

Exploring Divorce Reasons in Love and Arranged Marriages: A Phenomenological Study in West Bengal

Using Interpretative Phenomenological study analysis, this study has tried to shed light on the major reasons for divorce in both arranged and love marriages, particularly focused on five districts of West Bengal, India. We conducted in-depth interviews (IDI) with 15 divorcees (each lasting between 25-45 minutes). Findings suggested in love marriages, common reasons for divorce were problems in adjustment, behaviour issues, in-law interference, financial issues, torture, and extra-marital affairs. In arranged marriages, often stated reasons were in-law interference, lack of pre-marriage information, dowry, torture, and extra-marital affairs. It's worth noting that in arranged marriages there was more evidence of excessive in-laws' interference, brutality, and extramarital affairs compared to love marriages. Arranged and love marriage, both have their own sets of merits and demerits. The goal is to raise awareness so that couples can address these issues early on.

Keywords: *Divorce, Marriage, India, Phenomenological Study*

Background

The rising divorce rate is a significant contemporary trend, reflecting evolving dynamics in marriages and companionships. It underscores the need for discussions on relationship challenges and highlights the legal, financial, and social implications of divorce. Social scientists have conducted extensive research into divorce rate trends, not only to explore the significant impact of divorce on families and individuals (Holden, 1991; Ross, 1999) but also its connection with cultural values (Toth, 2009). Marriage, as a social union, represents the intimate connection of two individuals who come together with the shared intention of building a lifelong partnership (Faye, 2013), often expressed with the commitment to stay together 'forever' (Thara, 1997). But every coin has two sides, marriage is on the one side and divorce is on the opposite side. Divorce is a complex psycho-social phenomenon that is initiated by a number of emotional, behavioral, and social reasons (Kaneez S., 2021). Divorce does not occur for a single reason. There are many reasons that people have to experience before the completion of the whole process (Qamar, 2021). The contemporary shifts in values and societal awareness are reshaping traditional notions of marriage and family. Globally, there's a modern trend that views marriage and family life as non-essential to human fulfillment and existence. Single parenting, and assisted reproductive technologies, including cloning, reflect evolving family ethics (Janetius, 2019). Rogers (1972) regards these changes as a positive move towards greater spousal freedom. Divorce rates are increasing all over the world. In Western countries, the divorce rate is considerably higher than in developing nations like India. While the prevalence of divorce has been increasing over time in India, it remains lower compared to many other countries. State-wise, West Bengal comes out as one of the major states with high divorce rates in India.

Marriage in the Indian and West Bengal context

India's diverse culture includes varied customary practices, including marriage, divorce, and family. These practices differ based on religion, caste, tribe, region, and other factors. Marriage is believed to be irrevocable in India (Girase, 2016). The main purpose of marriage is to establish a family, to produce children, and to enhance the family's economic and social position. Indian traditional custom presents a wide array of practices ranging from marriage by capture to mutual love and elopement (Gupta, 1976). The key distinction between love and arranged marriage is the decision-making process. Love marriage involves individuals choosing their partners based on love and companionship, while arranged marriage places the

decision in the hands of parents or kin. Arranged marriages tend to be endogamous, often based on factors like race, religion, class, and caste (Dyson, 1983; Allendorf, 2016; Sarkar, 2020).

Over time, the marriage practices are evolving. In the past, due to limited education, most Indian women were characterized as ignorant, superstitious, and constrained by traditional roles. However, in contemporary India, especially in urban areas, rapid social change, and modernization are empowering women and challenging traditional values (Kaneez S., 2021). Women are increasingly seeking independence, while men often cling to traditional roles. This clash between modernity and tradition has led to evolving gender dynamics in India, highlighting the deep-rooted nature of these societal patterns (Pothen, 1989). The traditional joint family structure is gradually evolving into nuclear families. This transition is attributed to the impacts of industrialization and the ensuing urbanization (Agarwala, 1962; (Niranjan, 2005). Research by Niranjan (1998) indicates a noticeable increase in nuclear families across various regions of the country over the years. Changing family structures in India are impacting marriage dynamics by promoting individual autonomy in partner selection, fostering economic independence, delaying marriages for career pursuits, and encouraging inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. These shifts are also influencing the way arranged marriages are approached and are redefining gender roles within marriages, resulting in a more diverse and complex marital landscape in the country. Several studies have highlighted a decrease in arranged marriages and a slight increase in love marriages (Allendorf K. P., 2016; Kaur, 2014; Uberoi, 2006). The role of parents' choice of their children's life partner is still there (Cherlin, 2012) but parents now give importance to daughter consent and consider their happiness (Banerji, 2021). But mostly this modification can be observed among the urban, well-educated middle-class family (Cherlin, 2012).

