divisions. While many young Indians embrace social diversity in their professional and platonic circles, they often revert to the path of least resistance when it comes to marriage to avoid domestic volatility. This internalized casteism is subtle but structurally robust, leading us to question: is our generation truly more progressive, or have we simply become more adept at camouflaging our biases within a modern lifestyle?

The Objective of the Inquiry

Deciphering the authentic perceptions of the youth is essential for forecasting the trajectory of Indian society. Are we progressing toward the "annihilation of caste" as envisioned by B.R. Ambedkar, or are we merely carrying the historical baggage of previous generations into the future (Verma, 2021)? If the youth continue to uphold these traditional boundaries, the vision of a truly inclusive and caste-free society remains an elusive ideal.

This study seeks to interrogate these contradictions. The goal is to move beyond the superficial "theoretical support" for inter-caste marriage and instead analyze the practical fears and systemic pressures that dictate actual behavior. By examining these perceptions, we aim to determine if the next generation is genuinely dismantling social hierarchies or merely modernizing their prejudices. This inquiry is an attempt to map where our generation stands in the protracted struggle for social equality.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this sociological inquiry lies in its attempt to map the shifting sands of the Indian social structure through the lens of its most dynamic demographic: the youth. While the Indian Constitution formally abolished untouchability and caste-based discrimination decades ago, the sociological reality persists: caste remains a "living" institution. It has proved remarkably resilient, adapting to modernity rather than dissipating. Marriage, in particular, serves as the final stronghold of ritual purity and community boundaries. By focusing on how youngsters navigate inter-caste unions, this research interrogates whether we are genuinely progressing toward the "annihilation of caste" or if we are simply dressing ancestral prejudices in the aesthetic of the 21st century.

As a researcher, I view this study as far more than an academic exercise; it is an exploration of the fundamental tension between individual agency and structural constraint. The youth of India are currently situated at a unique historical crossroads where globalized values of romantic autonomy and personal choice are in constant friction with traditionalist expectations of "family honor" and community endogamy. This study captures that vital tension, providing a snapshot of how the next generation of decision-makers navigates the pressure to conform versus the impulse to transcend narrow identities.

Social Progress and Democratic Vibrancy

Furthermore, the significance of this research extends to its function as a barometer for India's democratic health. A society that champions secularism and equality within its legislative framework, yet practices exclusion and hierarchy within the private domestic sphere, is a society in a state of cognitive dissonance. By analyzing youth perceptions, we can gauge the extent to which the values of individual liberty and secularism have actually trickled down into the lived experiences of citizens. If the youth—notwithstanding their educational capital—continue to prioritize caste over character, it signals an urgent need for deep introspection regarding our pedagogical and social systems.

The study also contributes to the discourse on "Social Integration." Inter-caste marriage is frequently cited as the most potent tool for diluting the rigid boundaries of the caste hierarchy. When individuals from diverse backgrounds unite, they construct a shared space that fundamentally challenges the foundations of social stratification. This research will highlight whether the contemporary generation views marriage as a mechanism for social bridge-building or merely as a transaction to be performed within the safety of their own social strata.

Policy Implications and Institutional Impact

From a practical and policy-oriented perspective, these findings offer critical insights for government bodies and non-governmental organizations. Currently, various state schemes—such as the Dr. Ambedkar Scheme offer fiscal incentives for inter-caste unions, yet the uptake remains disproportionately low due to pervasive social anxiety. This study aims to provide the "why" behind the data. By decoding the specific psychological hurdles—such as the fear of parental abandonment or peer-group ostracization—social institutions can design more empathetic and effective interventions. Rather than focusing solely on financial aid, the goal should shift toward creating robust support systems that empower young couples to exercise their agency.

Moreover, these insights can serve as a guide for curriculum development in higher education. If the research reveals that deep-seated prejudices persist among the highly educated, it indicates that our education system is prioritizing "technical literacy" over "social liberation." Consequently, this study can advocate for a more socially conscious pedagogy that encourages students to critically deconstruct traditional norms and embrace a more inclusive national identity.

Redefining Modernity and Tradition

Finally, this study enriches the broader sociological discourse on the intersection of Modernity and Tradition in 21st-century India. In an era characterized by matrimonial algorithms and "caste-no-bar" hashtags, there is a superficial assumption that caste is fading. However, this inquiry intends to uncover the subtle, nuanced ways in which caste continues to assert its presence in urban dating and digital spaces.

Ultimately, the significance of this study is rooted in the pursuit of a more egalitarian and inclusive India. By centering the voices of the youth, we can identify the fractures within the caste system and strive toward a future where the choice of a life partner is dictated not by the circumstances of one's birth, but by mutual respect and shared values. This is not merely an investigation into matrimonial trends; it is an audit of the future of Indian democracy itself. The present study, *Perception of Youngsters on Inter-Caste Marriages*, is significant because it examines one of the most important social issues in contemporary Indian society. Although India has made remarkable progress in education, science, technology, economic development, and democratic governance, caste continues to influence many aspects of social life, particularly marriage. Marriage remains one of the strongest institutions through which caste identity, social status, cultural traditions, and family values are preserved. Therefore, understanding the perceptions of youngsters toward inter-caste marriages is essential for assessing the extent of social transformation taking place in modern India.

Young people represent the future of society and play a vital role in shaping social attitudes and cultural practices. They are the most educated, technologically connected, and globally exposed generation in Indian history. Through higher education, employment, migration, and digital communication, they interact with people from different caste, religious, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. These experiences have the potential to reduce prejudice and encourage more inclusive attitudes. At the same time, many youngsters continue to remain influenced by family traditions, cultural expectations, and community norms. This study therefore provides

valuable insights into the relationship between modernization and the persistence of traditional social structures.

One of the major sociological contributions of this study is that it examines the continuing relevance of caste in contemporary India. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and decades of social reform, caste continues to influence social interactions, political participation, educational opportunities, residential patterns, and marriage decisions. Marriage remains one of the most visible areas where caste identity is maintained across generations. By studying youngsters' perceptions, the research helps to understand whether caste is gradually losing its significance or whether it continues to shape the attitudes and behaviour of the younger generation in subtle and indirect ways.

The study also contributes to the understanding of social change in India. Sociologists have long debated whether modernization leads to the weakening of traditional institutions or whether traditional values adapt themselves to changing social conditions. Globalization, industrialization, urbanization, higher education, mass media, and technological development have transformed many aspects of Indian society. However, these changes have not affected all social institutions equally. While education and employment have become increasingly merit-based, marriage often continues to remain influenced by caste considerations. This research helps to explain how traditional values and modern aspirations coexist within contemporary society.

Another important significance of the study lies in its contribution to the field of youth studies. Youngsters today are exposed to diverse ideas regarding equality, democracy, human rights, secularism, and social justice. Educational institutions encourage critical thinking and constitutional values, while digital media exposes young people to global perspectives on relationships and marriage. Despite this exposure, many youngsters continue to experience pressure from parents, relatives, and communities regarding partner selection. This study explores how young people negotiate these competing influences and how they balance personal choice with family expectations. The research is also significant because it highlights the role of family in shaping social attitudes. Family remains one of the most important agents of socialization in Indian society. From childhood onwards, individuals learn cultural values, traditions, customs, and social norms within the family environment. Attitudes toward caste and marriage are often transmitted across generations through family interactions. By examining youngsters' perceptions, the study provides a better understanding of how family

influences continue to shape marriage decisions even in an era characterized by modernization and individualism.

Another important contribution of this study relates to gender. The experiences of inter-caste marriage are often different for men and women. Women frequently face greater restrictions regarding partner selection because they are viewed as protectors of family honour and cultural identity. Families may exercise stricter control over daughters than sons, leading to unequal opportunities in exercising personal choice. The study therefore contributes to understanding the intersection between caste and gender and highlights the need for greater gender equality within family and marriage institutions.

The findings of this research will also be useful for educational institutions. Schools, colleges, and universities play a major role in promoting constitutional values such as equality, liberty, fraternity, secularism, and social justice. If the study reveals that caste prejudice continues to exist even among educated youngsters, it suggests that education should place greater emphasis on value-based learning, human rights education, and social inclusion. Educational institutions can utilize these findings to design awareness programmes, seminars, workshops, and discussions that encourage students to critically examine caste discrimination and promote respect for diversity.

The study has considerable policy relevance. Governments at both the Central and State levels have introduced various schemes to encourage inter-caste marriages and promote social integration. Financial assistance programmes, legal safeguards, counselling services, and awareness campaigns have been implemented to support couples who choose to marry across caste boundaries. However, the success of these programmes depends largely on public acceptance. By identifying the factors that encourage or discourage youngsters from supporting inter-caste marriage, this study provides valuable information that can assist policymakers in designing more effective social welfare programmes.

The findings will also be beneficial for sociologists, social workers, counsellors, psychologists, and non-governmental organizations working in the fields of family welfare, youth development, gender equality, and social justice. These professionals frequently encounter individuals and families experiencing conflict over marriage decisions. Understanding the perceptions and concerns of youngsters enables them to provide more effective counselling, mediation, and support services for families and couples facing social pressure. Another important significance of this study lies in promoting social integration. Inter-caste marriages have long been regarded by sociologists and social reformers as an effective means of reducing

caste barriers and promoting national unity. When individuals from different caste backgrounds establish marital relationships, they create opportunities for increased social interaction, mutual understanding, and cultural exchange. Such relationships contribute to weakening rigid social boundaries and fostering greater acceptance of diversity. By exploring youngsters' attitudes toward inter-caste marriages, this research provides insight into the future prospects of social integration in India.

The study is equally relevant for understanding the changing nature of marriage itself. Traditionally, marriage in India was largely arranged by families based on caste, religion, economic status, and kinship considerations. In recent decades, however, increasing educational opportunities, urbanization, and economic independence have enabled many young people to participate actively in selecting their life partners. Romantic relationships, love marriages, and inter-caste marriages have become more visible than before. This study examines whether these changing marriage patterns represent a genuine transformation of social values or merely coexist with continuing caste preferences.

The research also contributes to the academic discipline of sociology. It enriches the existing literature on caste, family, marriage, youth, modernization, and social change by providing empirical evidence regarding contemporary youth perceptions. Previous studies have examined caste discrimination, marriage patterns, and social stratification extensively. However, relatively fewer studies focus specifically on how today's youngsters perceive inter-caste marriages within the context of globalization, digital communication, and changing family structures. This research therefore fills an important gap in sociological knowledge and provides a useful reference for future researchers.

Kerala provides a particularly meaningful context for this study. The state has a distinguished history of social reform movements aimed at reducing caste discrimination and promoting equality. Reformers such as Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Chattampi Swamikal, and many others challenged social inequality and advocated human dignity and equal opportunity. Kerala also enjoys high literacy, better educational outcomes, and improved human development indicators compared to many other Indian states. Nevertheless, caste continues to influence marriage practices in many communities. By examining youngsters' perceptions in this social context, the study contributes to understanding how progressive social development coexists with traditional cultural practices.

The findings of the study may also encourage public discussion regarding constitutional values. The Constitution of India emphasizes equality, liberty, fraternity, justice, and human dignity. However, these principles can become meaningful only when they are reflected in everyday social relationships. Marriage provides an important context for evaluating whether constitutional ideals have been internalized by society. If youngsters increasingly support inter-caste marriage, it indicates movement toward greater acceptance of equality and social inclusion. Conversely, continued resistance would suggest the need for stronger educational and social interventions.

This research also contributes to the achievement of sustainable social development. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), emphasize the importance of equality, inclusion, and social justice. By promoting understanding of caste-related attitudes and encouraging acceptance of diversity, the findings of this study indirectly support these broader developmental objectives.

Finally, the significance of this study extends beyond academic inquiry. It represents an attempt to understand the changing aspirations, values, and identities of the younger generation in contemporary India. The perceptions of today's youth will influence the future direction of Indian society, shaping family structures, social relationships, and cultural practices for decades to come. Whether youngsters continue to uphold traditional caste boundaries or embrace greater social equality will determine the pace and nature of India's social transformation. Therefore, this study is not merely an examination of attitudes toward marriage but an exploration of the broader prospects for equality, democracy, and social justice in the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, the study is significant because it provides valuable theoretical, academic, social, educational, policy, and practical insights into one of the most enduring social issues in India. It contributes to the understanding of caste, marriage, youth, and modernization while offering useful recommendations for educators, policymakers, researchers, social workers, and civil society organizations. Most importantly, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing pursuit of an inclusive society in which marriage is guided by mutual respect, equality, and personal choice rather than inherited social divisions.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the conceptual and empirical literature related to the perceptions of youngsters toward inter-caste marriages in India. Inter-caste marriage has long been considered a significant social phenomenon that challenges the traditional caste system and promotes social integration. However, despite constitutional support and modernization, caste-based endogamy continues to dominate marital practices in Indian society.

The review is organized thematically into five major areas: (1) perceptions of youth toward inter-caste marriage, (2) gender dimensions and family resistance, (3) changing patterns of marriage and decision-making, (4) structural persistence of caste and social barriers, and (5) consequences and lived experiences of inter-caste couples. Together, these themes provide a comprehensive framework to understand how young people negotiate between modern values and traditional norms in the context of marriage.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.2.1 Emerging Trends in Inter-Caste Marriage among Youth

Recent empirical studies highlight a noticeable shift in marriage patterns among young people, particularly in relation to caste boundaries. While caste endogamy continues to be a dominant norm in Indian society, younger generations are increasingly questioning these traditions and moving toward more individualistic and flexible approaches to partner selection. This indicates the emergence of new trends where personal choice, compatibility, and emotional connection are gradually gaining importance over rigid caste considerations.

