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A Psychological and Anthropological Exploration of Female Participation in Economic Activity and Rising Divorce Rates in India

RESEARCH QUESTION - To what extent does female participation in economic activity contribute to rising divorce rates in urban areas of India?

INTRODUCTION

The determinants of increasing divorce rates have changed with time, but an important question that remains unresolved is how changing economic circumstances and participation relate to trends in marital stability. Under the binary gender system followed by India, gender norms play a key role in determining how people function in society. Due to the patriarchy of the traditional Indian societal system, roles in a marriage are assigned in a format wherein conformity to gender norms is a given. Controlling financial and economic functions are prescribed for men, and supportive functions and domestic activity are prescribed for women. India has a divorce rate of only 1% (Ahire 2021), making it one of the lowest divorce rates in the world, and this is largely due to the acceptance of gender roles within a marriage. However, over the past two decades, divorce rates, especially in urban areas of India, have been increasing. With men being the earning members of Indian families and marriages, women tend to be dependent on them. Therefore, marital separation comes with economic difficulty and social shame. However, the financial stability of a woman could act as a facilitator to her attempts towards divorce. Women being financially independent can also cause a potential threat to the manhood of the husband in the relationship, due to the changing status of his wife in their relationship and non-conformity to gender roles within the marriage, which come with societal consequences. This paper examines the economic and financially oriented gender roles assigned to men and women in an Indian marriage, and how non-conformity to these norms. Specifically in terms of women and increased economic activity, could potentially lead to increased divorce.

EXPLORING EXISTING PERSPECTIVES

Economic independence of women has been considered a contributing factor for the increasing risk of divorce in most theoretical frameworks. However, existing theories that correlate these two variables suggest different reasonings behind the established connection.

In the 1950s, it was argued that sex-role specialisation is a requirement for the stability of a marriage. This argument stated that women's paid participation in economic activity would create competition for status in the marriage, causing disruption (Schoen 2002). The main argument made by Gary Becker, in terms of economics and role specialisation in a marriage, is that when one partner, usually the man, specialises in market human capital (activity that increases earnings in a financial sense) and the other, usually the woman, participates in non-market human capital (domestic activity and taking care of children), the marriage is highly efficient. This essentially means that if a woman exchanges her skill and experience in domestic activity for her husband's higher wages and economic support, the marriage is more likely to be stable. Therefore, following this argument, Becker suggests that by reducing specialisation in a marriage (i.e., both men and women engage in paid economic activity), the stability of their marriage will also decline (Becker 1977). The role specialisation hypothesis hence states that a woman's participation in economic activity inherently reduces specialisation and raises the risk of dissolution of marriage.

The economic independence perspective states that divorce rates significantly increase when partners are not financially dependent on their marriages. This gives both partners, specifically the woman, the opportunity to exit an unhappy marriage (Killewald 2016). However, this perspective is gendered in its implications. Women usually tend to be more financially dependent on their husbands because of their lack of experience and skill in economic activity (largely due to adherence to gender roles), causing them to remain in unhappy marriages.

The Economic Opportunity hypothesis presents a similar idea that essentially states that a woman's employment does not cause her marriage to become unsatisfactory. Instead, her paid employment provides her with an economically viable alternative to remaining in an unhappy marriage (Schoen 2002). In simpler terms, it gives her the resources she needs to exit an unsatisfactory marriage. This hypothesis, however, is contradictory to the role specialisation hypothesis. The latter suggests a causal relationship between a woman's employment and the

dissolution of her marriage by proposing the idea that her employment causes unrest in the marriage. The former suggests that underlying unhappiness causes the instability of a marriage, whilst the employment of the wife facilitates her ability to leave the unhappy marriage. Further, this paper analyses the feature that distinguishes these different views: whether all marriages, or just unhappy marriages, are at greater risk of dissolution when the wife engages in economic activity / is employed.