Some regional ethnographic studies have suggested that arranged marriage may be under threat as there is an apparent growth in love marriages, especially in Haryana (Chowdhury, 2007), Delhi (Mody, 2008), West Bengal (Allendorf K. &, 2016), Ladakh (Aengst, 2014), Gujarat (Netting, 2010), and Andhra Pradesh (Still, 2011). In his study, Allendorf K. (2016) found that along with other central region states West Bengal stood out with high and declining parental control and showed a declining trend in meeting the spouse on the wedding day. From 1970s to 2000s, there was only one percent increase in Inter-caste marriage in West Bengal.

Divorce in the Indian and West Bengal context

Divorce was once unheard of in Hindu law, considering marriage as an unbreakable bond. Manu asserted that a husband couldn't release his wife through sale or abandonment, emphasizing the permanence of marriage. However, when established custom allowed divorce, it held legal weight. Kautilya's Arthashastra allowed mutual consent divorce for certain marriages, but Manu emphasized lifelong fidelity. This situation got changed with the introduction of divorce in the 1955 Hindu Marriage Act (Agarwal, 2014). In Indian society, divorce is a sensitive and somewhat secretive topic, largely due to existing social stigmas.

Globalization, economic independence for women, and reduced social stigma around divorce are reshaping traditional marriage norms (Janetius, 2019). Numerous attempts have been made to formulate explanations for marital breakdowns, mainly in Western countries. Among them, the Social exchange theory is the most used and acknowledged theory. One of the most influential approaches within social exchange theory is the interdependence theory of relationships (Thibaut, 1959). At its core, the interdependence theory focuses on two pivotal concepts: outcomes and evaluations of outcomes. According to this theory, the outcomes of a continuing relationship are explained in terms of rewards received and costs incurred by each partner. Rewards encompass anything considered beneficial and pleasurable by an individual, while costs are defined as elements detrimental to their interests, such as embarrassment, anxiety, or pain (Klein, 1996). The magnitude of experienced rewards within a relationship varies depending on the individual's needs, values, and how well these align with their partner's performance. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) identified two vital outcome evaluation types: the personal comparison level of outcomes and the comparison level for alternatives. The personal comparison level reflects what an individual believes their outcomes in the relationship should be, shaped by personal experiences and observations. If rewards exceed costs based on this standard, the relationship is considered satisfactory. Conversely, the comparison level for alternatives represents the lowest possible outcomes outside the current relationship, and individuals weigh other options in terms of rewards and costs. Decisions to stay or leave a relationship depend on the balance of outcomes between the ongoing relationship and available alternatives, as per the interdependence theory (Thibaut, 1959). Levinger (1976, 1965) proposes that marital strength results from the interplay of attractions (affection, financial benefits, etc.), barriers (obligations, external pressures), and alternatives (perceptions of life outside marriage). When attraction decreases or barriers weaken, individuals are more inclined toward divorce. In the dissolution model, Edwards (1981) suggest that reduced barriers and increased alternatives have a negative impact on commitment. When the comparison level of

alternatives is high, and marital outcomes are unsatisfactory, commitment to the marriage decreases. This theoretical explanation provides an explanation of marital breakdown due to infidelity, domestic violence, family and compatibility issues.

In India, Under the Hindu Marriage Act, of 1955 primarily there are three main theories under which divorce is granted, they are- The guilt theory or Fault theory, Consent theory, and Irretrievable breakdown theory of divorce.

1) *The Guilt or Fault Theory:* Under the Fault or Guilt theory, divorce is allowed when one party commits a matrimonial offense, and only the innocent party can seek divorce. But the major drawback of this theory is if both parties are at fault, there is no remedy available. This theory forms the basis for framing most grounds of judicial separation and divorce under 'Section 13(1)' of the Hindu Marriage Amendment Act, 1976. The Act specifies nine grounds, including adultery, cruelty, desertion, conversion to a non-Hindu religion, incurable mental illness, severe physical diseases, taking sannyasa (a holy order), and presumption of death.

2) *The Consent Theory:* The rationale behind this theory is that since marriage is a matter of free choice, individuals should also have the freedom to end it willingly. Critics argue that this may encourage hasty divorces and dissolution of marriages even for minor incompatibilities, potentially promoting immorality. The Marriage Laws (Amendment) Act of 1976 introduced Section 13B in the Hindu Marriage Act, establishing mutual consent as a valid ground for divorce. Section 13-B allows all parties to a marriage to jointly petition the district court for divorce, provided certain conditions are met: First, the spouses must have lived apart for at least one year, indicating a significant separation. Second, they must have been unable to cohabit during this time. Third, the decision to dissolve the marriage must be unanimous and free from coercion, deception, or improper control.