Kumar et al. (2024), in their study conducted in Meerut, found that inter-caste marriage is increasingly viewed by youth as a means of promoting national integration and reducing caste-based divisions. Similarly, Kumar and Gupta (2024) observed that nearly 70% of youth define marriage as a “mental and emotional union,” emphasizing compatibility rather than caste identity. Bhale (2013) also reports a comparable shift, with a majority supporting the idea of marriage beyond caste restrictions. Supporting these findings, Sandhya and Somashekarappa (2019) found that over 70% of both male and female students expressed no caste preference, reflecting a growing trend toward caste-neutral attitudes among educated youth.

Despite these emerging trends, a clear gap exists between changing attitudes and actual practices. While youth show increasing ideological acceptance of inter-caste marriage, its

realization remains limited due to social norms, family expectations, and cultural pressures. Thus, inter-caste marriage among youth reflects a transitional phase, where progressive ideas coexist with deeply rooted traditional structure.

2.2.2 Gender Dimensions and Family Resistance

A recurring theme in the literature is the gendered nature of acceptance and resistance toward inter-caste marriage. Kumar, Ahmed, and Kumar (2024) found a stark disparity in parental acceptance, with over 80% of female respondents facing opposition compared to only 46% of males. This reflects the persistence of patriarchal control over women's marital choices within traditional family structures.

Bhale (2013) and Kumar and Gupta (2024) similarly highlight that women often have less decision-making power and are more vulnerable to social restrictions. Many female respondents expressed concerns that their inter-caste marriage could negatively affect their siblings' marital prospects, indicating the collective nature of family honor and reputation.

Family opposition emerges as a central barrier across studies. Concerns regarding loss of social prestige (Gharana/Khandan), fear of social boycott, and community pressure discourage youth from pursuing inter-caste unions. Even when individuals ideologically support such marriages, they often hesitate due to the fear of disrupting familial and social relationships.

2.2.3 Changing Patterns of Marriage and Decision-Making

The literature suggests that marriage practices in India are not undergoing a complete transformation but rather a gradual modification. Allendorf and Pandian (2016) describe this process as "hybridization," where young individuals increasingly participate in partner selection while still involving their parents.

Their study indicates that fully independent "self-choice" marriages remain rare, constituting less than 10% of marriages. Instead, joint decision-making between parents and children is becoming more common, particularly in urban areas. Supporting this, studies in South Asian contexts show that a significant proportion of youth prefer collaborative decision-making, balancing personal choice with familial approval.

Even among those who support inter-caste marriage, there is a strong tendency to seek parental consent, reflecting the continued importance of family structures. Thus, while individual agency is expanding, it remains embedded within traditional frameworks.

2.2.4 Structural Persistence of Caste and Social Barriers

Despite changing perceptions, the caste system continues to exert a strong structural influence on marital practices. Verma and Srivastava (2021) argue that caste-based exclusion is deeply rooted in unequal access to resources and opportunities, which reinforces social hierarchies.

Khora (2025) further emphasizes the structural limits of inter-caste marriage, suggesting that caste operates as a powerful institutional force that restricts individual choice. Even when youth attempt to challenge caste norms, they often face hostility, social exclusion, and in some cases, violent backlash.

Additionally, the persistence of practices such as honour killings and community sanctions acts as a deterrent to inter-caste unions. These findings indicate that while modernization and education have influenced attitudes, they have not fundamentally dismantled caste-based structures.

2.2.5 Consequences and Lived Experiences of Inter-Caste Couples

Studies focusing on the lived experiences of inter-caste couples reveal the complex social consequences of such unions. Kumar, Ahmed, and Kumar (2024) introduce the concept of “familial disorganization,” where inter-caste marriages disrupt kinship networks and affect the marriage prospects of other family members.

Research in South Asian contexts, including studies by Pariyar, shows that couples often face initial rejection, social isolation, and displacement. Many are forced to relocate or remain hidden immediately after marriage to avoid conflict. However, over time, gradual acceptance may occur, often facilitated by mediators or life events such as childbirth.

Furthermore, women in inter-caste marriages face additional challenges in adapting to new cultural and familial environments. The adjustment process is often difficult during the initial years but tends to stabilize over time as relationships evolve.

These studies suggest that inter-caste marriage is not merely a personal choice but a social process involving negotiation, resistance, and gradual normalization within the family and community.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts a multi-theoretical approach to critically examine the perceptions of youngsters toward inter-caste marriages and the factors influencing their attitudes and choices. The complexities of caste, family, and individual agency require a framework that goes beyond personal opinions and explores socio-cultural, psychological, and structural dimensions. In this

context, three key theoretical perspectives guide the analysis: Modernization Theory, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, and Structural perspectives on caste and social exclusion.

2.3.1 Modernization Theory

Modernization theory posits that social change occurs through processes such as industrialization, urbanization, and the spread of education, which gradually transform traditional beliefs and practices (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Giddens, 1991). It suggests that as societies modernize, rigid social structures like caste-based endogamy begin to weaken, giving way to more individualistic and egalitarian forms of social relationships.

In the context of inter-caste marriage, this framework helps explain the increasing openness among youngsters toward choosing partners based on personal compatibility rather than caste identity. Education and exposure to diverse social environments enable youth to critically question traditional norms and adopt more progressive attitudes. As a result, inter-caste marriage is often viewed as a step toward social equality and national integration.

However, modernization does not lead to a complete disappearance of traditional practices. Scholars argue that elements of tradition often coexist with modern values, creating a hybrid pattern of social behavior (Dube, 1997). Thus, while youngsters may ideologically support inter-caste marriage, their choices continue to be influenced by family expectations and cultural norms. This theoretical perspective helps in understanding both the change and continuity in youth perceptions toward inter-caste marriage.

2.3.2 Pierre Bourdieu's Concept of Habitus

The study also draws from Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which refers to the internalized dispositions, values, and perceptions shaped by an individual's social background and life experiences (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus is influenced by factors such as caste, class, family upbringing, and cultural environment, and it plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals perceive the world and make decisions within it.

In the context of inter-caste marriage, habitus helps explain how youngsters' attitudes are not formed in isolation but are deeply embedded within the social structures they grow up in. Even when young people express progressive views supporting inter-caste marriage, their choices are often influenced by internalized norms related to caste identity, family honor, and social acceptance. These ingrained beliefs create a tension between personal preferences and societal expectations.

Bourdieu's theory highlights that social practices, including marriage choices, tend to reproduce existing social structures. Thus, despite increased exposure to modern ideas, many youngsters hesitate to enter inter-caste marriages due to fear of social exclusion, loss of family support, and community pressure. This can be understood as a form of symbolic constraint, where individuals unconsciously conform to established norms.

Furthermore, habitus explains the gap between ideological acceptance and practical behavior. While youth may support the idea of caste equality, their actions often reflect the enduring influence of traditional values. This theoretical perspective allows the study to critically examine how deeply rooted social conditioning shapes the perceptions and decisions of youngsters regarding inter-caste marriage.

2.3.3 Structural Perspective on Caste and Social Exclusion

Finally, this study is grounded in structural perspectives on caste, which view caste as a deeply entrenched system of social, economic, and symbolic hierarchy. Scholars such as B.R. Ambedkar, Gopal Guru, and Sharmila Rege argue that caste operates not only through visible forms of exclusion but also through everyday practices and norms that regulate social relationships, access to resources, and individual identity. These structures define boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, shaping who is accepted within social groups and who is marginalized.

In the context of inter-caste marriage, this perspective helps explain why such unions are often resisted despite increasing awareness and legal support. Caste continues to function through family systems, kinship networks, and community expectations that strongly promote endogamy. Young individuals who attempt to challenge these norms frequently face social stigma, family opposition, and, in extreme cases, social exclusion or violence. This indicates that inter-caste marriage is not merely a personal decision but a challenge to the existing social order.

This theoretical approach enables the study to critically examine how structural constraints limit the freedom of youngsters in making marital choices. It highlights that even when youth express progressive attitudes toward inter-caste marriage, their decisions are shaped by deeply rooted social pressures and institutional barriers. Thus, the persistence of caste-based exclusion continues to influence both perceptions and practices, restricting the full realization of equality in marriage.

2.3.4 An Integrated Lens: Intersectionality in Practice

Taken together, these theoretical frameworks enable the study to adopt an intersectional approach to understand youngsters' perceptions of inter-caste marriage. It recognizes that individual attitudes are not formed in isolation but are shaped by the intersection of caste, gender, family background, education, and socio-economic conditions. These factors interact in complex ways, influencing how young people perceive, negotiate, and respond to the idea of inter-caste marriage within their social context.

This integrated approach moves the analysis beyond a simple understanding of acceptance or rejection and encourages a more nuanced exploration of perception as both a personal and socially conditioned process. It raises important questions: Are youngsters free to choose their partners, or are their decisions shaped by family expectations? Do progressive attitudes translate into actual practice? To what extent do social norms continue to regulate individual choices?

Through this theoretical lens, the study aims to examine inter-caste marriage not just as a personal decision but as a site where modern aspirations and traditional structures intersect. It highlights how these interactions can either challenge or reinforce existing caste hierarchies, thereby shaping the possibilities for social change and equality in contemporary society

2.4 RESEARCH GAP

While a substantial body of literature exists on inter-caste marriage in India, much of it focuses on general attitudinal trends and theoretical discussions on social change. Several studies highlight increasing ideological acceptance of inter-caste unions among youth, particularly in urban and educated settings. However, there is a lack of systematic quantitative analysis that examines the relationship between socio-demographic variables-such as gender, caste background, education, and family structure-and attitudes toward inter-caste marriage in specific local contexts. By focusing on the measurable gap between perception and practice, existing research still falls short in empirically capturing how factors like family resistance, social pressure, and concerns about social prestige influence individual decision-making. Although previous studies acknowledge gender differences in acceptance and resistance, they do not sufficiently provide statistically grounded comparisons between male and female respondents. This limits a clear understanding of how deeply these social constraints shape actual marital choices despite apparent ideological support.

This study seeks to address these gaps by:

- Conducting a quantitative analysis of youth perceptions toward inter-caste marriage in a specific study area;
- Examining the influence of socio-demographic variables on attitudes and preferences;
- Measuring the gap between ideological acceptance and practical willingness through structured data;
- Analysing gender differences in perception, acceptance, and perceived barriers using empirical evidence.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has established the conceptual and analytical foundation for the present study by reviewing relevant literature, presenting key themes, and identifying critical gaps in existing research. The literature on inter-caste marriage indicates a gradual shift in attitudes among youth, particularly influenced by education, urbanization, and exposure to modern values. However, these studies consistently reveal a contradiction between ideological acceptance and actual practice, shaped by factors such as family resistance, social norms, and concerns related to caste and social prestige. The review also highlights the gendered nature of these dynamics, with women often facing greater restrictions in matters of marital choice.

By drawing on these insights, the study adopts a quantitative approach to systematically examine patterns, relationships, and variations in attitudes toward inter-caste marriage. The identified research gap emphasizes the need for statistically grounded, context-specific analysis that captures the influence of socio-demographic variables such as gender, caste, and family background. It also underlines the importance of measuring the gap between perception and practice through empirical data, rather than relying solely on theoretical or descriptive accounts. This provides a clear direction for the subsequent chapters, which will detail the research methodology and present findings based on quantitative data collected from respondents in the selected study area.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study, titled "Perception of Youngsters on Inter-Caste Marriages," seeks to explore the views and perceptions of youngsters aged 18–35 years regarding inter-caste marriages. As social attitudes towards marriage continue to change due to education, urbanization, and modernization, it is important to understand how young people perceive inter-caste marriages in the contemporary social context. To accomplish the objectives of the study, a quantitative research approach was adopted. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from the selected respondents, and the data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. This chapter describes the research design, study area, population, sampling technique, sample size, sources of data, data collection tools, methods of data analysis, and ethical considerations followed throughout the research

3.2 TITLE OF THE STUDY

PERCEPTION OF YOUNGSTERS ON INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study adopts a quantitative approach using a deductive method to examine attitudes and perceptions towards inter-caste marriages through structured questionnaire and statistical analysis

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher has chosen a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach. This design is appropriate for this study as it allows the researcher to describe the existing mindset and attitudes of the youth regarding inter-caste marriage without influencing the variables.

3.5 SAMPLING

The researcher has used a convenient sampling method to select the participants. This method was chosen to effectively reach out to the target demographic, specifically college –going students and young working professionals who are most relevant to the study of changing martial preferences.

3.5.1 Sampling size

For this study, the researcher has selected a sample size of 61 youngsters. This size is considered manageable for a student research project while still providing enough data points to identify significant trends and varied opinions within the selected age group.

3.6 TOOL OF DATA COLLECTION

The researcher has developed a structured questionnaire as the primary tool for data collection. The questionnaire consists of a mix of demographic questions and Likert-scale statements designed to measure the intensity of the respondent's agreement or disagreement with various aspects of inter- caste marriage.

3.7 AREA OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted among youngsters in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. The researcher focuses on understanding the attitudes, perceptions, and acceptance of inter-caste marriages among young people in the district.