It is important to note the reinforcement of gender norms in marriages caused by role specialisation and how the violation of these gender norms could place a strain on a marriage. The gendered institution perspective states that divorce is more likely when the wife's earnings and participation in economic activity goes against the gender roles outlined by society. This perspective is based on the logic of 'doing gender.' (Killewald 2016) which is the way in which people produce and enact gender, and suggests that the rising rate of divorce is not determined by financial implications but rather by the symbolic lens through which gender roles and conformity to these norms are viewed (i.e., following the gendered expectations of what a "good wife" or "good husband" is). Wage earning and financial activity are normative for married men, and domestic activity and child rearing are normative for married women (D'Acunto, Malmendier, and Weber 2021).

Although most existing research focuses on the gendered expectations for women, men also have to conform to strict gender roles. Manhood as compared to womanhood is culturally viewed to be in a precarious state, as it needs to be defended. The theory of precarious manhood suggests that masculinity must be depicted through acts of toughness and the assertion of dominance (Vandello et al. 2008). This 'manhood' can be lost by the simple act of showing even the most minimal amounts of weakness, which is why it needs to be constantly proved. In this case, unemployment of a man and (or) a woman earning more than a man in a marriage could pose a threat to manhood, and the man may use filing for divorce or separation from his wife as a threat response in order to re-assert his dominance. The sense of masculinity gained after the threat response is once again one that is fragile. Its nature being elusive in the sense of obtainment, it is more than just a physical and biological transition. Gaining one's manhood is a status that is earned through a social pathway. This precariousness of manhood stems from 'evolved adaptations' in a social setting, and social roles abounding in competitiveness, defensiveness and public proof of success often involve men who strive to attain this status in society (Bosson et al. 2009).

It is important to note, however, that what is considered normative behaviour and gender roles themselves are pervasive and change depending on culture and with time. The next section of this paper aims to focus on divorce in India, hence it will focus on the gender roles and norms that are prevalent in Indian society.

Analysing existing studies

A study conducted by Alexandra (Sasha) Killewalkd tested whether the predictors of divorce for American couples had changed over time (couples married in 1975 or later). Her findings reflected the idea that the division of housework between the partners and the employment of the wife did not play a role in the dissolution of marriage. Rather, the full-time employment of the man was a necessary factor that contributed to the stability of the marriage. It was found that nonconformity to the norm of breadwinning assigned to men was associated with increased divorce.

A study conducted by Johnson and Skinner (1986) found that women increase their labour force participation in the three years prior to their divorces/ separation. Essentially, their findings reflected the idea that increased female participation in financial activity did not lead to marital discord; rather, marital discord and unhappiness within the marriage led to increased female employment.

A previously conducted study utilised an external threat model of bargaining wherein the threat point of the divorce was defined by the wife's fallback utility (MacDonald and Dildar 2018), essentially meaning that when her utility in the marriage is smaller than the threat point, it is more probable that divorce/ separation occurs. An example of this is: when the state provides more resources for single parents, the wife's fallback utility is greater, hence divorce is more likely. From an economic standpoint, the wife's fallback utility is her income. Hence, with financial stability, her income is greater, which increases her fall-back utility and risk of divorce. This is also coherent with the Economic Opportunity hypothesis that was discussed previously, which analysed financial stability as a facilitator to a woman's attempts toward divorce.

CULTURAL CONTEXT - INDIA

This section will explore the divorce rates and economic participation of females in India. India is a diverse country with a rich culture and a traditional society. This comes with its own pros and cons. Although women living in this country are tied down to gender norms, recent progress, especially in urban areas of India, has motivated them to break out of the mould. However, this non-conformity to societal norms contributes to conflict in their marital relationships.

The traditional gender system followed in India is binary. This essentially means that the gender system is divided into two distinct sections, male and female. Although India as a country is progressing rapidly economically and politically, its society is still tied down to rigid, traditional roots. Both males and females are assigned gender roles that they are expected to conform to in order to escape societal shame (Reports 2015). From very young ages, these norms are inculcated within Indian children and eventually translate into the gender role specification in Indian marriages. Under traditional societal systems, males are usually given preference in terms of education and opportunity, as they are expected to be financially stable husbands who provide for their families. Females are brought up with the focus on training them to become housewives who are able to perform all domestic tasks as well as take care of children ('We Need to Talk about Gender Roles in Indian Households' n.d.). Transgressions of these norms make many people living in Indian communities uncomfortable, causing them to react negatively towards individuals who do not conform to gender roles (Evans et al. 2022). This discomfort comes from the inherent human need to categorise. Social categorisation allows people to navigate a complex social world by providing them with reasons, that are not necessarily logical or true, for the actions, thoughts and beliefs of others. These categories guide inferences that we make about people in terms of their characteristics and social relationships (Lieberman, Woodward, and Kinzler 2017).