3) *The Irretrievable Breakdown Theory:* This theory is the most controversial theory in legal jurisprudence and based on a contentious legal concept rooted in the belief that marriage is built on love, affection, and mutual respect. If these essential elements are irreparably damaged to the point where spouses can't coexist peacefully and enjoy the benefits of marriage, it's argued that continuing the marriage in name only is pointless. The Hindu Marriage Act lists specific grounds for divorce in Section 13, but recognizing the evolving nature of marriage and societal changes, the Supreme Court has expressed a growing concern for including irretrievable breakdown as a divorce ground. Currently, the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, doesn't recognize irretrievable breakdown as a ground for divorce, but there's a push for its inclusion

to address marriages that are essentially dead due to changed circumstances. These conditions ensure that divorce by mutual consent is based on a genuine desire to end the marriage.

In contemporary Hindu law, all three divorce theories are acknowledged, allowing divorce based on any of them. Initially, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 primarily relied on the fault theory and outlined nine fault-based grounds in Section 13(1) for which either the husband or wife could initiate divorce, along with two fault-based grounds in Section 13(2) for the wife's sole use. In 1964, an amendment introduced changes to Section 13(1) in the form of Section 13(1A), recognizing two grounds related to marriage breakdown. The 1976 amendment Act added two more fault-based divorce grounds specifically for the wife and introduced a new Section 13B to facilitate divorce by mutual consent. The various grounds of divorce are- adultery, cruelty, desertion, conversion, insanity, leprosy, venereal disease, renunciation, presumption of death, wife's special grounds for divorce (pre-act polygamous marriage, rape, sodomy or bestiality, non-resumption of cohabitation after a decree or order of maintenance, repudiation of marriage etc. These legal theories and statutes cover some major grounds for divorce, but divorce petitions are often rooted in various underlying factors. Based on primary data, some Indian literature has highlighted several core reasons for divorces in India, including role conflicts (Girase R. D., 2016; Vincent, 2018; Amri, 2022), early marriages (Mundu, 2018), financial difficulties (Bayle, 2017; Kumar, 2015; Scott, 2013), sexual incompatibility (Malik, 2021; Agarwal N. M., 2019), substance abuse, infidelity (Vasudevan, 2015), childlessness, and domestic violence (Faye, 2013; Pathak, 2020), etc. The reasons for divorce can differ significantly based on factors such as age difference, religion, cultural background, family structure, and even the type of marriage.

In India, 81% of marriages are arranged without dating or courtship, with a 94% success rate and low divorce rates (Janetius, 2019). Also, recently the Supreme court of India stated that most divorces are arising from love marriages only (Justice BR Gavai and Sanjay Karol). Due to the data constraints, there has been a scarcity of Indian literatures to explore the reasons on why divorces are happening more in the love marriages. More rigorous studies are needed at the country or state-level to build a stronger evidence base. No publish study exist to date, using primary or secondary data, to comprehend the reasons behind divorce by marriage types. This study has the objectives to shed lights on the major reasons of divorce in both arranged and love marriages, particularly focused on West Bengal, India.

Data source and Methodology

This study used qualitative research design for exploring divorce as it delves deep into the emotional, contextual, and subjective aspects of this complex experience. It offers rich insights into individual perspectives and cultural influences that quantitative methods may miss. Its flexibility, ethical sensitivity, and capacity to guide policymakers make it a powerful tool for understanding divorce comprehensively. To focus on individuals' lived experiences and interpretations and to explore the deep emotional and contextual intricacies of divorce, this study employs the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This analysis integrates elements from phenomenology and hermeneutics to create a method that is both descriptive and interpretative. It emphasizes the importance of understanding how things appear and speak for themselves, while also recognizing that every phenomenon is subject to interpretation. IPA is firmly grounded in the idiographic approach (Smith, 2021), which involves in-depth analysis of individual cases and the examination of participants' unique perspectives within their specific contexts. This analysis prioritizes exploring each case thoroughly before drawing general conclusions. In IPA, the focus remains on the particular rather than the universal, enabling researchers to formulate precise, context-specific statements about study participants based on detailed case exploration. It allows for a nuanced understanding of participants' subjective perspectives, shedding light on their unique journeys through the divorce process and offering us to understand the core reasons for divorce by the two different types of marriage (i.e. love and arranged marriage) in West Bengal, India.