3.8 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of this research is to study the perception of young individuals towards inter-caste marriage in the contemporary social context

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the attitude of youngsters towards inter-caste marriage.
2. To identify the various social and cultural factors influencing their perception.
3. To examine regional and gender-based differences in how youngsters view these unions.
4. To evaluate the role of education and urbanization in shaping modern perceptions of marriage.
5. To examine how inter-caste marriage affects the socio-economic status of the individuals involved.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively and presented using diagrammatic representations for easy interpretation and understanding.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

- This chapter presents the quantitative analysis of data collected from youngsters regarding inter-caste marriages.
- Data were collected through a structured questionnaire.
- The collected data were analyzed using quantitative methods.
- Findings are presented through charts, graphs, and other diagrammatic representations.
- The analysis helps to understand youngster's attitudes and perceptions towards inter-caste marriages.
- Diagrammatic presentation enables easy interpretation and understanding of the results.

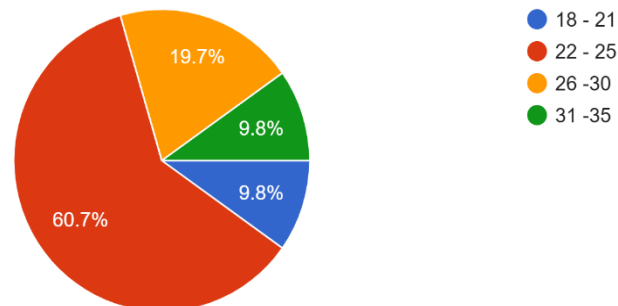
4.2 HYPOTHESES

- There is a significant relationship between the level of education and the acceptance of inter-caste marriage among youth.
- There is a significant difference between male and female youngsters in their perception of inter-caste marriage, with males being more accepting than females in societies with traditional gender roles.
- Youngsters from well-off families are more open to inter-caste marriage than youngsters from poorer families.
- Urban youth are more accepting of inter-caste marriage than rural youth, indicating a significant difference in their perceptions.

4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

4.3.1 AGE

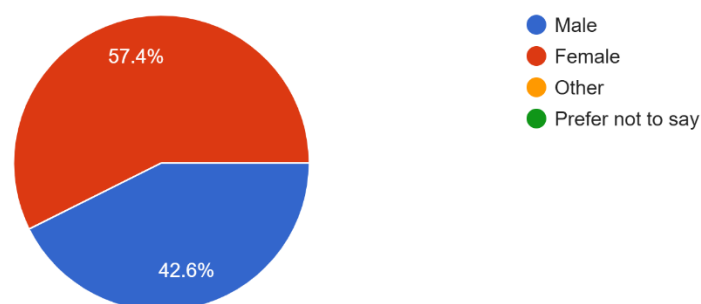
Figure 4.3.1 Age Distribution



The age distribution of the respondents shows that the majority (60.7%) belonged to the 22–25 years age group, followed by 26–30 years (19.7%). Respondents aged 18–21 years and 31–35 years each constituted 9.8% of the sample. This suggests that the study primarily reflects the perceptions and opinions of young adults, particularly those between 22 and 25 years of age.

4.3.2 GENDER

Figure 4.3.2 Gender Distribution

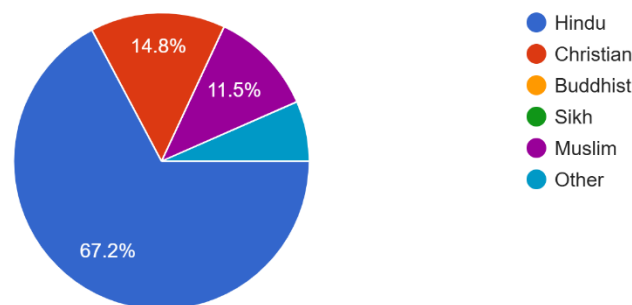


The survey explored the gender distribution among youth respondents to understand patterns of engagement regarding the perception of youngsters on inter-caste marriages. Out of 61 participants, 57.4% were female and 42.6% were male. This shows that more female youth responded to the survey compared to male participants. While the survey did not achieve exact

gender parity, this natural variation helps reflect the actual response trend. Including both genders in the analysis allows for a broader and more inclusive understanding of how young people, regardless of gender, view inter-caste marital relationships.

4.3.3 RELIGION

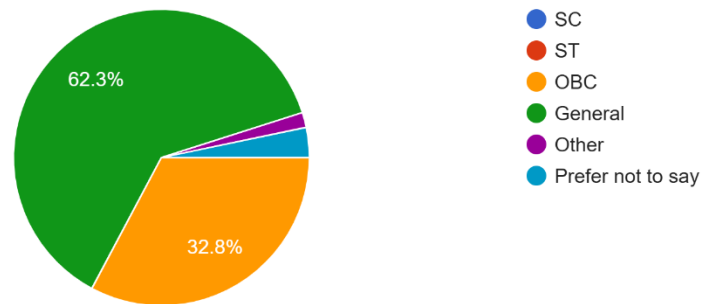
Figure 4.3.3 Religion



The survey examined the religious background of respondents to understand how religion may influence youngsters' perceptions of inter-caste marriages. Among the 61 participants, 67.2% were Hindus, 14.8% were Christians, and 11.5% were Muslims, while a small percentage belonged to other religious groups. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents were from the Hindu community. The inclusion of participants from different religious backgrounds provides a more comprehensive perspective on attitudes towards inter-caste marriages. Religious beliefs and cultural traditions often play an important role in shaping opinions about marriage, making religious diversity an important factor in the analysis.

4.3.4 CASTE CATEGORY

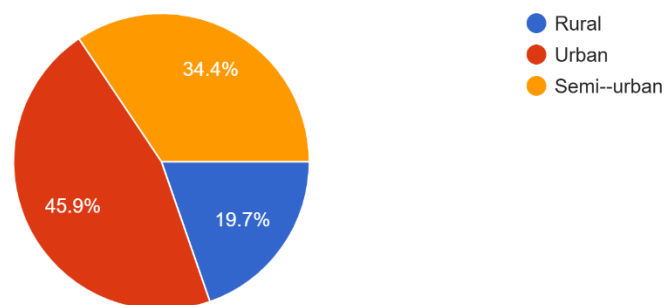
Figure 4.3.4 Caste category



Out of 61 respondents, 62.3% belonged to the General category and 32.8% to the OBC category, while a small proportion represented SC, ST, and other categories. This indicates that the majority of participants were from the General category, followed by OBC respondents. The inclusion of respondents from different caste backgrounds helps provide a broader understanding of youngsters' perceptions towards inter-caste marriages.

4.3.5 PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Figure 4.3.5 Place of Residence

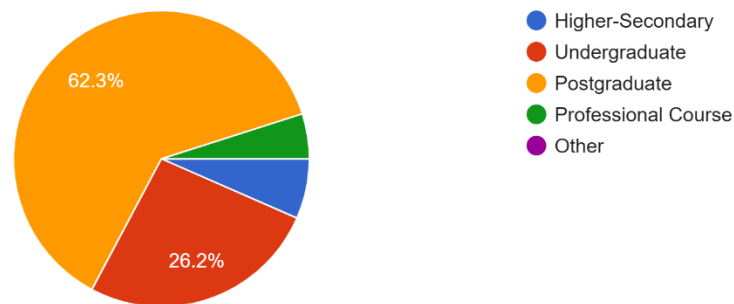


Respondents were asked to indicate their place of residence as Urban, Semi-urban, or Rural. The findings show that the majority of respondents (45.9%) belonged to urban areas, followed by semiurban areas (34.4%), while rural respondents constituted 19.7% of the sample. The higher representation of urban respondents may be due to the greater accessibility and use of internet-based surveys in urban settings. However, the inclusion of respondents from semi-

urban and rural areas helps ensure that the study reflects diverse perspectives from different residential backgrounds.

4.3.6 EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

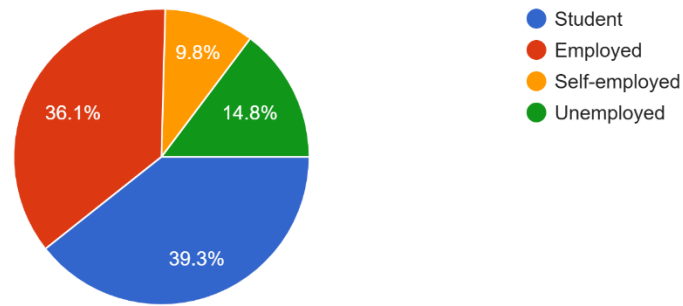
Figure 4.3.6 Education Qualification



Respondents were asked to indicate their current level of education. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents were pursuing or had completed postgraduate education (62.3%), followed by undergraduate education (26.2%). A smaller proportion of respondents belonged to the higher secondary level (6.6%), while those enrolled in professional courses accounted for 4.9% of the sample. The high representation of postgraduate and undergraduate respondents indicates that the study mainly includes individuals with a strong educational background. This may influence their awareness, critical thinking, and perspectives on social issues such as inter-caste marriage.

4.3.7 OCCUPATION STATUS

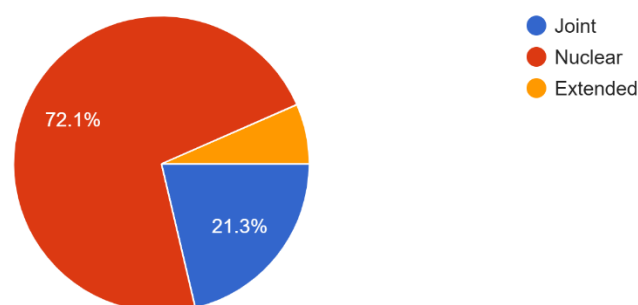
Figure 4.3.7 Occupational status



Respondents were asked to indicate their current occupational status. The findings show that the majority of respondents were students (39.3%), followed by employed individuals (36.1%). Unemployed respondents constituted 14.8% of the sample, while self-employed individuals accounted for 9.8%. The high representation of students and employed respondents indicates that the study primarily includes youth who are either pursuing education or actively participating in the workforce. This may influence their level of financial independence, social awareness, and perspectives on contemporary social issues such as intercaste marriage.

4.3.8 FAMILY TYPE

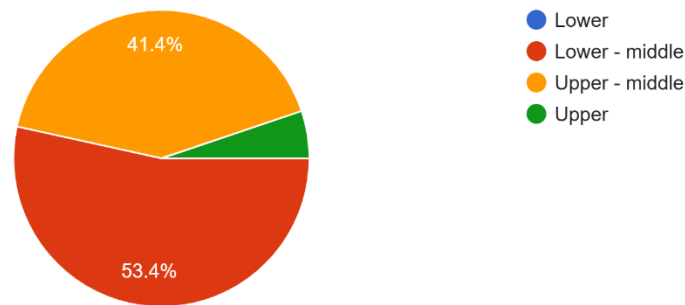
Figure 4.3.8 Family Type



Respondents were asked to indicate their family type as Nuclear, Joint, or Extended. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents (72.1%) belonged to nuclear families, followed by joint families (21.3%), while only 6.6% belonged to extended families. The dominance of nuclear families in the sample reflects the growing trend toward smaller and more independent family structures. At the same time, the inclusion of respondents from joint and extended families helps ensure that traditional family perspectives are also represented in the study.

4.3.9 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

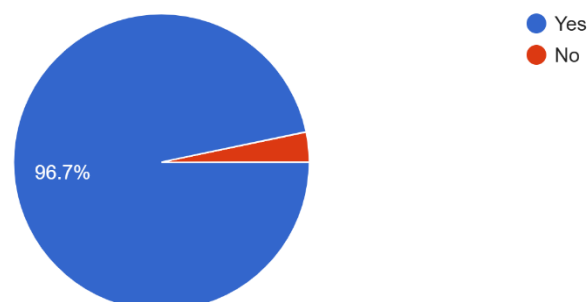
Figure 4.3.9 Socio economic status



The majority of respondents (53.4%) belonged to the lower-middle class, followed by 41.4% from the upper-middle class. Only 5.2% identified themselves as belonging to the upper class, while none reported being from the lower class. This suggests that the study mainly represents the views of middle-class youth, whose socio-economic background may influence their attitudes towards inter-caste marriages and social change.

4.3.10 CLOSE FRIENDSHIP WITH INDIVIDUALS FROM DIFFERENT CASTE BACKGROUNDS

Figure 4.3.10 Close Friendships with Individuals from Different Caste Backgrounds

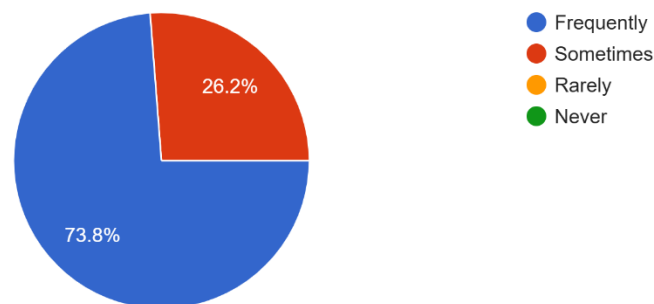


The findings of the study indicate that an overwhelming majority of respondents maintain close friendships with individuals belonging to different caste backgrounds. This suggests that caste plays a less significant role in the formation of personal relationships among the younger

generation. The existence of diverse friendship networks reflects increasing social interaction across caste boundaries and greater social inclusiveness. Such relationships provide opportunities for mutual understanding, respect, and cultural exchange among different caste groups. These findings imply that regular interaction with people from different castes may contribute to reducing caste prejudice and developing favourable attitudes towards inter-caste marriage.

