
Effect of Dowry on the Familial, Educational, Psychological and Social Areas in Bride and Her Parents Lives

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ABSTRACT

Females of Indian society laden with dowry tradition have implications in the familial, educational, social and psychological experiences and also have serious impact on their future lives. Studies in this direction are very few in India. This study was a qualitative and analytical research method based on primary and secondary information. The sample area of study has been taken Ahmadabad and Gandhinagar as they are the state capitals and have maximum number of interstate migrants in Gujarat (Census, 2001). The selected sample area is also appropriate from the point of view of urbanized and educated locality. The study is conducted taking time period of maximum of last 25 years. Through the literature review, the researcher could identify specific core issues. Conclusions highlight and reinforce the findings of earlier studies that describe the trauma faced by women where dowry traditions are practiced on huge scale and emphasize the need for further study and legislative action to deal with this malaise. This study provides hope for females victimized on the name of dowry who can benefit from other agencies including volunteer organizations.

KEYWORDS: Effect of Dowry, Familial, Educational, Psychological, Social Areas

INTRODUCTION

One of the worst evils of Indian Society is the dowry system. The word ‘**dowry**’ means the property and money that a bride brings to her husband’s house at the time of her marriage. Dowry System is the one of the worst problem in Indian Society. It does not only affect the individual victims, the brides, but the entire social fabric which was created to help realize the aspirations of both the individuals and the collective. It is a custom that is prevalent in all the sections of our society in one form or the other. At the beginning it was voluntary where parents gifted their daughters out of love and affection while entering in a married life, but later on the social pressure was such that very few could escape from it. Gradually it became a common never ending source of income for the husband’s family whose burden was born by the bride’s

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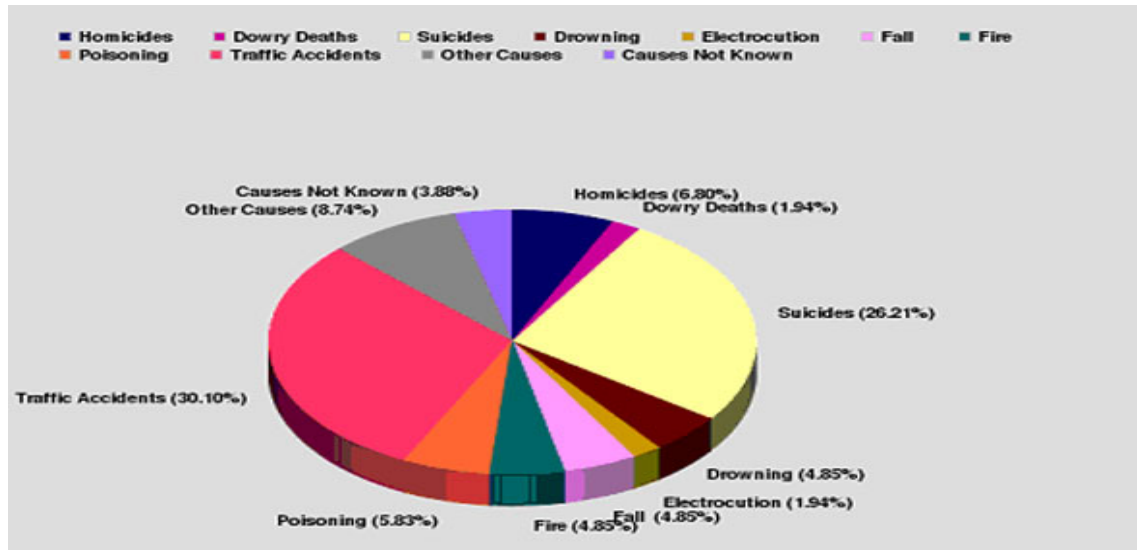
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family which directly or indirectly affected their entire family. At times the inability of the bride's family to comply often leads to the daughter-in-law being abused, killed or led to commit suicide to make way for a new financial transaction when the husband remarries. The pressure of this expense on the bride's family is enormous and many families take out loans to meet outrageous demands.