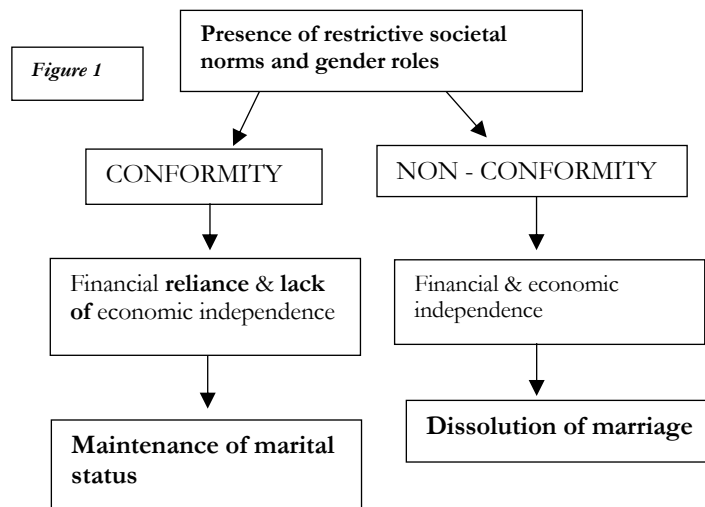


Figure 1: This figure essentially explains the link between conformity to gender roles and marital status. It is **important to note**, however, that dissolution of marriage is not the only possible outcome of non-conformity to gender norms. However, this paper will study the effect that nonconformity could potentially have on divorce.

Because of the roles assigned to women and men within Indian marriages, the conformation and non-conformation to these roles, specifically a woman's role, could impact their marriage in different ways. A woman conforming to the role of a domestic worker and housewife with a lack of participation and understanding of economic activity puts her in the position of being financially dependent on her husband. As discussed previously, this limits the resources that she has to exit her marriage, as she has no means of supporting herself financially. However, a woman not conforming to the role assigned to her, and participating in paid economic activity could place a strain on her marriage that could be caused by: (i) societal shame that comes with non-conformity; (ii) manhood threat (change in role, power and status in their relationship) caused by the non-conformity; (iii) gaining economic resources that could facilitate her attempts to exit an unhappy marriage.

India has one of the lowest divorce rates in the world, only 1% (Ahire 2021). However, over the past two decades, divorce rates, especially in urban India, have been increasing. For instance, in Delhi, divorce rates increased from 1,200 in 2008 to 4,028 in 2019, and in Mumbai, the city considered to be the financial capital of India, they increased from 4,138 cases in 2007 to 7,727 cases in 2019 ('Mumbai Reported an Average of 22 Divorce Petitions Daily' 2021). At the same time, data from Grip's 2022 India survey 'How Women Invest' highlights that women in India,

specifically from Delhi and Mumbai, have started investing and earning from their diversified investment portfolios. The responses recorded were from 1,500 women between the ages of 22 and 55. Over 70% of these women earn a fixed income from their investments (Bureau n.d.). Shubhada Maitra, dean, school of social work at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, suggested that though women in India have started becoming more career oriented, men have not moved on with them. In many marriages they still expect women to fulfil all the requirements of a “traditional Indian wife,” which essentially is an expectation of conformity to rigid gender roles. Their partners non-conformation to gender norms leads to conflict in the marriage. Hence, this rising independence of women, especially in an economic sense, could be contributing to the increase in divorce rates in urban areas in India.