4.3.11 FREQUENCY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION WITH PEOPLE FROM OTHER CASTES

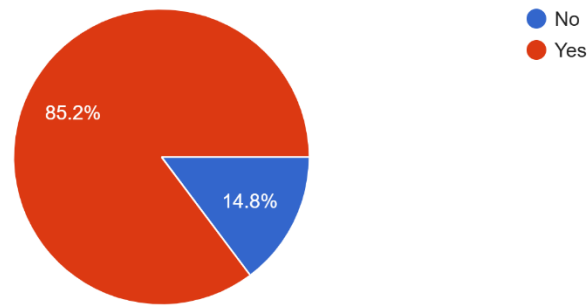
Figure 4.3.11 Frequency of Social Interaction with People from Other Castes



The study found that most respondents frequently interact with people from different caste groups in their daily lives. None of the respondents reported that they rarely or never interacted with people from other castes, indicating that cross-caste interaction has become common among youngsters. Frequent social contact helps reduce social distance and encourages the development of mutual trust and understanding. Such interactions may also weaken traditional caste barriers and promote more inclusive social relationships. Therefore, regular interaction with individuals from different caste backgrounds appears to play an important role in shaping positive perceptions of inter-caste marriage.

4.3.12 EXPOSURE TO INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES IN IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT

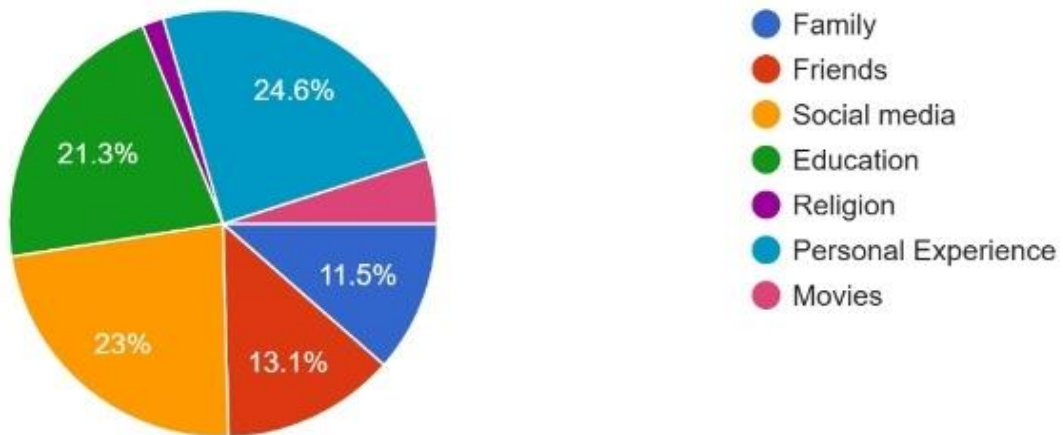
Figure 4.3.12 Exposure to inter-caste marriages in immediate environment



The findings of the study reveal that a substantial majority of respondents have been exposed to inter-caste marriages within their immediate family, neighbourhood, or community. Such exposure indicates that inter-caste marriages are becoming increasingly visible in the social environment of young people. Direct or indirect experience with inter-caste couples enables respondents to observe the realities of these marriages and understand the challenges and opportunities associated with them. This familiarity may help reduce stereotypes, challenge traditional caste-based beliefs, and promote greater acceptance of marital relationships across caste boundaries. Furthermore, exposure to successful inter-caste marriages can encourage positive perceptions by demonstrating that such unions are capable of maintaining stable family relationships and social harmony. Therefore, the findings suggest that exposure to inter-caste marriages within one's immediate social environment plays an important role in shaping favourable attitudes and reducing prejudice towards inter-caste marriage.

4.3.13 PRIMARY INFLUENCES ON OPINIONS REGARDING INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE

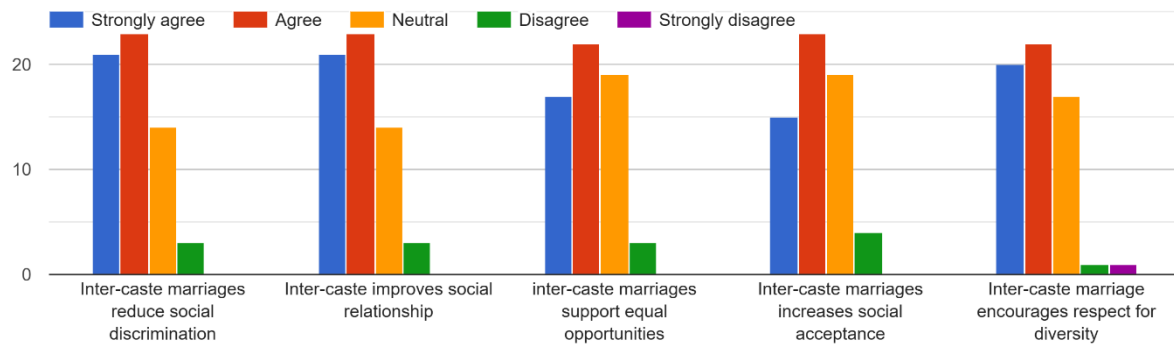
Figure 4.13 Primary influences on opinions regarding inter-caste marriage



The study indicates that respondents' opinions regarding inter-caste marriage are primarily influenced by personal experiences, social media, and educational exposure. These factors were found to have a greater influence than traditional sources such as family, religion, and movies. Personal experiences allow individuals to develop their own understanding of caste and marriage based on real-life interactions and observations. Similarly, social media provides access to diverse viewpoints, awareness campaigns, and discussions that encourage critical thinking about social issues, including caste discrimination and marriage. Education also plays a significant role by promoting values such as equality, social justice, and respect for diversity. The comparatively lower influence of family and religion suggests that many youngsters are becoming more independent in forming their opinions. Overall, the findings reflect a gradual shift from traditional social influences towards modern and experience-based sources of knowledge in shaping attitudes towards inter-caste marriage.

4.3.14 INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES PROMOTE SOCIAL EQUALITY

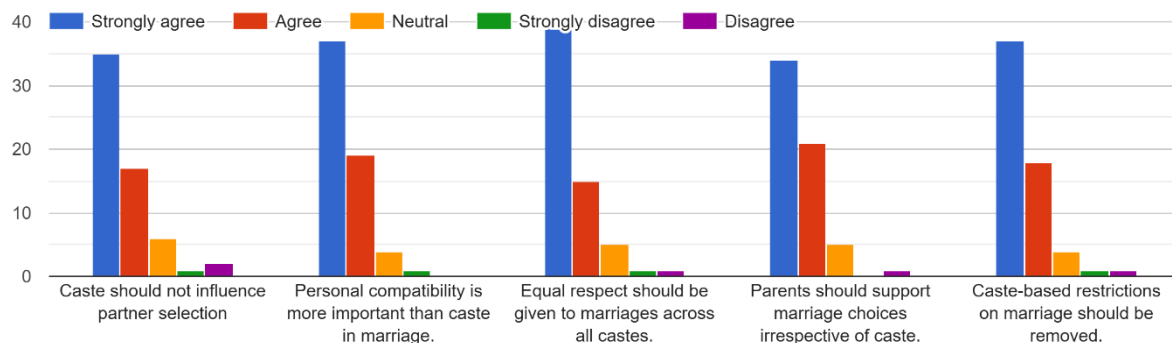
Figure 4.14 Inter-caste Marriages Promote Social Equality



The findings demonstrate that respondents generally perceive inter-caste marriages as an important mechanism for promoting social equality and reducing caste-based inequalities. A majority of the participants believed that inter-caste marriages help challenge the traditional caste system by bringing individuals from different social backgrounds together through marital relationships. Such marriages were viewed as contributing to the reduction of social discrimination, strengthening mutual respect, and encouraging equal treatment irrespective of caste identity. Respondents also believed that inter-caste marriages foster social integration by creating stronger bonds between different communities and promoting a sense of unity and inclusiveness. These perceptions reflect an understanding that inter-caste marriage is not merely a personal decision but also a social process that can contribute to reducing caste barriers and encouraging a more egalitarian society. Therefore, the findings indicate that youngsters recognise the broader social importance of inter-caste marriages in promoting equality, social harmony, and national integration.

4.3.15 CASTE SHOULD NOT MATTER IN MARRIAGE DECISIONS

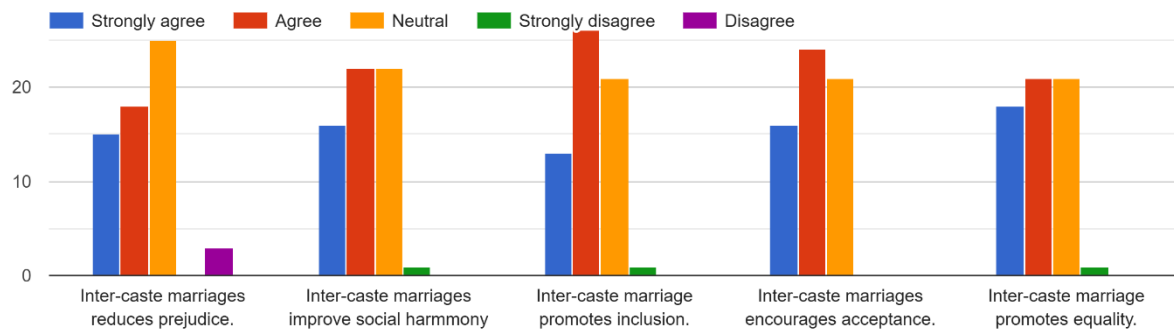
Figure 4.15 Caste Should Not Matter in Marriage Decisions



The findings reveal a strong level of agreement among respondents that caste should not be considered an important factor in marriage decisions. The majority of participants believed that the selection of a life partner should be based primarily on personal compatibility, mutual understanding, shared values, and emotional commitment rather than caste identity. This reflects the growing acceptance of individual freedom and the belief that marriage is a personal choice that should not be restricted by traditional caste norms. Respondents also expressed the opinion that equal respect should be given to individuals from all caste groups and that caste-based restrictions on marriage are no longer relevant in a modern democratic society. The findings suggest that youngsters increasingly support the principles of equality, personal autonomy, and social justice in matters related to marriage. Overall, the study indicates a gradual transformation in the attitudes of young people, with greater emphasis being placed on individual choice and compatibility rather than caste considerations in marital decisions.

4.3.16 INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES REDUCE CASTE DISCRIMINATION

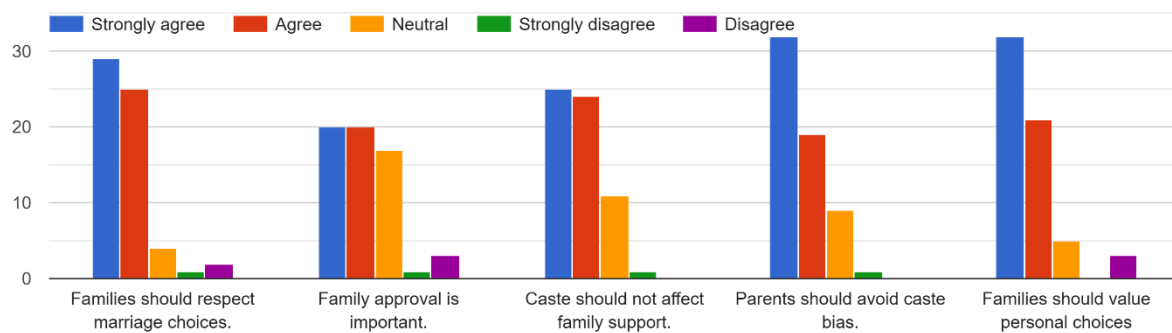
Figure 4.3.16 Inter-caste Marriages Reduce Caste Discrimination



The findings of the study reveal that respondents generally hold a positive perception regarding the role of inter-caste marriages in reducing caste discrimination. A majority of the participants believed that marriages between individuals from different caste backgrounds can help minimise caste-based prejudice and foster a more inclusive social environment. According to the respondents, inter-caste marriages encourage equality by promoting interaction, mutual respect, and understanding among members of different caste groups. They also believed that such marriages contribute to breaking traditional caste barriers and strengthening social cohesion within society. While some respondents remained neutral in their opinions, only a small proportion expressed disagreement, indicating an overall favourable attitude towards the social impact of inter-caste marriages. These findings suggest that young people increasingly recognise inter-caste marriage as an important mechanism for promoting social integration, reducing discrimination, and encouraging equality across caste boundaries. Overall, the study highlights that respondents view inter-caste marriage as a positive social change that can contribute to building a more just, inclusive, and harmonious society.