Selection of the study area

India has a huge population. It is not possible for one to carry out a 'representative study' with limited time and funds. Even to carry out a study in a state like West Bengal is hard. So, this study is confined to divorced individuals in five districts of West Bengal, they are- North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Calcutta, Howrah, and Hooghly. West Bengal, renowned for its dynamic women's empowerment and feminist movement, has seen notable shifts in women's roles and status. Education and economic empowerment, coupled with industrialization and urban migration, have redefined traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. These changes influence household dynamics, kinship, and behaviours of both men and women. The state's strong feminist culture has also contributed to reduced divorce stigma, gender equality promotion, and support networks, empowering individuals with the agency to seek divorce when needed. West Bengal stands out as a significant state with a high prevalence of divorce (Census, 2011; NFHS 2019-21), making it a pertinent focus. Additionally, regional familiarity facilitates communication on this sensitive topic in these selected districts of this state.

Ethical Consideration

Before collecting data, ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) in Mumbai, India. In the field, participants were assured that their identities and information would be kept confidential. All the interviews were recorded with participant's permission. They were also informed about their right to stop the interview at any point if they wished.

Data collection

There is no rule regarding the sample size for IPA. It depends on the depth of analysis of a single case, the richness of individual cases, and how the researcher wants to compare or contrast the cases. To obtain authentic and comprehensive data for contextualizing findings, we employed purposive sampling with a homogeneous sample. We conducted in-depth interviews (IDI) with 15 divorcees (each lasting between 25-45 minutes) to address study objective. The eligibility criteria for this interview was: (1) divorced at least 6 months before the interview; (2) resident of any of these five selected districts of West Bengal; (3) ready to participate; and (4) not remarried. For data collection, a semi-structured interview guide was employed, followed up by relevant probing during the interviews. Some specific questions were asked to the individuals- What was your age at the time of marriage? How did your marriage happen? How was your relationship with your partner and his/her family? What were the major problems in your marriage that led to your decision to have a divorce?

Process of Analysis

We employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, 1996) as our methodological framework. This approach allowed us to delve into the profound nuances of the data, exploring both its textural dimension (what was experienced) and its structural facets (how it was experienced, including the conditions, situations, and contextual elements). The data, originally in Bengali, was meticulously transcribed and subjected to multiple readings to gain a deep understanding, with a focus on identifying statements of significant import. These significant statements, carefully selected to address our research objective, were then extracted and accompanied by a memo for each one, encapsulating our initial insights. Subsequently, these significant statements were coded in English, while ensuring that the codes retained their essence and closely reflected the original sense of the data.

Result

Table 1 provides an overview of the background details of the 15 respondents in our study. It reveals that a significant portion falls in the 31-45 age range and got married between 18-25 years old. Most respondents had marriages lasting 5-10 years, and love marriages were more common than arranged ones. Notably, in all cases, the wives were younger than their husbands, with an age difference ranging from 1 to 23 years. The majority resided in urban areas, and there were more female participants. In terms of ethnicity, the general category was the most prevalent. When it came to educational differences between spouses, husbands having more education than wives was the prevailing scenario. Interestingly, some participants met their partners on their wedding day, while others knew their partners for years before marriage. Regarding divorce, mutual divorces were more common than contested ones, and a significant number of participants were the ones who initiated the divorce proceedings.

The study findings revealed a variety of themes in three categories, i.e. Reasons for divorce in Love marriages, Reasons for divorce in Arrange marriages, and Advice for the life partner selection.

Reasons for Divorce in Love Marriages

Adjustment issues

In love marriages, couples usually know each other well after spending years together. But sometimes, even with all that familiarity, there can be problems adjusting to married life. Meeting someone and living with them are two different experiences. Meeting someone can reveal their traits, but marrying them will teach how to deal with those traits on a daily basis. This journey can either strengthen a person or challenge them significantly. The change from being "boyfriend/girlfriend" to "husband/wife" can bring about shifts in behavior and require new ways of getting along. When couples struggle to adapt to these changes, it can result in adjustment issues, with some respondents noting that these issues start with expectation clashes. Participant 2 stated;

“For the first five years of our marriage, we had no major problems. Minor problems like financial issues and expectation clashes were there. I was not earning so much that I could take care of this new family as well as my parents and their well-being. I could not take her to different places, big restaurants, or luxury weekends which she might have expected from me.”

Participant 1 stated;

“I was a full-time Ph.D. student and she works at a different place. We thought we would manage the long-distance marriage. We were friends and then dated for years. But marriage is more than everything. Marriage comes with several responsibilities and expectations. She expected me to come at her place, even if it was a normal fever or cold. This became harder for me to fulfill her expectations all the time. She told me, “Whenever I need you, you just make excuses; Why did you get married then?”. I had several other commitments, I could not simply live with her. Later, I understood that expectations were so different for a boyfriend, and when that person becomes a husband, the expectations will change ... Her continuous statement was I didn't take responsibility for her and our relationship. Also, she complained that I didn't cook or go for groceries with her, which all the other couples usually do at this phase.”