CONDUCTED QUALITATIVE STUDY

Introduction to the Study and Goals of the Study

In order to further examine theories surrounding financial independence and female participation in economic activity as a cause of conflict in Indian marriages, it was important to conduct a primary study with willing participants. Overall, this study aims to establish a correlation between the financial independence of women living in urban India and divorce. In addition, the study aims to gauge the following:

- 1) The importance of financial independence to women attempting to file for divorce (did financial stability provide women with the resources they needed to exit their marriage?)
- 2) The effect of conformity to gender roles on financial independence of women (are divorced women more financially independent than married women?)
- 3) The effect of non-conformity to gender roles on the stability of the marriage

Hypothesis 1: Financial independence provided the women with the resources that they required and facilitated their attempts to exit their marriages as they were no longer financially dependent on their partners.

Hypothesis 2: The women’s non-conformation to traditionally established gender roles (due to their engagement in paid economic activity) was a cause of conflict that contributed to the dissolution of their marriage.

Hypothesis 3: Financial independence did not provide required resources or facilitate their attempts to exit their marriages.

Hypothesis 4: The women's non-conformation to traditionally established gender roles (due to their engagement in paid economic activity) was not a cause of conflict that contributed to the dissolution of their marriage.

Participants

The participants for this study were recruited from Indian families living in Mumbai, an urban city in India where divorce rates are rising, an increase of 48.58% from the years 2009-2013, and female participation in economic activity is increasing as well (Vyas 2015). The sample size was 12 participants (It has been recommended that qualitative research studies should have a sample size of around 12 participants to reach data saturation) between the ages of 25 and 75 from varying economic backgrounds and incomes. The participants chosen for this study were only deemed eligible if they met the following criteria:

- 1) They identify with an Indian nationality and are a part of an Indian ethnic group living in Mumbai.
- 2) They identify as heterosexual (they are sexually attracted to the opposite sex)
- 3) They are divorced or separated from their partners. It is important to note that Section 10A of the Indian Divorce Act, 1869, requires a couple to be separated (i.e., not living as husband and wife) for at least 2 years before divorce. Separation is also more common in India than filing for divorce, due to social stigma and lack of financial resources available as further explored in this paper. This study will be considering women that are separated from their husbands as well.

Procedure

Initially, this study was intended to be conducted in the format of one-on-one interviews with each participant. However, considering the taboo nature of divorce and the willingness of the participants to discuss their personal lives in the format of an interview, it was decided that creating a survey and receiving detailed responses from the participants would be a more efficient method of accurately understanding the circumstances of each participant.

The questionnaire consists of 3 main sections, each with several sub questions that need to be answered either by selecting an available option (e.g. Yes/No questions) or responding to short answer questions.

Section 1: General Details – This section includes questions regarding basic information on the participant in terms of their age, the length of their marriage and other details concerning their family structure, members and marital status. Answers to these questions provide an important background of the participant and some insights into their lifestyle.

Section 2: Economic/Finance Related Questions – This section includes questions relating to their engagement with financial activity and their personal economic stability as well as questions regarding their communities and societies in terms of their employment/economic endeavours. There are a few questions regarding the employment of their former partners as well. Answers to these questions provide important information regarding their understanding of financial stability and their personal journeys in their financial lives (the benefits or backlash they gained from financial stability and its relevance in their marriages and divorces).

Section 3: Details Related to Their Marriage and (or) Divorce – This section includes questions relating to the participants' marriages and divorces specifically. Answers to these questions provide important information, especially in terms of norm conformity within the marriage and the possible causes of conflict within their marriages that led to a divorce / separation.

The questionnaire was distributed to willing participants, through platforms of communication such as email, with the support of the JM Financial Foundation and their team working with women living in India, primarily in Maharashtra, Bihar and Gujarat.

Questionnaire

Respondent	
No:	
Date:	

Privacy statement: Answer all questions relevant to your current situation. All responses recorded in this survey shall be used for the said survey only and shall not be used or published anywhere otherwise. The researcher shall maintain the anonymity of the subject and protect the privacy of the personal information shared in this survey.

(A) General Details		
1	How old are you?	
2	What age were you when you got married?	
3	Current marital status	Married / Divorced / Separated
4	Current family structure	Joint / Nuclear
5	Do you have any children?	Yes / No
6	If “yes” to Q. 5, how many children?	
7	Can you briefly describe your daily routine / responsibilities?	

(B) Economic/Finance related details		
1	Do you hold any graduate/professional degree?	Yes / No
2	Were you working before marriage?	Yes / No
3	If “no” to Q. 2 – Why not?	