While other social evils like untouchability and caste-system are falling into a decline, the evil of dowry system is assuming a gigantic form. The enactment of the Dowry Prevention Act in 1961 by the Central Government has even failed to check its growth. Above all, the Indian society is deep-seated with numerous problems like superstitions, illiteracy, caste system and dowry system, etc. To a great surprise the condition is no better in the 20th century, infact we have drowned more in the depth of one evil that is, dowry. Due to dowry system, the sacred affair of marriage is destroyed and it is turned to a business deal. The brides are placed on the same class as those of cattle. The ugliest thing of this system is that the richer the family of the bride groom the higher is their demand. A marriage life that starts with such a business deal can never be happy. The parents of the brides are put to inhuman pressure for a handsome dowry in kind or cash whatever it may be. All the noble virtues of human beings like love, affection, sense of equality, liberal motive, gentleness, sympathy, kindness etc. are buried like rotten corpses. This system is found in both rich and poor community.

In every corner of the globe women are denied basic human rights, beaten, raped, and killed by men. This happened yesterday, it is happening right now, and it will happen tomorrow. In many regions of the world, longstanding customs put considerable pressure on women to accept abuse. Patriarchal oppression is seen all over the world, where a woman's sole purpose in life is to serve her father, brothers, and husband for the entirety of her existence. These women are viewed as second-class citizens and controlled, dominated, and undervalued by modern-day society. This lifelong cycle of violence is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between women and men. Girls and women constitute Indian's largest oppressed section. Indeed they are some of the staunchest upholders in a family set-up where not only women but girls are expected to bear the entire domestic drudgery, perform most of the parental duties as mother and sacrifice themselves for the benefit of their offspring.

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[<https://brideburning.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/injury-deaths-in-india-2009.jpg>]

In today's condition the truth is that before fixing a marriage or any related ceremony for social declaration of the marriage dowry is demanded as a precondition. If the demand for dowry is not accepted, a disagreement is reached and the marriage proposal gets obstructed even at the preliminary stage. The personality of a bride or bridegroom, their willingness for the proposed marriage etc which are normally considered as the essential prerequisites of a marriage take the backstage.

The system of dowry has also become a primary source of post-marital disputes. When the agreed amount of dowry is not paid or it is partly paid and partly promised, sometimes the marriage is organized and even consummated.

At times, the brides are even driven back to her parent's home to fulfill the dowry demands of the marital home. Therefore, the bride's parents become somehow bounded to fulfill the demands for dowry to ensure a better future for their daughters at their marital homes. Which ultimately leads them to an unfortunate future and they become heavily indebted and wallow in poverty or struggle to have their both ends meet throughout their life?

It is noted that in recent years there has been an alarming increase in the dowry cases. The research demonstrates the far reaching implications of dowry on the parents of brides which has touched all the levels of the society hailing from poor, middle to the richer class. This paper reveals as to how deeply rooted is this system into our customs and has become part and parcel of the Indian tradition. The National Crime Records Bureau reports that in 2010 alone, there were 8,391 dowry-related deaths in the country, representing a 0.1% increase from 2009 and almost double the number of dowry-related deaths recorded two decades ago. Only a third of all

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reported cases result in conviction of the offenders. The NCRB of recorded a total of 10146 cases related to dowry disputes in 2014. Which denotes 0.2% (53) of the dowry cases from Gujarat itself?

LotikaSarkar (1987), a project undertaken by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, had stated that though the origin and path of the long term evolution of dowry is still a subject of incomplete investigation but its prevalence is clearly recorded in historical evidence. The relevant literature of the 19th century and the first three decades of this century are full of talks of woe of married and marriageable girls and their parent. He found that the lower income families among the upper castes were the worst affected and by the end of the 19th century dowry appears to have become universal among the upper castes. The most eloquent example however is recorded in some letters of RabindraNath Tagore, the first Indian Nobel Laureate. Tagore was in great difficulty having to collect twenty thousand rupees demanded during the negotiations for his elder daughter's marriage (24). Tagore family was known for its leadership in social and religious reform in 19th century.

Research has shown that mostly poor families struggle to raise dowry through several different mechanisms, including taking multiple loans from micro finance institutions or by selling their assets. In comparison, the extreme poor adopt a different set of coping mechanisms such as child labour, informal loans on high interest etc.