Sometimes, miscommunication can also create discomfort in marital relationship. If couples often argue, feel distant, or don't trust each other, it can lead to divorce. When they can't talk and understand each other, some decide to end the marriage to find happiness elsewhere. For an example, one of the participants (Participant 6) said;

“After a year of our marriage, she had the chance to do a post-doctoral program at Philadelphia University. We were concerned about managing a long-distance relationship, but we decided to give it a try. However, after about six or seven months of her being there, miscommunication became a problem. We often found ourselves with conflicting schedules, which led to daily arguments. I tried to explain, but it was hard for her to understand.”

In India, parents still play a significant role in selecting their children's partners, even though there are new ways people form couples. To date, "Love marriages" aren't widely accepted, and arranged marriages are more common in India. Once married, adapting to a new family custom or making a new member feel comfortable in the family both can be challenging, especially if there are problems with in-laws. How in-laws behave depends on how readily they accept the new family member. At times, disagreements with family members can lead to adjustment problems for the couple.

Participant 12 reported;

“Initially, as a couple we had no any adjustment issues. All of that started with continuous disagreement between my wife and my mother. She and my mother didn't have the same mindset. Every day I had to go through all of those fights. They even fought over food. I didn't like those things, usually got frustrated. Some days I fought with my mother and some days with her. The situation became more difficult when she couldn't get pregnant despite many attempts. I didn't blame her for it because I understood how much effort she was putting into trying to have a child. But my mother got frustrated

more and always blamed her. Another way, she was not the one who can listen those statements silently. These fights brought so much negativity to our relationship. She expected me to stand for her all the time and protest for her. I did but that was not enough for her.”

Couples can face difficulties in maintaining personal space in their marriage, which can involve issues with physical and emotional boundaries. This includes disagreements over organizing living spaces, managing personal belongings, and setting boundaries. Some couples may feel emotionally suffocated in their marriage due to over dependency. Balancing time between the marriage and individual social lives, including friendships and personal interests, can also lead to conflicts. Participant 2 said;

“We had personal space issues. She called me frequently during working hours and questioned me about my whereabouts, even if I was slightly late. Over time, this escalated to the point where she monitored my movements and expected constant updates. I felt restricted and had to seek permission for my personal interests, like theater and films. It became suffocating, stifling my individuality.”

He also added;

“She was so emotionally dependent on me. She would get upset over little things. Whenever we argued, I had to keep making her feel better, and it was really suffocating.”

Behavioural issues

Even though, people marry to their chosen partners, still they often experience behavioural issues. In some stories that we heard from the participants, partner’s behaviour played a major negative role in marriages. Causes range from a lack of understanding, trust, to extreme level of possessiveness, insecurity, dominance and anger issues. Some participants couldn’t identify these problems before the marriage and some have identified some of these issues but could not get out of the relationship that turns into an unhappy marriage.

Participant 7 explained that her husband's dominant and rude behavior was the main reason for their divorce.

“I couldn't express my emotions and opinions because he dominated me so much. I declined his marriage proposal due to his behavior, but he attempted suicide. He emotionally pressured me for the marriage. The main issue in our marriage was his extreme rudeness and disrespect. He often imposed his preferences on me, even forcing me to watch movies I had no interest in. One day, we had three hours long arguments just because I came home late from work. Every day was so suffocating with him.”

Participant 2 mentioned that his wife's extreme insecurity, possessiveness, and constant demands made him very agitated and led him to choose divorce.

“She wanted me all the time. She made excuses and fights to get my attention and time. Most of the time, she had a high sexual urge but I could not enjoy sex after all of those fights. “I was mentally stressed. I wanted to study but couldn’t, how can I enjoy sex with her?”. I wanted to shine in my field but these fights made me weak, I was frustrated and agitated. For me, Love is freedom, support and care but for her Love was only me with lots of possessiveness, demands, insecurities, and co-dependency. I could not breathe freely... If I’m talking to my female students, even if a sister, she started to doubt me. We had a maid in our house. She doubted me with her also.”

Participant 3 shared about her husband's dual nature and rude behavior that she could not identify while in a love relationship with that person.

“I had a picture-perfect love relationship with him. But a person cannot pretend all the time. If you can see a good side of a person eventually you will see the bad side also. He had anger issues. I remember, one day I pour Dal into a bowl and mistakenly it slightly dropped outside; he behaved so rudely, so badly even in front of my parents. He had two shades; he cared for my family on one side and pinched me for that on the other side.”

Participant 1 described how revengeful his wife was.