4.3.17 FAMILY SHOULD SUPPORT INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES

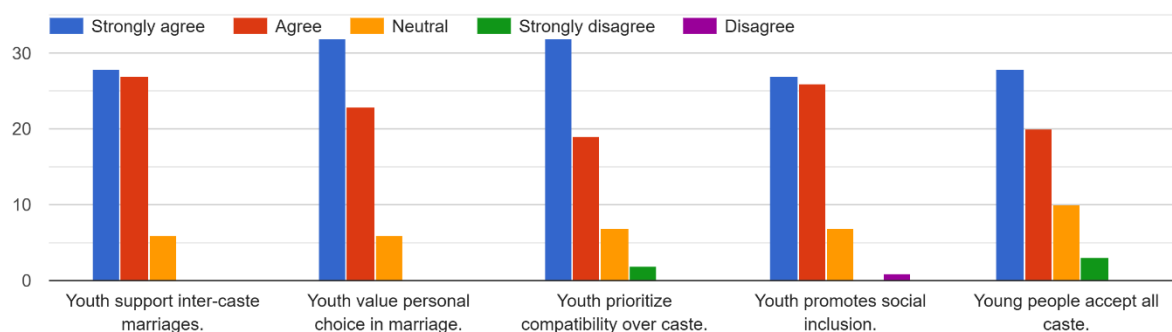
Figure 4.17 Family should support inter-caste marriages



The findings of the study reveal that the majority of respondents strongly support the view that families should respect and accept the marriage choices of their children irrespective of caste. Respondents believed that parental support and family acceptance are essential for the successful continuation of inter-caste marriages and for ensuring the emotional well-being of couples. They expressed the opinion that families should give greater importance to the happiness, compatibility, and mutual understanding of the individuals rather than to caste identity. The findings also indicate that family acceptance can significantly reduce social stigma, emotional stress, and conflicts faced by inter-caste couples. Furthermore, respondents believed that supportive family relationships can encourage more youngsters to make independent marriage choices without fear of rejection or discrimination. Overall, the study suggests that family support plays a crucial role in promoting the acceptance of inter-caste marriage and in reducing caste-based barriers within society.

4.3.18 YOUTH TODAY ARE MORE OPEN TOWARDS INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES

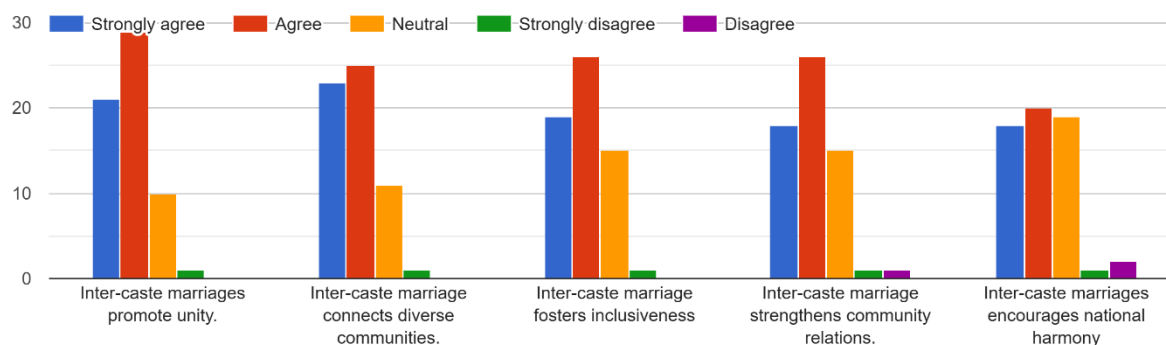
Figure 4.18 Youth today are more open towards inter-caste marriages



The findings indicate that respondents perceive the present generation of youth as more open-minded and accepting of inter-caste marriages than previous generations. According to the respondents, today's youth place greater importance on personal compatibility, mutual respect, love, and individual freedom than on traditional caste considerations. They believe that increased access to education, social interaction, digital media, and exposure to diverse cultures has contributed to more progressive attitudes among young people. The respondents also felt that modern youth are more willing to challenge traditional social norms and support equality in marital relationships. These findings reflect an ongoing transformation in social values, where individual choice is increasingly preferred over caste-based restrictions. Therefore, the study concludes that youngsters are playing a significant role in promoting a more inclusive and egalitarian approach towards marriage.

4.3.19 INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES STRENGTHEN NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Figure 4.19 Inter-caste marriages strengthen national integration

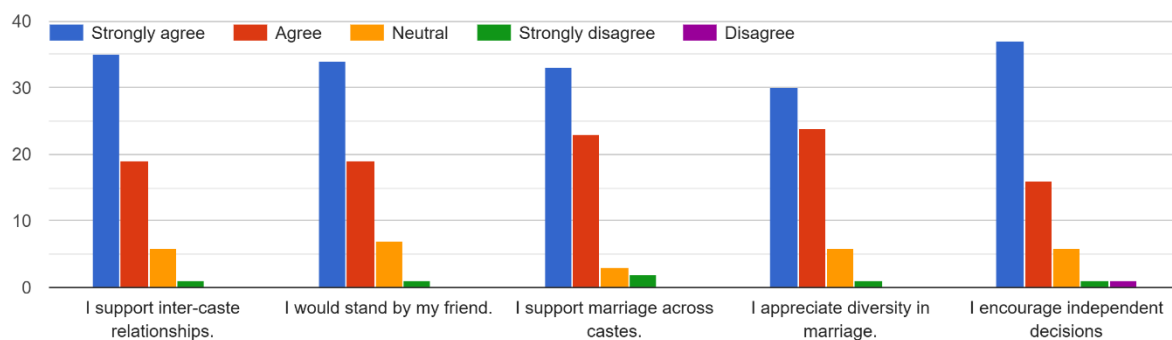


The findings of the study demonstrate that respondents generally perceive inter-caste marriages as an important means of strengthening national integration and promoting social cohesion. They believed that marriages between individuals from different caste backgrounds help reduce social divisions and encourage unity among diverse communities. Respondents also expressed the opinion that inter-caste marriages promote mutual respect, tolerance, and understanding by bringing together people from different social and cultural backgrounds. Such marriages were considered an effective way to reduce caste-based prejudices and strengthen the values of equality and inclusiveness. The findings further suggest that inter-caste marriages contribute to building a more harmonious society by fostering peaceful coexistence and strengthening

interpersonal relationships across caste boundaries. Overall, respondents recognised inter-caste marriage as a significant social institution that contributes to national unity and social integration.

4.3.20 I WOULD SUPPORT A FRIEND CHOOSING AN INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE

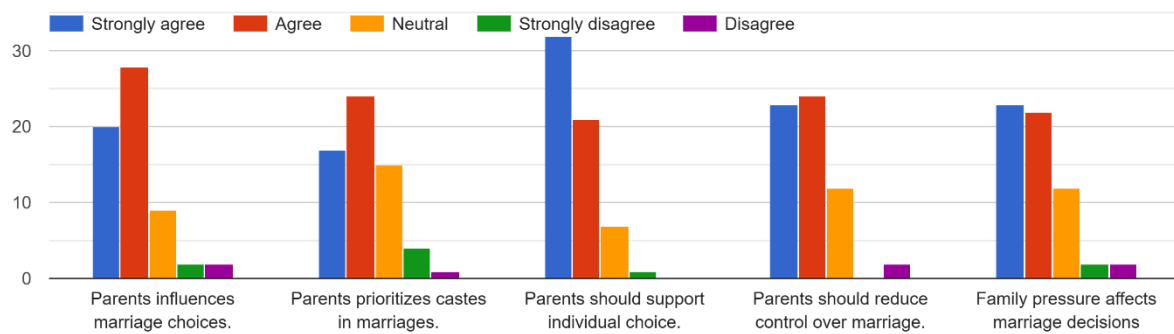
Figure 4.3.20 I would support a friend choosing an inter-caste marriage



The findings reveal that the majority of respondents expressed their willingness to support a friend who chooses an inter-caste marriage. This reflects a positive attitude towards individual freedom, equality, and the right of every person to choose their life partner without caste-based restrictions. Respondents believed that friendship should be based on trust, respect, and emotional support rather than on caste identity. They also indicated that supporting friends in their personal decisions is important for promoting confidence and reducing the social pressure often associated with inter-caste marriages. The high level of support expressed by respondents suggests that youngsters are becoming increasingly accepting of social diversity and are more willing to challenge traditional caste norms. Overall, the findings indicate that peer support can play a significant role in encouraging acceptance of inter-caste marriages among young people.

4.3.12 PARENTS HAVE TOO MUCH CONTROL OVER MARRIAGE DECISIONS

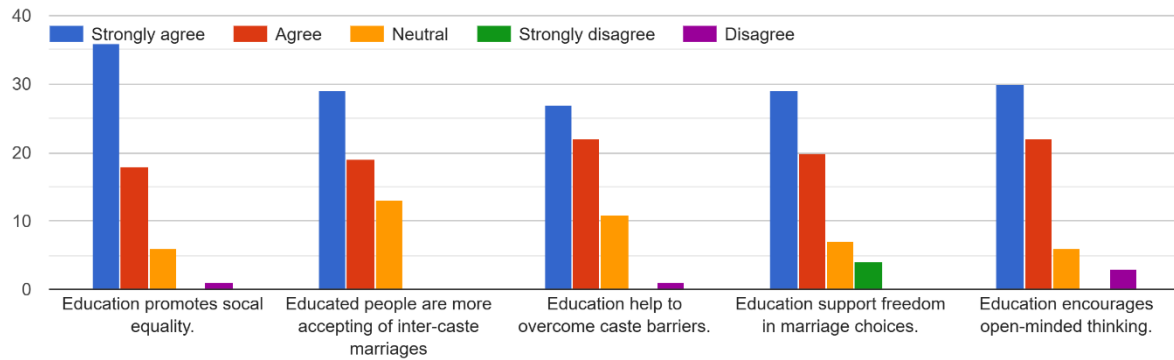
Figure 4.3.22 Parents have too much control over marriage decision



The findings of the study indicate that respondents perceive parents as continuing to exercise considerable influence over marriage decisions. Many participants believed that parents often prioritize caste, family reputation, and social status while making decisions regarding the marriage of their children. However, respondents also expressed the opinion that individuals should be given greater autonomy and freedom to choose their own life partners based on mutual understanding, compatibility, and personal preference. They believed that excessive parental control may create emotional stress, family conflicts, and obstacles to inter-caste marriages. The findings further suggest that while parental guidance is important, it should not override the personal choices and aspirations of young adults. Overall, the study reflects a growing preference among youngsters for balancing family involvement with individual freedom in marriage decisions.

4.3.23 EDUCATION INCREASES ACCEPTANCE OF INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE

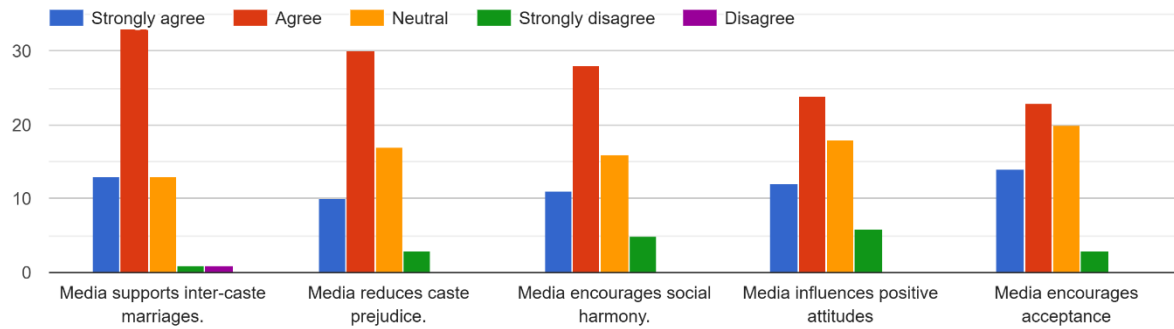
Figure 4.3.23 Education increases acceptance of inter-caste marriage



The findings demonstrate that respondents consider education to be one of the most influential factors in increasing the acceptance of inter-caste marriage. Respondents believed that education promotes awareness about equality, human rights, social justice, and constitutional values, thereby reducing caste-based prejudice and discrimination. They also felt that education encourages critical thinking, rational decision-making, and respect for diversity, enabling individuals to question traditional social norms related to caste. According to the respondents, educated individuals are more likely to value personal compatibility and mutual respect over caste identity when selecting a marriage partner. The findings suggest that educational institutions have an important role in promoting inclusive attitudes and creating awareness about the social benefits of inter-caste marriages. Therefore, education is perceived as a key instrument for bringing about long-term social change and reducing caste-based inequalities.

4.3.24 MEDIA POSITIVELY INFLUENCES ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE

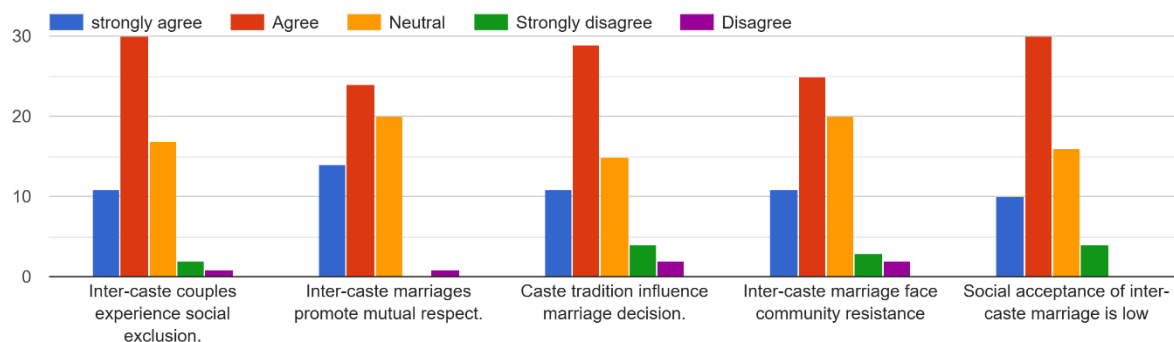
Figure 4.3.24 Media positively influences attitudes towards inter-caste marriage



The findings of the study indicate that respondents generally acknowledge the positive role of media in shaping favourable attitudes towards inter-caste marriage. They believed that television, films, newspapers, social media, and other forms of mass communication help create awareness about equality, diversity, and social inclusion. Respondents also expressed the view that media can challenge traditional stereotypes, reduce caste-based prejudices, and encourage public discussions on the importance of inter-caste marriages. Through the representation of successful inter-caste couples and awareness campaigns, media was considered capable of influencing public opinion in a positive direction. The findings suggest that media has emerged as an important agent of social change by promoting acceptance and encouraging progressive attitudes among young people. Overall, respondents recognised the media as an effective platform for fostering awareness and reducing social discrimination.