Bride wealth has been highly commercialized leading to many negative consequences like women treated as property, idea of daughters as investment, hasty and forced marriages Saroja Krishna Swamy (1995), in her study conducted on a randomized sample of hundred married and hundred unmarried Hindu working women from Dharwad city applied a pretested questionnaire. This study aimed at finding out differences, if any, in the attitude of married and unmarried Hindu working women toward dowry. It examined the differential effect of a set of socioeconomic and personal variables on the attitude of respondents. These results found had disproved the myth that increased education, income and employment of women can turn these women against dowry system at least in their attitude. These findings imply the need to search for social and psychological factors operative in the working women's family and socio cultural milieu which are defeating all efforts to eradicate dowry and to mobilize working women's attitude against it.

The four areas covered in this study are: Family, Social, Psychological Problems, Education, Effects in future.

FAMILY

Decrease in the standard of living: George Pulikuthiyil(2004), the study undertaken at the name of Jananeethi, initiated a random survey among the various sections of society with respect to the

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impacts of dowry in Kerala . The higher is the educational status, the greater is the expectancy / demand of dowry. The evil consequences of dowry have ruined several families. Throughout the life the parents keep cutting their daily expenses to meet the future requirement of the bride's marriage. Which directly or indirectly effects the upbringing of the child. This affects the entire families schooling, food, clothing etc. and they are deprived of a better standard of living and have to compromise with the cheapest option available.

Taking informal loans on high interest rates: The never ending demands of the brides in-laws force the parents of the bride to even take lofty loans just to settle and keep their daughters happy at a new place and with new members. It has been observed that in many incidents when the parents are unable to seek loans from the banks they would rather not hesitate in seeking informal loans from unauthorized agencies/people also and that too at high interest rates which somehow becomes the root cause of their all miseries.

Fulfilling the outrageous demands of girls in-laws: Biswamoy Pati (1993), his study clarifies that the demand for dowry and the harassment of married women by their husbands and in-laws is a multi-caste and multi-religious phenomenon in Orissa. To justify his discussion which he easily proved statistically with the state topping in dowry-deaths which have increased from two to 63 in the 1987-91 period? The parents of the bride fell into the trench of debt knowingly or unknowingly. They get so engrossed in settling their daughters properly that they even forget their pains and troublesome period ahead after taking so much debt. The expectations from the bride's parents are such that is never ending till the death of their daughters in that house. Even on each celebrations and festivals expectations are from the bride's home.

SOCIAL

Women treated as property: Stevan Harrell and Sara A. Dickey (1985), in their paper tried to perceive the dowry from Intra-cultural perspective point of view and associate the custom of dowry-giving and status competition by intra-cultural comparison. They also found that mostly people considered the aspect of dowry as a transaction accompanying marriage which provided them a social status where a family wants to display its wealth publicly. They came to conclusion that in spite of cultural variations and social stratification the dowry system is acceptable to major population as per their own justification.

The advent of cash economy brought commercialization of bride-wealth. Bride-wealth is paid in cash, as opposed to livestock and to individuals. Cash is a symbol of sale, so women are seen as articles of sale. This leads women to be seen as property or chattels. Parents put a price to their daughters plus other unofficial payments in some communities. The payment becomes even higher if the bride is educated. When women are treated as property, they have no dignity. And

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such decisions are made without their involvement. The treatment as property is clearly seen in the way the meeting is held with hugging and bargaining.

Promotes child labour: the effect of dowry differs in each social strata. As found the parents of the bride in poor families believe that the increase in number of members in the family means more working hands which would be an additional income for the family. And if they are blessed with daughters the responsibility doubles. Therefore, they do not hesitate in dropping out their children from school and help them in generating more income. To some extent the repercussions of dowry has encouraged child labour too.

Daughters responsibility leads for the lust of a son: Francis Bloch and Vijayendra Rao (2002), in their case study have employed ethnographic information on the behaviors underlying dowry-related violence culled from open-ended interviews conducted in three villages in rural South India. A husband's greater satisfaction with the marriage, indicated by higher numbers of male children, reduces the probability of violence. Thus, it is likely that aspects of violent behaviour are strongly linked to economic incentives and deserve greater attention from economists. Generally the parents of the daughters develop a lust for a son as they believe in transferring the same dowry to the daughters which they would obtain for their sons. This practice is prevalent in many states as it does not disturb the economic balance of the family.