“We decided to start to live together after the stressful long-distance time. Hardly 4-5 days passed, she said, “I don’t want to have sexual intercourse with you.” And after 2-3 days, she said, “I don’t love you anymore.” I said, “When you don’t love me, then why did you come to stay with me?” she answered, “I wanted to check whether I truly unlove you or not.” She shifted to another room. She slept alone, without me. Things started getting worse. My academic performance got devastatingly hampered. I was mentally devastated. I was crying in one room, and she was laughing and talking to her friends in another. She didn’t even come to console me. I have gone through so much inferiority complex, jealousy, anxiety, and stress. Whenever I went to love her, she mistreated me and denied my love. Her continuous statement was that I didn’t take responsibility for her and our relationship. I tried to make her happy. But still, she believed that I did those things to win her back and I’ll be the same again if she started to love me again. She went in trekking without even telling me. One Sunday, I told her she should inform me so I could join her. She rudely replied that she disliked introducing me to her friends. When I was at the job, she texted me, saying “You have not cleaned dishes well; see the evidence”. I had no idea why she was doing that.”

Participant 10 dealt with the careless behaviour of her husband. She stated;

“He lost the job that my father found for him. Again, I found a work for him, there also he did the same. Somewhere he did not have any urge to work, or take our responsibility. He wanted a boy child. As a father one should care, love and support his child, he didn’t do 1% of it. I approached him for the divorce with one condition that he will not be able to meet our baby anymore, he didn’t say No to it. I could sense it all. So, I leave him.”

Torturous environment

Domestic violence can cause a divorce when the hurt and fear become too much. Sometimes, it's because people want to be safe, or the law gets involved. If there are kids, parents might want them to be safe too. Divorce can help people start a better life and heal.

Participant 3 said;

“Heated arguments, verbal abuse, and even sometimes physical abuse- all came into the scenario. Initially, he felt sorry and apologized also, but as days passed, the efforts became less, lesser, and least. He took a large amount as a loan from my father, when I requested him to repay the amount then he has beaten me up, and verbally abused me.... To torture me, he deliberately woke up my son and frightened him severely. He abused me verbally in front of my child. He prayed for my child’s death. I was helpless. That was the day when I finally decided to leave him.”

Again participant 12 stated;

“Everything has changed rapidly in a negative direction. I came to know she got involved in an extramarital relationship. When I questioned her about this, she abused me, slapped me, and even tried to physically harm me. When I saw that phase then I had to accept the fact that our relationship was coming to an end. I firmly decided to get divorced.”

Violence has several forms, it could be physical or mental or sexual. One of the participants experienced such mental torture that push him to leave his marriage. Participant 2 stated;

“Fights became Cruelty. Due to the heated fights, my daughter could not eat, sleep, or read properly. she had to see her father this way “Angry, verbally abusive, frustrated” when she used to see me as a “Cool, calm, and composed father”. And so, I took my stand for my daughter and for myself.”

Financial Issues

Financial issues can strain a marriage and potentially lead to divorce in several ways. For an example Participant 10 stated;

“We have a deficit of 1.5 lakh rupees. I told him to manage and he said “I have nothing to manage, you ask your parents.” I didn’t want that. I approached my colleagues. One of them agreed to give me

money but he approached me to spend a day with him for the money. I told this to my ex-husband, and he said not to approach him anymore. He tried somewhere for the money but couldn't get the amount so he told me if I can think to approach that person again for the money."

Participant 3 said;

"He was becoming a greedy person. He told me that he had a major loan. So, he issued a credit card in my name. Money was deducted and I got messages continuously. I had to pay his loan installments. You won't believe I couldn't save my wedding jewellery. One day he just threw my child's food because I didn't give him my earnings. He said, "When you cannot give me the money then how can your child eat this food?".... But somehow, I didn't give up on him and decided to give him another chance. It was my biggest fault. He didn't change at all. In 2018, apart from my all jewellery he sold out our home. My parents strictly told me to take my decision."

Lastly, Participant 12 mentioned;

"My wife was very greedy. She always wanted more and more things. Even though we both had jobs, she pressured me to earn even more money. She started doing extra work like yoga classes to fulfill her desires. She didn't help with household chores, which made my mother upset. She stretched yoga classes from 7 am to 9 pm. I didn't mind her working, but her constant need for more became too much for me to handle."

Extra-marital Relationship issues or Infidelity

Among the various threats to marital relationship, a major one is extra-marital affair. It often shatters one's trust and emotional bond with his or her partner. Sometimes, for the daily arguments some people feel out of love in the marriage and sometimes people opt extra-marital as better option. Around 4 out of 8 participants who married with their beloved one experienced extra-marital affair issue. One of these 8 participants (Participant 2) mentioned;

"At that time, you can say after 8 years of our marriage, I felt I wanted someone else to get back into my life."