4	If you are working/earning – What does the phrase <i>financial independence</i> mean to you?	
5	If you are not working / earning – What does the phrase <i>financial stability</i> mean to you?	
6	If you have answered Q. 4 – Do you participate in any economic activity?	Yes/No
7	If you have answered Q. 4 – Are you employed?	Yes/No
8	Are you engaged in any ongoing entrepreneurial/business activity?	Yes/No
9	If yes to Q. 8, please describe the activity	
10	Can you briefly describe your daily routine / responsibilities?	
11	Did you experience any societal backlash when making the decision to continue/ participate in economic activity?	Yes / No
12	Were you ever asked to take your career or ambitions on the back seat in order to fulfil your domestic duties?	Yes / No
13	Were you ever asked to pursue you career aggressively to effectively contribute to the financial stability of the family?	Yes / No
14	How much or what part of your earnings (approximately) do/did you contribute towards your family?	

15	To what extent did your earnings contribute towards the betterment of your well-being?	
16	Does/did your husband hold any graduate/professional degree?	Yes / No
17	Did he think that it is important to be employed before getting married?	Yes / No
18	If yes to Q. 16, please describe the activity	
19	What does the phrase <i>financial stability</i> mean to your husband/Partner?	
20	Does your husband/partner face societal pressure to financially provide your family's well-being?	Yes / No

(C) Details related to roles and responsibilities in the marriage:

1	Could you describe in brief, the roles and responsibilities undertaken by you and your (former) husband/partner in your marriage. And give reasons for the same.	

2	Who among the two is more involved in the domestic activity in your home and who focuses on providing for the family financially?	
3	<p>How do you manage your financial well-being? *</p> <p>(a) If you are married and employed, what part of your earnings do you allocate for the well-being of your family?</p> <p>(b) If you are married and unemployed, who takes care of your financial well-being?</p> <p>(c) If you are separated and employed, what part of your earnings do you allocate for the well-being of your family?</p> <p>(d) If you are separated and unemployed, who takes care of your financial well-being?</p> <p><i>*From the given below list of questions in Q. 3, answer the most relevant to your current situation.</i></p>	
4	How long have you and your partner been separated for?	
5	Was finance/economic well-being a reason for your separation?	Yes / No
6	If comfortable, any specific circumstances or incidence you would like to share to elaborate Q. 5	
7	Is your partner financially dependent on you?	Yes / No

8	Did having economic stability (direct/indirect) play a role in deciding to get separate?	Yes / No
9	Have you required/ received financial support from your husband after your separation?	Yes / No

Results and Analysis

This study analysed the relationship between female participation in economic activity and rising divorce rates in an urban city of India, Mumbai. The responses answered in a Yes/No format have been analysed using a Qualitative Content Analysis in order to evaluate any patterns and frequencies of proposed ideas in the responses received, whereas the short answer responses have been analysed using both a Narrative and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach in order to draw important information from personal experiences and aspects of the participants' divorces/ separations from their partners.

1) Qualitative Content Analysis

The findings from the responses revealed that 11 out of the 12 women who participated in this study are financially independent and active after their separations. Respondent 7, who does not engage in economic activity, is currently 73 years of age, which acts as a limiting factor to her ability to work and be employed, the retirement age in India mandated by the government is 62 years of age. 8 out of the 12 participants agreed to having experienced societal backlash when making their decision to engage in economic activity. Out of the 4 (Respondents 3, 4, 10 and 11) that did not receive this backlash, 2 respondents (Respondents 11 and 4) were eventually pushed aggressively to furthering their careers as a means of supporting their families after their divorces/ separation, as their husbands' income no longer provided for them. 9 respondents out of 12 stated that their husbands felt societal pressure to financially provide for the well-being of their families. 7 out of 12 responses suggested that Financial/ Economic stability was a reason for separation/ divorce, whereas 10 out of 12 responses suggested that Financial/ Economic stability was a resource that facilitated their attempts towards separation / divorce.