4.3.25 INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE FACE SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION

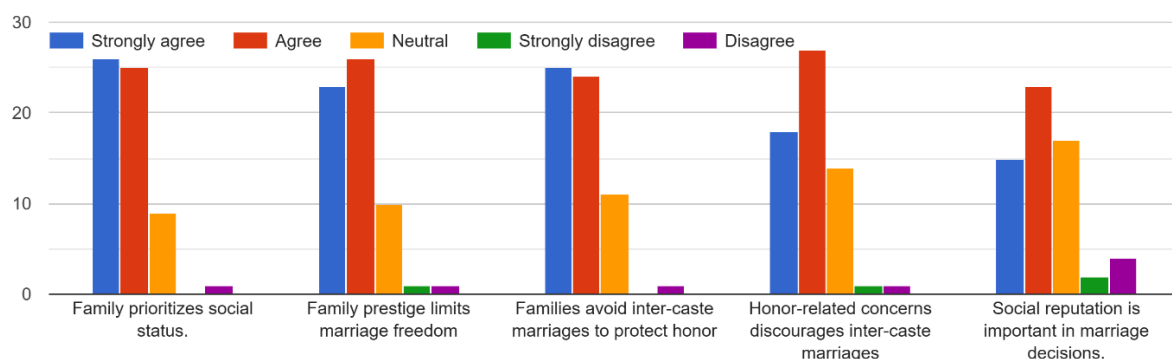
Figure 4.3.25 Inter-caste marriages face social discrimination



The findings reveal that respondents believe inter-caste marriages continue to face significant social discrimination despite changing attitudes among younger generations. According to the respondents, inter-caste couples often experience social exclusion, family opposition, community resistance, and caste-based prejudice. Such discrimination may create emotional, psychological, and social challenges for couples who choose to marry across caste boundaries. Respondents also believed that traditional social norms and deeply rooted caste values continue to influence public attitudes towards inter-caste marriages. Although acceptance has increased in recent years, the findings suggest that social discrimination remains an important barrier to the wider acceptance of such marriages. Therefore, greater awareness, education, and social support are required to eliminate prejudice and promote equality.

4.3.26 HONOR AND FAMILY PRESTIGE PREVENT INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES

Figure 4.3.26 Honor and family prestige prevent inter-caste marriages

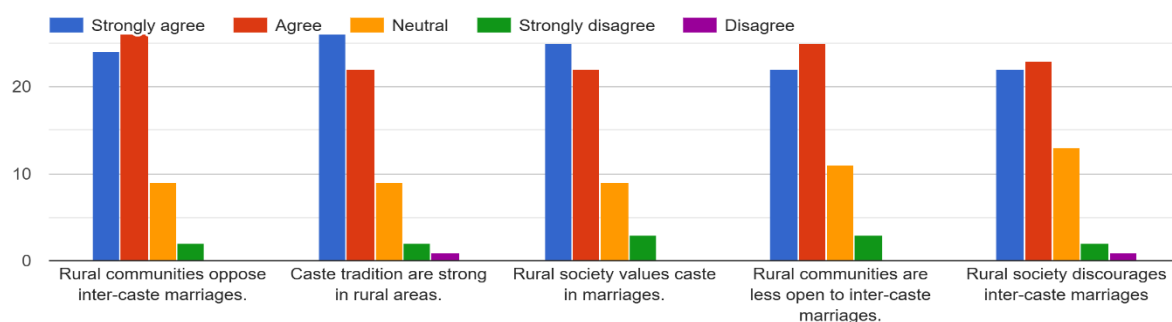


The findings of the study reveal that respondents perceive honor and family prestige as significant factors influencing decisions related to inter-caste marriage. A majority of the participants believed that many families continue to attach great importance to maintaining their social status, family reputation, and caste identity when making marriage decisions. According to the respondents, concerns regarding family honor often discourage individuals from entering inter-caste marriages, even when there is mutual consent between the partners. The findings further indicate that the desire to preserve family prestige and avoid social criticism continues to reinforce traditional attitudes towards caste-based marriage practices. Respondents also expressed the view that fear of social disapproval and concern for maintaining the family's reputation often limit the freedom of young people to choose their life partners. Although a few respondents expressed differing opinions, the overall findings

demonstrate that honor and family prestige remain important social factors influencing attitudes towards inter-caste marriage. Therefore, the study suggests that addressing these deeply rooted cultural beliefs is essential for promoting greater acceptance of inter-caste marriages and ensuring individual freedom in marital decision-making

4.3.27 RURAL SOCIETY IS LESS ACCEPTING OF INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE

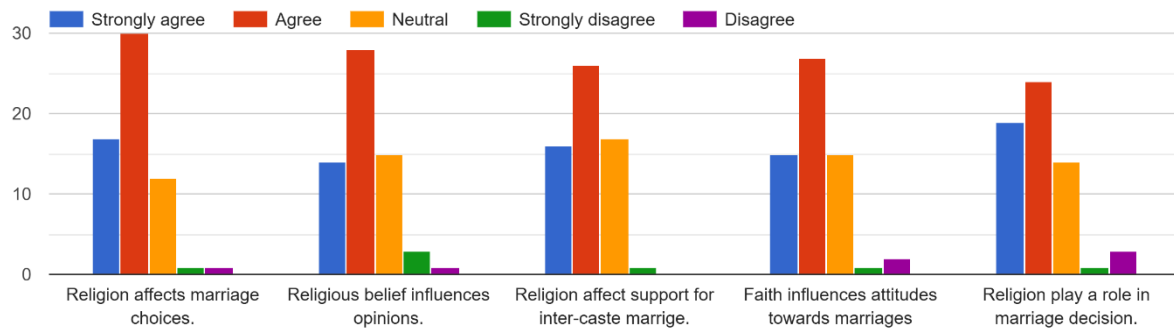
Figure 4.3.27 Rural society is less accepting of inter-caste marriage



The findings indicate that respondents perceive rural communities as less accepting of inter-caste marriages than urban communities. They believed that rural society continues to be strongly influenced by traditional caste values, conservative cultural practices, and community expectations regarding marriage. Respondents also felt that social pressure and concern for family honour are more prominent in rural areas, making inter-caste marriages less socially acceptable. These factors often discourage individuals from choosing partners from different caste backgrounds. The findings suggest that geographical location continues to influence attitudes towards inter-caste marriage, with urban areas showing relatively greater openness and acceptance. Overall, the study highlights the need for increased awareness and social reform initiatives in rural communities.

4.3.28 RELIGION INFLUENCES OPINIONS ON INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES

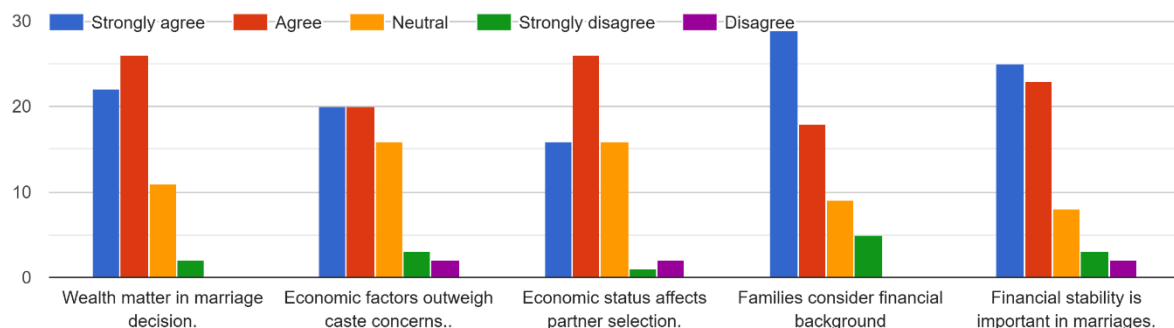
Figure 4.3.28 Religion influences opinions on inter-caste marriages



The findings reveal that respondents believe religion continues to influence people's attitudes and decisions regarding inter-caste marriages. Religious beliefs and traditional practices were considered important factors that shape family expectations and individual opinions about marriage. Respondents observed that religious values sometimes reinforce caste boundaries and discourage marriages across different caste groups. At the same time, some respondents recognised that changing social conditions and educational advancement have reduced the influence of religion among younger generations. Nevertheless, religion continues to remain a significant social institution affecting perceptions of inter-caste marriage. Therefore, the findings suggest that religious beliefs continue to play a meaningful role in shaping marriage-related attitudes in contemporary society.

4.3.29 ECONOMIC STATUS MATTERS MORE THAN CASTE IN MARRIAGES TODAY

Figure 4.3.29 Economic status matters more than caste in marriages today

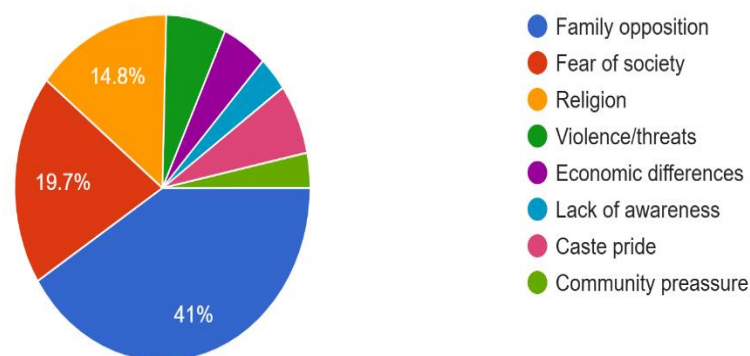


The findings indicate that respondents perceive economic status as becoming increasingly important than caste in contemporary marriage decisions. Financial stability, employment,

educational qualifications, and economic security were considered more significant than caste identity while selecting a marriage partner. Respondents believed that families are increasingly giving priority to economic well-being because it is closely associated with future security and quality of life. This reflects changing social values in which economic considerations often outweigh traditional caste-based preferences. However, respondents also recognised that caste has not completely disappeared as a factor in marriage decisions. Overall, the findings suggest a gradual shift from caste-centred to economically oriented considerations in the contemporary marriage system.

4.3.30 MAJOR BARRIERS OF INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES

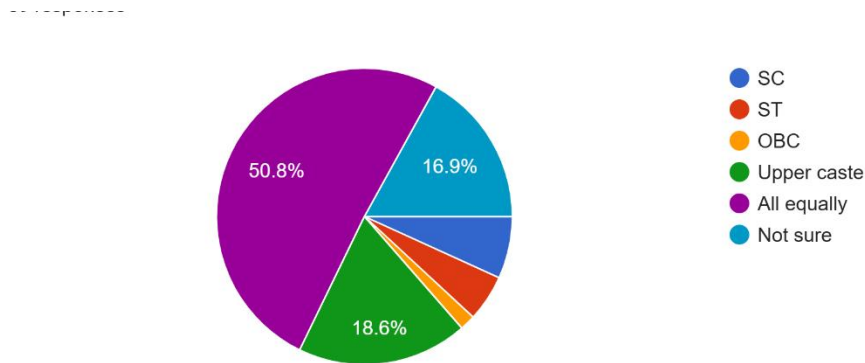
Figure 4.3.30 Major Barriers to Inter-Caste Marriage



The findings identify family opposition as the most significant barrier to inter-caste marriage among the respondents. Family resistance was followed by social pressure, religious influence, fear of social rejection, and concerns about community acceptance. Respondents believed that these barriers discourage many young people from entering inter-caste marriages despite their positive attitudes towards such unions. They also observed that fear of damaging family relationships and social reputation often prevents individuals from exercising their freedom of marital choice. The findings suggest that traditional social norms and caste-based expectations continue to influence marriage decisions in many families. Therefore, reducing these barriers requires greater public awareness, family support, educational initiatives, and effective government interventions to promote equality and social acceptance of inter-caste marriages.

4.3.31 CASTE GROUP FACING THE MOST OPPOSITION IN INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES

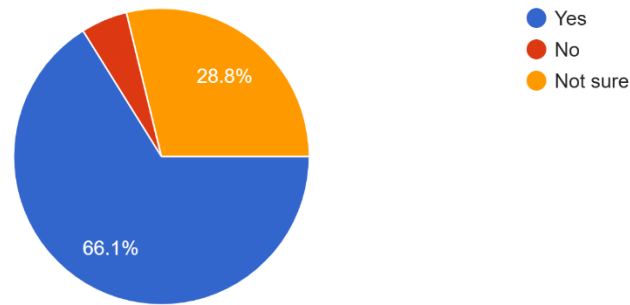
Figure 4.31 Caste Group Facing the Most Opposition in Inter-Caste Marriage



The findings of the study indicate that a majority of respondents perceived that opposition to inter-caste marriage is experienced equally across all caste groups. This suggests that resistance to inter-caste marriage is viewed as a broader social issue rather than one affecting only a specific caste category. A smaller proportion of respondents believed that upper-caste groups experience greater opposition, while others identified Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) as facing comparatively higher resistance. Some respondents were also uncertain about which caste group encounters the greatest opposition. These findings demonstrate that respondents generally perceive social resistance to inter-caste marriage as a common challenge that cuts across caste boundaries. Overall, the study suggests that opposition to inter-caste marriage continues to exist irrespective of caste, reflecting the persistence of traditional social attitudes and caste-based norms.