Participant 8 said;

"The problems began when my husband started spending a lot of time at my brother's house after my brother got married. After being married for over a decade, I had never seen such a disconnect between us. I was shocked to learn that he was having an affair with my brother-in-law. Two years later, they left to be together, but later they returned and apologized to us. My brother forgave his wife, but I couldn't forgive my husband. I was determined to get a divorce, so I did."

Participant 6 said;

“She started to ignore my calls, I was helplessly tired. I didn’t get any evidence of her extramarital relationship before the divorce but after the divorce, she immediately married to one of her batchmates. It is my perception that she was engaged in an extramarital affair before the divorce, otherwise it is not possible to engage in a relationship so soon.”

Participant 3 said;

“I used to get calls from different women on his phone.”

Role of In-laws

Findings revealed that parent-in-laws played a significant role in divorce. Participant 10 said;
“I was on good terms with my husband’s family at both times before and after the marriage. When we got a new flat and needed help to manage our baby along with the work, my mother-in-law initially agreed but later changed her mind and ditched me, causing problems. For her I had to suffer a lot, even later I had to sell our new flat.”

Participant 3 said;

“Even though my mother-in-law liked me before our marriage, I faced insecurity issues from her side especially in the first two years of our marriage. She worried that I might take her son away and tried to create problems between me and my husband. But my husband took stand for me at that time.”

Reasons for Divorce in Arranged Marriages

Role of in-laws

In-law interference can lead to divorce if it causes constant conflicts, trust issues, and strains the marriage, making it hard for the couple to find happiness together. In arranged marriages, in-law’s intervention can be seen as a prime reason of divorce. most of time, women participants reported that they have experienced brutal and cruel behavior of in-laws because of their money-minded nature. For an example, Participant 13 said;

“Right after our wedding, my husband's sister and mother told me that there was no place for me in their house because the flat wasn't in my husband's name. His sister even suggested selling my jewellery to buy a bed and cupboard. They kept telling me that I couldn't cook or keep the house clean, no matter how much I tried. They thought I was pretending to be sick. In the summertime, my mother-in-law forced me to turn off the fan and say, 'You're not Ambani's daughter; go sit on the stairs like everyone else.

Who will pay the bills, your father or your husband?' It was really frustrating. I had an opportunity to work as a nurse, but when I asked for my mother-in-law's permission, she told my husband, 'If your wife works outside, tell her to go back to her parent's house.'

Participant 9 said;

"At the time of my first night, my mother-in-law came into our room and asked me to give all the jewellery. She is the ultimate head of the family. He forced me to give all of my wedding jewellery to his mother. I tried to befriend his mother but she didn't adjust at all. She never give me enough food, most of the time she gave me stale food."

Participant 4 said;

"My mother-in-law first gave me a nighty to wear in the house after a certain time, she started to say "How can you wear a nighty in the house? Did you see anywhere sons-in-law wear nighty? Shame on you. Your parents could not give you proper sanskara". They didn't allow me to talk with neighbors. I had a phone, but they did not allow me to call my parents... My son used to stay up all night and sleep until 5 am the next morning. Even if I woke up at 7 am in the morning, she kept taunting me "Which kind of behavior is this as a son-in-law?". My mother-in-law did not allow me to go to the kitchen. They only gave me stale foods."

But one of the male respondents explained how his mother-in-law broke his marriage because he refused to stay with his wife's family after marriage, Participant 5 mentioned;

"Both of these families agreed to the marriage. Just after a month, we registered our marriage, but her mother declined marriage. Her mother restricted her from even talking to me. She gave me condition for that marriage that I have to stay at their home after marriage, I denied that proposal.... All the problems created between us because of her mother. Me and my ex-wife did not have so many problems, as such. All the marriages have normal problems and we had that too. Within one month of our marriage, her mother took her to their home for 20 days. That became a pattern. If she stayed for three days in a week at my house, then she stayed at her maternal house for the next four days. Her mother didn't want her to stay with me. After these fights, her mother offered me to stay nearby their home again. Actually, her mother wanted me to leave my mother all alone, stay with her daughter, and give all my income to her daughter's hand so that her mother can rule. Her mother is full of herself, so dominating. She dominated her whole family; my ex-wife's father didn't utter a word against her and didn't say anything."

Misleading Information about partner

This is becoming an important leading reason of marital dispute mostly among the arranged married couples. In the study, 3 out of 7 participants accepted that they had the false information about their partners before marriage. As an example, Participant 4 said;

“To date, I particularly have no idea exactly what he was doing then and now, what was his educational qualification. Before marriage they agreed to give me permission for doing job, but later his mother never ever allowed me to read, give interviews, and go for job.”

Another Participant (Participant 11) said;

“After some time of our marriage, I came to know that he hadn't even passed his secondary exams, yet before marriage, he claimed to have completed his B.Com. I was shocked and hurt. I had no any idea about his occupation too.”