Female Infanticide: L. S. Vishwanath (2004), in his paper discusses the different perceptions, colonisers and their 'subjects' had on the archival records of female infanticide. In his studies he found the evidence of the dominant castes like the patidars, rajputs, jats and ahirs were hypergamous trying to maintain their socio-economic status through dowry avoidance and female infanticide, which also influenced the lower castes as per the recent studies. In his study he had done qualitative and quantitative data analysis from the historical records, which relate sex ratio to the social status of clans, and lineages, which controlled territory during the 19th century. His study is also based on the interviews of British officials with castes which practiced female infanticide. As assumed from his findings it is quite clear that female infanticide and female foeticide is related to dowry and the problem will be solved once dowry is eradicated through efficient law enforcement or some other method like generating public opinion against it.

In a similar vein, the dowry system may be seen as partly responsible for the female infanticide that occurs all over rural India. Because of the same lack of legal enforcement that has exacerbated dowry-related abuse and murder, the phenomenon of female infanticide is prevalent among Indian families (particularly in rural communities) where the additional cost of dowry for a third or fourth daughter may greatly exceed the family's financial capacity.

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Increases corrupt attitude of parents: Many parents develop their corrupt attitude to collect money for paying dowry. They accept all sorts of briberies. They undertake unsocial activities like smuggling or earn by unfair means. Thus, dowry practices forces some parents to be corrupt.

Dowry leads to some immoral practices: C. S. Lakshmi (1989), in his study described how the father of three little girls sold his kidney just for the sake of getting some money which would secure his daughters future marriage. In order to escape from the menace of dowry, some young girls prefer to undertake jobs to earn huge amount of money to meet the dowry expenses and thereby reduce the dowry tension of their parents. In the process some innocent girls are carried away by the false promises of the young boys and are often sexually cheated to be made pregnant. Subsequently such girls are socially defamed and finally they are forced to commit suicide finding no alternatives.

Dowry system makes imbalance in the sex ratio: Mattias Larsen and Ravinderkaur (2013), in their study made an attempt to ascertain whether the skewed sex ratio has led to change in sex-selective behavior and other social practices by surveying the three northern districts of India namely, Kurukshetra(in Haryana), Kangra (Himachal Pradesh), Fatehgarh Sahib (Punjab). They studied the impacts of shortage of brides, although they found no relationship between bride shortage and the level of dowry given they found its positive effect on few social practices and customs likely, on rules of clan exogamy (gotra) , marriage and with a reduced demand for dowry. They focused on the demographic imbalance and further impacts on long-term social change which would also encourage cross-region marriages. Parent of poor families kill their daughter from their vary birth or at the stage of fetuses in their mother's womb. The practice of female infanticide and feticide has led to an imbalance in the sex ratio in our society.

Promotes mismatch marriages: The price of the dowry is kept in accordance to the occupation and earning of the bride groom. This at many times leads to mis match marriages of both. In many incidences though the brides were quite educated and well settled with a job could not find a proper match just because they could not afford to buy such an expensive groom. The price table for the grooms in accordance to their jobs is given below.



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PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Daughters are considered as a liability: The arrival of a baby girl in the family brings a mixed feeling of joy and concern of heavy expenses in the near future for majority parents. The feeling of being considered as a liability or a burden is an unexpressive grief for any girl who leads to insecurity among them and has an intense psychological and emotional impact.

Living in fear of losing the daughters in dowry death: the interaction with parents of bride had unveiled a very bitter truth of society and that is since the birth of a girl child they had always lived in fear of losing her at the name of dowry. This is more relevant in northern India, north east, North West and central India states. It always forced the parents of the bride to think and make required preparations for future.

Fearing that their girl child might undergo the same trauma on having a girl child: The parents of the bride had always lived under the fear of their daughters undergoing the same recursive trauma on having a girl child which they faced. Thus, as an experienced elderly member of the family they themselves suggest for aborting the girl child. At her in-law's place, she must be prepared to suffer silently and stoically. She knows well enough that the women are born to suffer and it is a sin to protest against their destiny.