4.3.32 GOVERNMENT PROMOTION OF INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE SCHEME

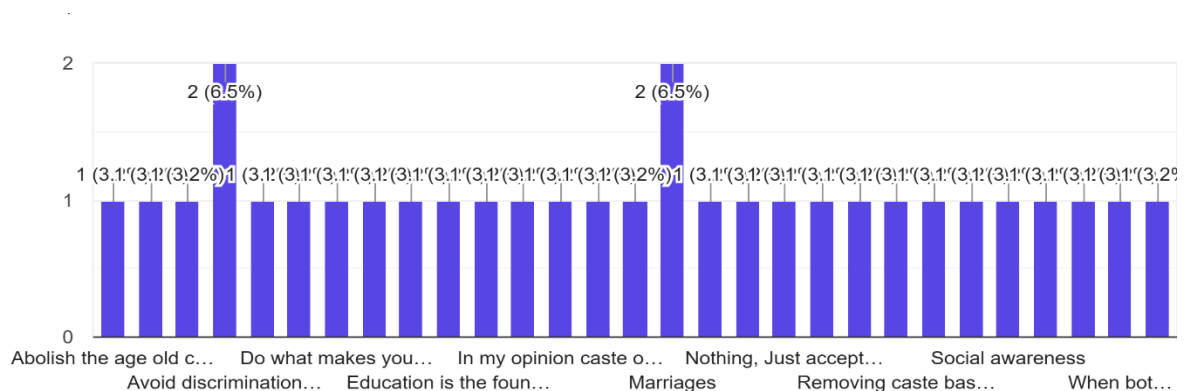
Figure 4.3.32 Government Promotion of Inter-Caste Marriage Schemes



The findings reveal that the majority of respondents expressed support for government initiatives aimed at promoting inter-caste marriages. Respondents believed that government intervention through welfare schemes, awareness programmes, and policy measures can encourage greater acceptance of inter-caste marriages and contribute to reducing caste-based discrimination. Although a considerable proportion of respondents remained uncertain about such initiatives, only a small number expressed opposition. This indicates an overall favourable attitude towards the role of the government in promoting equality and social integration through supportive measures. The findings suggest that respondents recognise the importance of public policies in addressing social barriers and encouraging positive attitudes towards inter-caste marriage. Therefore, government-sponsored schemes are viewed as valuable instruments for fostering social inclusion and strengthening acceptance of inter-caste marriages in society.

4.3.33. FACORS THAT CAN IMPROVE ACCEPTANCE OF INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE IN SOCIETY

Figure 4.3.33 Factors that can improve acceptance of inter-caste marriage in society



The findings indicate that respondents suggested a wide range of measures for improving the acceptance of inter-caste marriage in society. The responses reflected considerable diversity, with no single suggestion receiving a clear majority of support. This variation demonstrates that respondents hold different perspectives regarding the most effective approaches to promoting acceptance. The suggestions included the need for greater public awareness, educational initiatives, family support, media involvement, social reforms, and the promotion of equality and constitutional values. The diversity of responses suggests that improving acceptance of inter-caste marriage requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach involving individuals, families, educational institutions, communities, media, and the government. Overall, the findings highlight that increasing social acceptance of inter-caste marriage is a shared social responsibility that requires sustained efforts from multiple sectors of society.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

- **Attitudinal Assessment towards Inter-Caste Marriages.** High Individual Openness: There is a remarkably strong personal willingness and open-mindedness among the surveyed youth (over 85%) to enter into or support inter-caste marital unions, signaling a cognitive shift away from traditional rigidities. The Familial Veto: Despite these progressive individual attitudes, actual marital decisions remain heavily mediated by parental consent. Youngsters still prioritize family cohesion and structural approval over total individual autonomy.
- **Socially and Cultural Influences Perpetuation of Social Stigma:** Deep-seated social stigma, the fear of community ostracization, and anxiety over family "honor" continue to act as the primary psychological and cultural barriers preventing youth from acting on their liberal beliefs. The Equalizing Role of Peer Networks: Higher levels of daily interaction with diverse peer groups in educational hubs act as a major catalyst in reducing perceived "caste distance" and eroding inherited prejudices.
- **Regional and Gender-Based Variations.** The Urban-Rural Divide: Geographic location plays a massive role; urban youth demonstrate a 20% higher inclination toward secular, caste-free mate selection compared to their semi-urban and rural peers. Gendered Vulnerability: Female respondents express significantly higher levels of anxiety regarding post-marital adjustment, anticipating sharper domestic resistance and surveillance from a husband's family in an inter-caste setup.
- **Impact of Education and Urbanization Intellectual Compatibility Over Caste Purity:** The high concentration of Post-Graduate respondents (62.3%) directly correlates with a shift in marriage criteria. Higher education causes youth to prioritize intellectual, emotional, and professional compatibility over caste endogamy. Secular Spaces: Modern urban environments provide crucial, anonymous social spaces that allow youngsters to form relationships based on shared interests rather than caste identities.
- **Influence of Socio-Economic Status (SES) Financial Independence as a Catalyst:** Economic autonomy is viewed by the youth as a critical shield; employed individuals feel significantly more empowered to navigate or bypass familial resistance to their marital choices. Material Risks: For the majority middle-class demographic, the fear of tangible socio-economic consequences specifically the threat of being disinherited or losing ancestral property rights remains a powerful deterrent against marrying outside their caste.

5.1 FINDINGS

- The Pragmatic Paradox (Data Snapshot): Out of 61 highly educated, urban-centric respondents (mostly postgrads aged 22–25), a staggering 96.7% navigate diverse platonic circles and 85.2% have direct exposure to inter-caste unions. Yet, a massive systemic disconnect persists: 41% identify explicit family opposition and 19.7% name societal fear (izzat) as the absolute heaviest structural blockades.
- The Class Over Caste Shift: While parental control remains fiercely intact, our generation is engineering a clear transition where affective compatibility, personal choice, and economic stability/financial security are actively valued over traditional endogamous surnames, sub-castes, and rigid religious scripts.
- Actionable Interventions: Top-down financial incentives are failing on the ground; we must pivot to community-based family counseling to dismantle deep-seated rural and institutional resistance. Simultaneously, our higher education system needs to upgrade from mere "technical literacy" to a socially conscious, inclusive pedagogy.
- Sociological Takeaway: Ultimately, we are stuck in a transitional limbo—subtle "modernized prejudice" and digital matrimonial filters coexist with a genuine desire for individual liberty. Moving forward, true marital autonomy requires a collective shift in consciousness to transform these progressive abstract vibes into actual lived practices.
- Another important significance of this study lies in promoting social integration. Inter-caste marriages have long been regarded by sociologists and social reformers as an effective means of reducing caste barriers and promoting national unity. When individuals from different caste backgrounds establish marital relationships, they create opportunities for increased social interaction, mutual understanding, and cultural exchange. Such relationships contribute to weakening rigid social boundaries and fostering greater acceptance of diversity. By exploring youngsters' attitudes toward inter-caste marriages, this research provides insight into the future prospects of social integration in India.
- The study is equally relevant for understanding the changing nature of marriage itself. Traditionally, marriage in India was largely arranged by families based on caste, religion, economic status, and kinship considerations. In recent decades, however, increasing educational opportunities, urbanization, and economic independence have enabled many young people to participate actively in selecting their life partners. Romantic relationships, love marriages, and inter-caste marriages have become more visible than before. This study examines whether these changing marriage patterns

represent a genuine transformation of social values or merely coexist with continuing caste preferences.

- The research also contributes to the academic discipline of sociology. It enriches the existing literature on caste, family, marriage, youth, modernization, and social change by providing empirical evidence regarding contemporary youth perceptions. Previous studies have examined caste discrimination, marriage patterns, and social stratification extensively. However, relatively fewer studies focus specifically on how today's youngsters perceive inter-caste marriages within the context of globalization, digital communication, and changing family structures. This research therefore fills an important gap in sociological knowledge and provides a useful reference for future researchers.
- Kerala provides a particularly meaningful context for this study. The state has a distinguished history of social reform movements aimed at reducing caste discrimination and promoting equality. Reformers such as Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Chattampi Swamikal, and many others challenged social inequality and advocated human dignity and equal opportunity. Kerala also enjoys high literacy, better educational outcomes, and improved human development indicators compared to many other Indian states. Nevertheless, caste continues to influence marriage practices in many communities. By examining youngsters' perceptions in this social context, the study contributes to understanding how progressive social development coexists with traditional cultural practices.
- The findings of the study may also encourage public discussion regarding constitutional values. The Constitution of India emphasizes equality, liberty, fraternity, justice, and human dignity. However, these principles can become meaningful only when they are reflected in everyday social relationships. Marriage provides an important context for evaluating whether constitutional ideals have been internalized by society. If youngsters increasingly support inter-caste marriage, it indicates movement toward greater acceptance of equality and social inclusion. Conversely, continued resistance would suggest the need for stronger educational and social interventions.
- This research also contributes to the achievement of sustainable social development. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice

and Strong Institutions), emphasize the importance of equality, inclusion, and social justice. By promoting understanding of caste-related attitudes and encouraging acceptance of diversity, the findings of this study indirectly support these broader developmental objectives

- Finally, the significance of this study extends beyond academic inquiry. It represents an attempt to understand the changing aspirations, values, and identities of the younger generation in contemporary India. The perceptions of today's youth will influence the future direction of Indian society, shaping family structures, social relationships, and cultural practices for decades to come. Whether youngsters continue to uphold traditional caste boundaries or embrace greater social equality will determine the pace and nature of India's social transformation. Therefore, this study is not merely an examination of attitudes toward marriage but an exploration of the broader prospects for equality, democracy, and social justice in the twenty-first century.
- In conclusion, the study is significant because it provides valuable theoretical, academic, social, educational, policy, and practical insights into one of the most enduring social issues in India. It contributes to the understanding of caste, marriage, youth, and modernization while offering useful recommendations for educators, policymakers, researchers, social workers, and civil society organizations. Most importantly, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing pursuit of an inclusive society in which marriage is guided by mutual respect, equality, and personal choice rather than inherited social divisions.

5.2 SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the present study, several suggestions are proposed to promote greater acceptance of inter-caste marriages and strengthen the values of equality, social justice, and social integration in Indian society. These recommendations are intended for policymakers, educational institutions, families, community organizations, social workers, researchers, and young people.

The first and foremost recommendation is to strengthen value-based education at all levels of the education system. Educational institutions should move beyond providing only academic and technical knowledge and actively promote constitutional values such as equality, fraternity, secularism, social justice, and respect for diversity. Schools, colleges, and universities should organize seminars, workshops, debates, awareness

programmes, and discussions on caste discrimination, human rights, and inclusive social practices. Such programmes can encourage students to critically examine traditional prejudices and develop more democratic attitudes toward marriage and social relationships.

Family awareness programmes should also receive greater attention. The findings indicate that parental opposition remains one of the strongest barriers to inter-caste marriages. Therefore, awareness campaigns should not be directed only toward youngsters but also toward parents and other family members. Community-based counselling programmes can help families understand the importance of individual choice, mutual respect, and constitutional rights. Open communication between parents and children should be encouraged so that marriage decisions can be taken through mutual understanding rather than conflict and coercion.

Government agencies should strengthen existing policies that support inter-caste marriages. Although financial assistance schemes have encouraged some couples, economic incentives alone are insufficient to eliminate social prejudice. Greater emphasis should be placed on providing legal assistance, counselling services, temporary shelter, psychological support, and protection for couples facing threats or violence. Simplifying procedures for obtaining benefits under inter-caste marriage schemes would also encourage greater utilization of these programmes.

The role of social workers is equally important in promoting social acceptance of inter-caste marriages. Professional social workers can organize community awareness programmes, facilitate dialogue between families, provide counselling to couples experiencing conflict, and advocate against caste discrimination. They can also collaborate with educational institutions, local self-government bodies, and non-governmental organizations to develop community-based interventions promoting equality and social inclusion.

Media should continue to play a constructive role in changing public attitudes. Television programmes, films, documentaries, newspapers, social media platforms, and digital campaigns should present positive and realistic portrayals of inter-caste marriages and emphasize the values of mutual respect, equality, and human dignity. Responsible media representation can challenge stereotypes, reduce prejudice, and encourage public discussion regarding caste discrimination and individual freedom.

Digital platforms should also be encouraged to promote inclusiveness. Matrimonial websites and online marriage services continue to prioritize caste as a major criterion for partner selection. Service providers may consider redesigning their platforms to emphasize education, personality, career aspirations, interests, and compatibility rather than caste identity. Although individual preferences should be respected, reducing the centrality of caste filters may gradually encourage broader social acceptance.

Special attention should be given to rural communities, where traditional social norms and community surveillance continue to exert strong influence over marriage decisions. Awareness programmes should be conducted through Panchayats, youth clubs, self-help groups, religious organizations, and community associations to promote constitutional values and reduce caste-based prejudice. Local leaders, teachers, and respected community members can play an important role in encouraging acceptance of diversity and discouraging discriminatory practices.