2) Narrative and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

<i>Theme Identified</i>	<i>Theme Description</i>	<i>Occurrence of the Theme</i>
<p>Financial Stability as a source of Confidence and Freedom</p>	<p>Most of the responses received from the 12 participants in terms of their understanding of what Financial Stability is surrounded the ideas of gaining Confidence (in their personal decision making) and Freedom (in the actions that they take and decisions that they choose to make) with sub themes of Security and Increase in Opportunity being mentioned as well.</p> <p>Respondent 5 wrote, <i>‘Financial Stability to me is gaining confidence and security’</i></p> <p>Respondent 7 wrote, <i>‘Being able to stand up for myself without being scared of the consequences’</i></p> <p>Respondent 10 wrote, <i>‘Having the freedom to make my own decisions’</i></p>	<p>8 out of 12 responses included similar themes.</p>

<p>Financial Stability as a means of providing for family members</p>	<p>Many responses from the 12 participants in terms of their understanding of what financial stability is included the gained ability to provide for their families, specifically their children and parents, themselves without external support.</p> <p>Respondent 1 wrote, <i>'Being able to make decisions for myself and my son without being scared'</i></p> <p>Respondent 2 wrote, <i>'Being able to take care of and help my mother and daughters'</i></p> <p>Respondent 4 wrote, <i>'Supporting my children and my family'</i></p>	<p>7 out of the 12 responses included similar ideas.</p>
<p>The association of Financial Stability with 'power'</p>	<p>Many responses from the 12 participants in terms of what their partners' understanding of what financial stability is included association with the idea of 'power' and superiority. This is coherent with the gender roles assigned</p>	<p>8 out of 12 responses included similar themes.</p>

	<p>to men in a marriage as, being the breadwinners of their households, they are considered to be the ‘head of their families,’ a figure associated with some amount of ‘power’.</p> <p>Respondent 5 wrote, ‘He associated financial stability with power’</p> <p>Respondent 7 wrote, <i>‘Superiority within the family’</i></p> <p>Respondent 11 wrote, <i>‘His earnings gave him authority in our household’</i></p>	
<p>Conformity and Gender role Specification within a marriage</p>	<p>Most responses from the 12 participants in terms of the duties and roles assigned to both partners in the marriage reflected conformity to gender roles and specialisation of roles within the marriage according to societally established gender norms. Most husbands were the breadwinners and provided financially, whereas wives were required to put</p>	<p>10 out of 12 responses included similar themes.</p>

	<p>their efforts into domestic work and taking care of the household and children (if any).</p> <p>Respondent 1 wrote, <i>‘Domestic activity assigned to me, he brought in the money. He was the breadwinner and preferred it that way.’</i></p> <p>Respondent 9 wrote, <i>‘I managed most of the work that was to be done at home. He provided financially and did not help out at home.’</i></p> <p>Respondent 11 wrote, <i>‘He worked while I took care of his parents and our home’</i></p>	
<p>Non-conformity as a cause of conflict within a marriage</p>	<p>Many responses from the 12 participants in terms of the causes of conflict in their marriages reflected non-conformity to gender roles (specifically the wife) as a stressor on the marriage. Many husbands were not supportive of their partners’ engagement in financial activity, their growing careers or the requirements of their</p>	<p>7 out of 12 responses included similar themes.</p>

	<p>careers (e.g. travel). In some cases this led to insecurity too (e.g. when the wife had a higher income than the husband)</p> <p>Respondent 8 wrote, <i>'He felt that I was too ambitious'</i></p> <p>Respondent 10 wrote, <i>'He did not agree with me growing my career'</i></p> <p>Respondent 12 wrote, <i>'He did not want me to devote my time to my career and travel for my job which was a requirement'</i></p>	
<p>Financial stability as a facilitator and useful resource in attempts towards divorce</p>	<p>Most responses from the 12 participants in terms of financial stability being a resource that benefitted their attempts towards divorce/separation were positive. The economic independence gained gave them more opportunities to exit their already unhappy marriages.</p> <p>Respondent 4 wrote,</p>	<p>10 out of 12 responses included similar themes.</p>

	<p><i>'Gave me the strength to move out and facilitated the separation as once I was able to provide entirely for my family I didn't require the money that came from him.'</i></p> <p>Respondent 6 wrote, <i>'It allowed me to move out and stand on my own two feet'</i></p> <p>Respondent 1 wrote, <i>'The financial plan gave me the strength I needed to separate from my husband'</i></p>	
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Findings in terms of the hypotheses