Dowry practice enhances psychological tension: Many marriages breakdown due to dowry practice and increases the tension of both parents and daughters. Besides, parents always remain worried and tensed in arranging money required to pay in dowry for daughter's marriage. In some cases girls with self dignity may refuse to marry a boy who demands dowry and may be forced to remain spinsters throughout their lives. Forcible suppression of sex urge may make them to become irritable, frustrated disgusted and pessimistic. They may even develop neurotic diseases and get involved in an emotional problem.

EDUCATION

Effect on the female education: Each group is bounded by its culture and the tradition passed from each generation. Dowry has taken a deep root in our society and the believe that if we educate our daughters and settle them well in life we need not worry about their marriage as she would get best marriage proposals for them has also proved wrong in maximum incidence. On the contrary the expectations have increased that well settled and educated brides are preferred by all and that too accompanied with dowry. But in many cases the parents are not able to reach all the expectations, they spend less on the girls education and don't promote them for higher education too as they believe in utilizing the same money to keep them happy in real life after marriage.

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Following are the results of primary survey in which we conducted a expert survey among migrant brides.

Figure: 1: Dowry is less than other cstae and categories

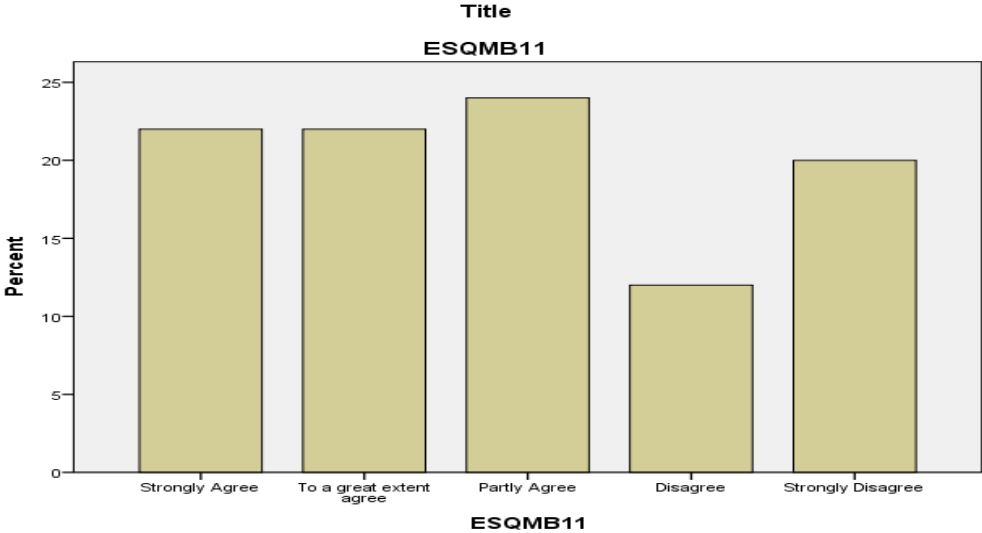
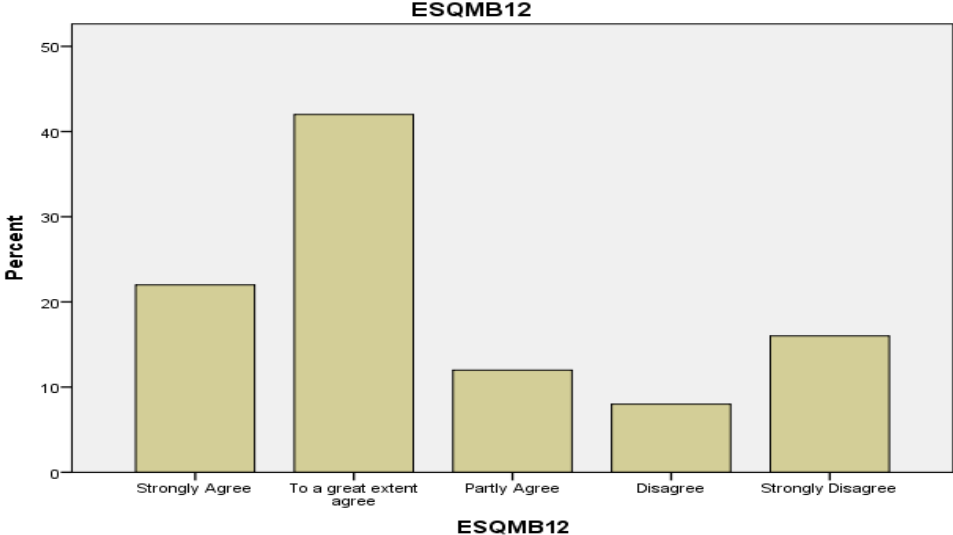