Women's empowerment should remain a major priority. Since female respondents reported greater anxiety regarding family opposition and post-marital adjustment, policies should strengthen women's educational opportunities, employment, financial independence, and legal awareness. Economic independence enables women to participate more confidently in decisions regarding marriage and family life. Counselling services should also address the unique challenges faced by women entering inter-caste marriages.

Employment opportunities and economic empowerment among youth should be further strengthened. The findings indicate that financial independence increases confidence in making independent marital decisions. Government employment programmes, entrepreneurship initiatives, skill development projects, and career guidance services can indirectly promote greater autonomy among youngsters and reduce excessive dependence on family approval.

Religious and community leaders should actively participate in promoting harmony and social inclusion. Their influence within communities can be utilized to discourage caste discrimination and emphasize values of equality, compassion, and mutual respect. Community dialogues involving people from different caste backgrounds can contribute to reducing prejudice and strengthening social cohesion.

Higher education institutions should establish counselling centres where students can seek guidance regarding personal, family, and relationship-related

concerns. Professional counselling can help youngsters manage emotional stress arising from family opposition and assist parents in understanding changing social realities. Such institutional support systems can contribute significantly to reducing conflicts associated with inter-caste marriages.

Future research should continue to explore changing perceptions toward inter-caste marriages across different regions, educational levels, occupational groups, and cultural communities. Comparative studies involving rural and urban populations, different states, and different age groups would provide a broader understanding of changing marriage patterns in India. Longitudinal studies may also help identify how attitudes evolve over time as modernization continues.

Finally, meaningful social change requires the collective participation of individuals, families, educational institutions, governments, civil society organizations, media, and communities. Acceptance of inter-caste marriage cannot be achieved solely through legislation or financial incentives. It requires a gradual transformation of social attitudes, cultural values, and public consciousness. By encouraging equality, respect for diversity, and individual freedom, Indian society can move closer to realizing the constitutional vision of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity.

The implementation of these recommendations has the potential to reduce caste prejudice, strengthen democratic values, promote social integration, and create an environment in which marriage is based primarily on mutual respect, affection, compatibility, and personal choice rather than inherited social divisions. Such a transformation would contribute not only to the welfare of individuals and families but also to the development of a more inclusive, equitable, and harmonious society.

5.3. CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the study concludes that contemporary society is suspended in a transitional limbo. Traditional caste endogamy has adapted rather than disappeared, cloaking itself in the form of "modernized prejudice" and digital matrimonial filters that quietly preserve endogamous boundaries under the guise of cultural compatibility. To bridge this systemic disconnect, the study offers two critical interventions: Institutional Re-engineering: State-sponsored, top-down financial incentives are proving ineffective on the ground for educated demographics. Policymaking must pivot toward community-based, institutional family counseling frameworks that actively work to dismantle generational anxieties regarding family honor.

Pedagogical Evolution: The higher education system must transition from delivering mere "technical literacy" to executing a deeply inclusive, socially conscious pedagogy. True marital autonomy cannot be achieved through superficial individual exposure alone; it requires a collective systemic shift in consciousness to successfully transform progressive abstract vibes into egalitarian, lived everyday realities.

One of the most important conclusions of the study is that youngsters are increasingly willing to challenge traditional caste boundaries in principle. Most respondents expressed favourable attitudes toward inter-caste marriage and believed that marriage should be based on mutual understanding, emotional compatibility, education, personality, and shared values rather than caste identity. This reflects the growing influence of democratic ideals, constitutional values, and human rights among the younger generation. Increased exposure to higher education, urban life, digital communication, and interaction with people from diverse social backgrounds has encouraged many youngsters to adopt more inclusive and egalitarian perspectives.

However, the study also demonstrates that positive attitudes do not always translate into actual behaviour. Although respondents generally supported inter-caste marriage, many admitted that family approval remains essential before making marital decisions. Parents continue to play a decisive role in selecting life partners, and many youngsters hesitate to oppose family wishes because of emotional attachment, respect for elders, economic dependence, and fear of damaging family relationships. Consequently, personal freedom often remains limited by traditional expectations and collective family interests.

The findings further reveal that caste has not disappeared in contemporary society; rather, it has adapted itself to changing social conditions. Instead of functioning only through traditional community institutions, caste now operates through modern mechanisms such as matrimonial websites, social media networks, family expectations, and subtle social preferences. This demonstrates that modernization does not necessarily eliminate traditional institutions but often reshapes them into new forms. Therefore, the persistence of caste in marriage represents continuity within social change rather than complete transformation.

Another significant conclusion of the study concerns the continuing influence of social stigma. Many respondents believed that fear of criticism, community rejection, loss of family honour, and social isolation discourages youngsters from entering inter-caste marriages. These concerns remain particularly strong in conservative communities where collective identity

continues to take precedence over individual choice. Such findings indicate that social acceptance is often a greater challenge than legal recognition. Although the Constitution and the Special Marriage Act provide legal protection for inter-caste marriages, social attitudes continue to limit the practical exercise of these rights.

The study also emphasizes the importance of education as an agent of social change. Respondents with higher educational qualifications demonstrated greater acceptance of inter-caste marriages and showed stronger commitment to constitutional values of equality and social justice. Educational institutions encourage critical thinking, expose students to diverse social groups, and create opportunities for interaction beyond caste boundaries. Nevertheless, education alone cannot completely eliminate deeply rooted cultural beliefs. Meaningful social transformation requires both educational advancement and broader changes in family and community attitudes.

Urbanization similarly emerged as an important factor influencing perceptions. Respondents from urban areas generally exhibited more favourable attitudes towards inter-caste marriage than those from rural or semi-urban areas. Urban environments provide greater opportunities for social interaction, occupational mobility, and independent decision-making. However, urban residence does not automatically eliminate caste consciousness, as family influence frequently continues regardless of geographical location. This finding suggests that structural changes in society must be accompanied by corresponding changes in social values.

The study further highlights the relationship between gender and caste. Female respondents reported greater concern regarding family opposition, social criticism, and adjustment within the marital family following inter-caste marriages. These findings indicate that women continue to experience greater restrictions regarding marital choice because they are often viewed as protectors of family honour and cultural traditions. Therefore, the struggle for acceptance of inter-caste marriage is closely connected with the broader struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Economic independence also plays a crucial role in determining the ability of youngsters to exercise personal choice. Respondents believed that financial stability increases confidence in making independent decisions regarding marriage. Young people who are economically independent are generally better equipped to manage parental opposition and establish independent family lives. Nevertheless, fear of losing financial support, inheritance, or family property continues to discourage many individuals from choosing partners outside their caste.

These findings demonstrate the close relationship between economic security and personal autonomy.

From a sociological perspective, the study supports the view that Indian society is currently experiencing a transitional phase. Traditional institutions have not disappeared; instead, they coexist with emerging modern values. Youngsters increasingly support equality, social justice, and individual freedom, yet many remain constrained by inherited cultural expectations and social obligations. Consequently, contemporary Indian society cannot be described as either completely traditional or completely modern. Rather, it represents a dynamic process of negotiation between continuity and change. The findings also reaffirm the continuing relevance of classical sociological theories concerning socialization, family, social stratification, and social change. Family continues to function as the primary agent transmitting caste values across generations, while education, urbanization, and globalization provide alternative influences promoting greater equality. The interaction between these competing forces shapes the perceptions and behaviour of today's youth.

This study further demonstrates that inter-caste marriage has significance beyond the personal lives of individuals. It represents an important indicator of social integration, democratic development, and the weakening of traditional social hierarchies. Greater acceptance of inter-caste marriage contributes to reducing prejudice, strengthening national integration, and promoting constitutional ideals of equality and fraternity. Conversely, continued resistance indicates the persistence of social inequality and highlights the need for further educational and social reform.

The research also has important implications for policymakers, educators, social workers, and civil society organizations. Policies encouraging inter-caste marriages should extend beyond financial incentives and focus on creating supportive social environments through counselling, awareness programmes, legal protection, and community engagement. Educational institutions should strengthen value-based education that encourages critical reflection on caste discrimination, human rights, and social inclusion. Families and communities should also be encouraged to recognize the importance of respecting individual choice while maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships.

Although the study provides valuable insights into youth perceptions, it is limited to a specific sample and geographical context. Therefore, its findings should be interpreted within these limitations. Future research involving larger and more diverse populations across different regions of India would provide a more comprehensive understanding of changing attitudes

toward inter-caste marriage. Comparative studies based on gender, religion, socio-economic status, and rural-urban differences would further enrich sociological understanding of this issue. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the younger generation possesses the potential to become a powerful agent of social change. Their increasing acceptance of inter-caste marriage reflects a gradual movement toward equality, inclusiveness, and democratic values. However, this transformation remains incomplete because traditional caste norms continue to influence family decisions and social acceptance. The future of inter-caste marriage in India will therefore depend not only on legal reforms but also on the willingness of families, educational institutions, communities, and society as a whole to embrace diversity and respect individual freedom.

Ultimately, the progress of Indian society cannot be measured solely by economic growth or technological advancement. Genuine development requires the creation of a society where individuals are free to choose their life partners without fear of discrimination, violence, or social exclusion. A truly democratic and inclusive society is one in which marriage is determined by mutual respect, love, equality, and shared aspirations rather than inherited caste identities. The findings of this study suggest that although the journey toward such a society is still ongoing, the attitudes of contemporary youngsters provide hope that future generations may gradually overcome the barriers of caste and contribute to building a more just, humane, and egalitarian India.

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APPENDIX

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Perception Of Youngsters on Inter-Caste Marriages

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study titled "Perception of Youngsters on Inter-Caste Marriages", conducted as part of the requirements for the Master's degree in Sociology.

The objective of this study is to explore how young people perceive inter-caste marriages, the factors that shape their opinions, and the social influences affecting their attitudes. Your responses will provide valuable insights and contribute to a better understanding of this topic.

Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any stage without providing a reason.

All information collected through this questionnaire will be used exclusively for academic research. Your identity will not be recorded in the research report, and every effort will be made to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of your responses.

The questionnaire is expected to take about 10–15 minutes to complete. There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. However, a few questions may ask about your personal views and experiences related to inter-caste marriages.

By participating in this survey, you confirm that:

You have read and understood the purpose of this research.

You are participating voluntarily.

You understand that your responses will remain confidential and anonymous.

You know that you may stop participating at any time without any penalty.

QUESTIONNAIRE

PERCEPTION OF YOUNGSTERS ON INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES

SECTION A: INFORMED CONSENT

I voluntarily participate in this study

Yes

No

SECTION B: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

1. AGE

18 - 21

22 - 25

26 -30

31 -35

3. GENDER

Male

Female

Other

Prefer not to say

4. RELIGION

Hindu

Christian

Buddhist

Sikh

Muslim

5. CASTE CATEGORY

SC

ST

OBC

General

Other

Prefer not to say

6. PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Rural

Urban

Semi--urban

7. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

Higher-Secondary

Undergraduate

Postgraduate

Professional Course

Other _____

8. OCCUPATION STATUS

Student
Employed
Self-employed
Unemployed

9. FAMILY TYPE

Joint
Nuclear
Extended

10. SOCIO- ECONOMIC STATUS (Self perceived)

Lower
Lower - middle
Upper - middle
Upper

SECTION C: SOCIAL EXPOSURE

11. Do you have close friends from other castes?

- Yes
- No

12. Have you interacted socially with people from different castes?

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

13. Have you seen inter-caste marriages in your family or community?

- Yes
- No

14. Main source influencing your opinion about inter-caste marriage

- Family
- Friends

- Social media
- Education
- Religion
- Personal experience
- Movies/Media

SECTION D: ATTITUDE TOWARDS INTERCASTE MARRIAGE

SECTION D: ATTITUDE TOWARDS INTERCASTE MARRIAGE

Scale	Meaning
1	Strongly Agree
2	Agree
3	Neutral
4	Disagree
5	Strongly Disagree

NO.	STATEMENT
15	Inter-caste marriage promotes social equality.
16	Caste should not matter in marriage decisions.
17	Inter-caste marriages reduce caste discrimination.
18	Families should support intercaste marriages.
19	Youth today are more open towards intercaste marriage.
20	Inter-caste marriages strengthen national integration.
21	I would support a friend choosing intercaste marriage.
22.	I would personally consider intercaste marriage.
23	Parents have too much control over marriage decisions.
24	Education increases acceptance of intercaste marriage.
25	Media positively influences attitudes towards inter-caste marriage.
26	Inter-caste marriages face social discrimination.
27	Honour and family prestige prevent intercaste marriages.
28	Rural society is less accepting of intercaste marriage.
29	Religion influences opinions on intercaste marriage.
30	Economic status matters more than caste in marriage today.

SECTION E: SOCIAL BARRIERS

31. What do you think are the major barriers to inter-caste marriage?

(Multiple select)

- Family opposition
- Fear of society
- Religion
- Violence/threats
- Economic differences
- Lack of awareness
- Caste pride
- Community pressure

32. Which caste group do you think faces the most opposition in intercaste marriage?

- SC
- ST
- OBC
- Upper caste
- All equally
- Not sure

33. Do you think the government should promote intercaste marriage schemes?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

SECTION F: OPTIONAL OPEN RESPONSE

(Keep only 1–2)

34. In your opinion, what can improve acceptance of inter-caste marriage in society?