The first hypothesis, which proposed the idea that financial independence acted as a resource that facilitated attempts towards divorce, allowing women to exit unhappy marriages, is supported by a majority of the responses. The second hypothesis, proposing that women's non-conformation to gender roles acted as a cause of conflict within the relationship, is only partially supported. It is important to note that several participants had different underlying causes of conflict within their marriages. For example, respondent 4 faced trouble with her husband's intake of alcohol and spending of small amounts of money earned by her. However, they used financial independence as a means of exiting an unsatisfactory marriage, hence favouring the first hypothesis. The third and fourth hypotheses respectively suggested that neither non-conformation as a cause nor financial independence as a facilitator had an impact on the

dissolution of these marriages. Considering the support for the first two hypotheses, the latter two are unsupported by this study. This study reflected an idea regarding the importance of conformity to gender roles for men as well. Results from the survey suggested that husbands associated their income, financial stability, and ability to provide for their family with confidence and power. Most also faced societal pressure into conforming to gender roles. This extrinsic pressure to conform could potentially lead to the development of a fragile masculine identity that needs constant proving through traditionally accepted “masculine” actions.

Limitations of the study

While this study had its own strengths, it also has limitations that need to be addressed for future research in this field. Since it is a qualitative study, the sample size is small and focused; hence, no broad generalisations can be made with the data analysed and collected through this study. It is important to conduct quantitative research in regard to divorce rates and financial independence/ activity of women in order to make statistically sound correlations that can be applied to larger populations (Choy 2014). This study was not able to do that. Since this study also required the analysis of the respondents’ opinions and experiences, the presence of slight biases and a lack of complete objectivity in analysis needs to be considered. The participants also responded on behalf of their husbands (for questions that regarded personal information regarding the husbands’ financial activity and societal pressures), hence this information must also be regarded with the possibility of biases. This study also did not consider the expectations both partners had of their marriage prior to their marital union and its role in causing conflict within a marriage. It did not take into consideration the familial backgrounds in which the individuals grew up as agents of socialisation and expectations that could have stemmed from this (Endendijk, Groeneveld, and Mesman 2018). For example, a woman growing up with a strong female figure such as a mother who engages in financial activity is influenced by her mother’s decisions and may choose to make similar ones in her future. However, there is a possibility that her future husband grew up in a contrasting environment wherein females surrounding him mainly took part in domestic activity, hence shaping his view of what a wife should be. Considering the culture and society of India is also important. Divorce, as discussed previously, is a taboo topic in India (‘Divorce Rate in India | Areas of Law | Law Library | AdvocateKhoj’ n.d.), and not many people are willing to speak frankly about this aspect of their personal lives, as it involves a degree of societal shame and pressure. This could have caused

participants to not disclose particular, possibly important details that could have potentially been relevant to the study.

CONCLUSION

Divorce is a subject that is not spoken of within Indian society. It is associated with shame and failure, especially for women, which causes it to be a rare occurrence in India. However, as cities in India begin to progress, women's involvement in economic activity has been increasing, despite rigid gender norms, and as explored in this study, this increase provides women with several resources and opportunities that they did not previously have access to, hence changing the nature of divorce in India today. The findings of this study and the literature reviews referred to in it (concerning theories such as the Sex-Role Specialisation theory, the Economic Opportunity hypothesis and the Gendered Institution perspective) establish a correlation between female participation in economic activity and increasing divorce rates specifically in urban India. The results of the questionnaire were mainly supportive of the idea that financial stability provided women with the resources that they required in order to exit an already unhappy marriage through dissolution of marriage. At the same time, a woman's employment caused non-conformity to gender roles specialisation within the marriage, which was a noted cause of discomfort and conflict within marriages. However, it is also important to note the perspective that arose in terms of men associating conformity to economically oriented gender roles with power and confidence, highlighting the possible threat to manhood that nonconformity to gender roles and (or) changes in status within their relationship could cause, leading to divorce/ separation as a norm reaffirming threat response.

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