Figure 1 shows the percentage analysis of caste categories effect on dowry among migrants. This shows that maximum respondents partly agree with the idea that dowry in their caste and categories are less than others. Very least respondents disagree that dowry in heir castes are higher than others.

Figure: 2: Dowry because of Tradition, COstum and Beliefs



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Figure 2 shows the percentage analysis of respondents responses as the dowry prevalence among the migrant brides and grooms as the consequence of customs and traditional beliefs. Maximum respondents greatly agree that dowry among migrants is due to traditional beliefs and conventional practices. In this segment also very less people disagree that it is due to conventional principles.

Figure 3: Dowry Depends on Economic Situation of Migrant bride's Family

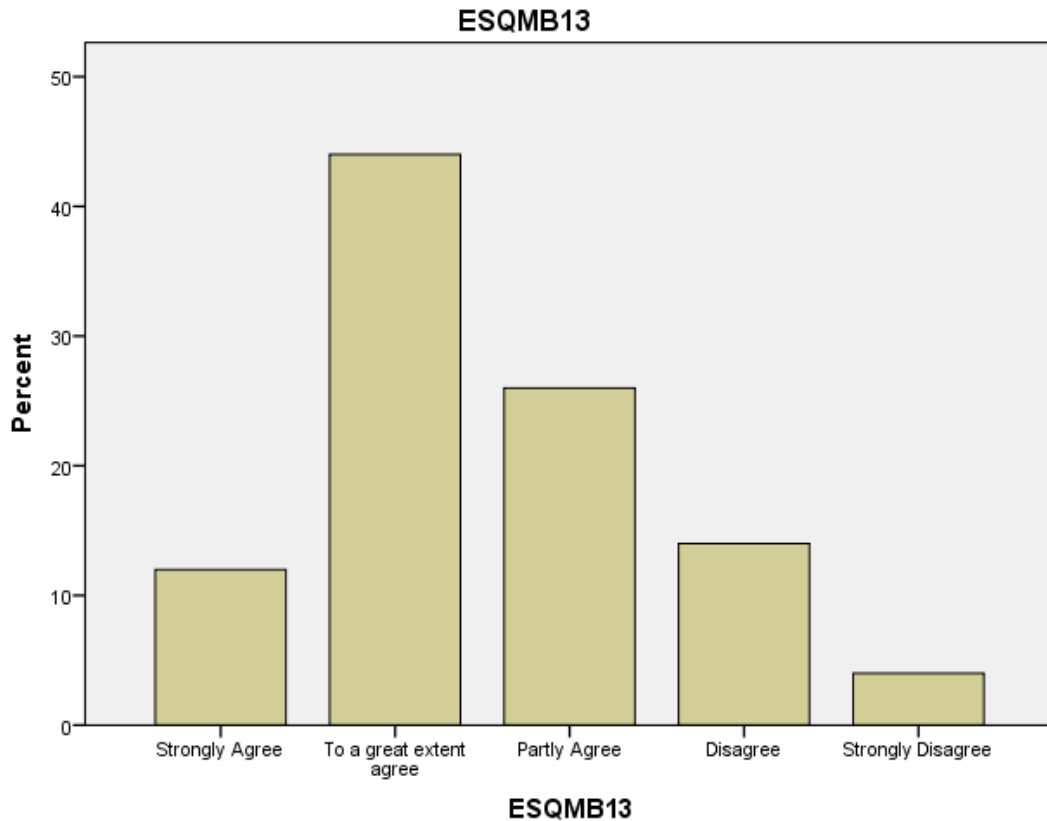


Figure 3 shows the percentage distribution of responses regarding the economic situation of bride as the driver of dowry. More than 40% respondents greatly agree that economic situation of migrant bride family does affect the dowry prevalence. It is important to see that quite a few people strongly disagree with this.

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