Participant 13 mentioned;

“After the marriage registration, my family got to know that there was no property or money on my husband's name.”

Dowry

Findings revealed that before marriage groom's side didn't demand for anything but after marriage when they didn't get what they wanted in the sake of marriage, they started to torture brides. On this context, Participant 4 said;

“When the marriage was in the discussion stage his parents told “We will not take anything. We only want your daughter”. But on the day of the Ashirbaad ceremony (a day before the marriage), they asked for one lakh rupees as travel costs. My father somehow collected that money and gave them. They just intended to have more and more money or jewellery from my parent's house. When I didn't want to take money from my parents for them my elder sister-in-law said to me, “If you can't take money from your parents, then do some business. Business means prostitution. I will give you customers at home.” I got pregnant. My mother-in-law said, “It is their tradition that my family has to pay the delivery costs, medicine costs, and all the pregnancy essentials costs”. And they demanded that it should be done in some private hospitals only. The minimum delivery cost was around 1 lakh. My parents tried in each and every possible way. Then they demanded a gold chain for my son.”

Participant 15 claimed;

“He was just so demanding. Once he wanted to buy a flat in Ranaghat and asked for five lakh rupees from my home for that purpose. Again, he expressed a desire for a particular bike and forced me to get the money from my father for that. He said, 'Look at what your father has given you during the wedding... I had PCOD. He and his family were well aware of this but still insisted on taking money from my father for the doctor's expenses.’”

Torturous Environment

Domestic violence can have several forms; it could be physical or mental or sexual. Participant 3 had to experience horrific sexual torture in her marriage, which led her to have divorce.

“That was my first night with him. Before I asked something to him, he started to get physical with me, even though he tried to force me. He satisfied himself and that's it. I cried all night in the bathroom, he didn't come to me for once... later I came to know he has hypersexual disorder. There was no particular time in a day, whenever he felt an orgasm he started to torture me sexually. He never asked me about my satisfaction, my pain, and my comfort. I had to have sex with him during my periods too. He used to see pornography all the time and forced me to fulfill his fantasies in any way. He might think that marriage gave him legal permission to have sex with a person in any condition.”

Participant 4 saw the brutal and cruel shades of her husband and his family within 2 years of her marriage. She said;

“I just delivered my baby. To torture me he stopped the pump water connection and fired house chore workers. I had to do all the work, bring the water from the ground floor, had to handle the baby even when it was just some months after my cesarean operation. When he went to the office then for him I had to prepare rice and chapatti along with fish curry and one vegetable dish. I did that. In the morning, while making his tiffin or food, I had to do all the house cleanings. It was one of his rules. While cooking, it is normal that we peel off all the vegetables we need and then dustbin the rest. But another rule was if I was peeling one potato, I had to peel it and dustbin the rest. And the dustbin was not in the same kitchen, it was outside. he stopped to bring food (milk, staples) for my son. my father came here and gave me some money to sustain myself. One day I bought one-kilo rice, and he saw it and threw it. When I and my parents got to know that they were planning to kill me, then my parents took me to the home.”

Extra-marital relationship or Infidelity

Findings have shown that infidelity is indeed a significant concern within marital relationships. The discovery of an affair can profoundly disrupt a marriage, often causing irreparable damage.

Participant 5 said;

“She used to upload her pictures, sometimes our pictures on social media, I observed that one boy liked her single photos and commented on her every photo. I questioned her “Is he your ex-boyfriend”, she answered “No, he is just like my brother” and insulted me so badly on the streets. But later I got to know about their extra-marital affair, her mother supported her to do this.”

Participant 11 said;

“He would talk romantically with the girl over the phone, sitting at home. He wasn't involved with only one girl; he was involved in a relationship with multiple girls like this.” He used to buy several SIM cards to talk to different girls. I had to endure these things.... He introduced me as his "brother-in-law" or "cousin" to his friends. He used to treat me like a stranger in front of others.”

Participant 14 said;

“I was 7 months pregnant, then my husband went to Coochbihar for business. Since then he hasn't contacted us. My elder daughter died, and I became mad. At that time, I delivered my younger daughter... After four years, I got to know about his extramarital affair from one of my nephews. At that moment he wanted divorce from me so that he could marry that second woman.”

Another incident reported by Participant 15, she said;

“After my heart-breaking miscarriage, I went to my maternal house for comfort and stayed there for a month. When I returned to my husband's place, something seemed off. I found out that his brother-in-law, claimed to be pregnant, even though his brother declared himself as “impotent”. I was shocked.... I caught my husband and his brother-in-law being intimate. I warned them, but they did it again. His brother-in-law told me that “Since my husband couldn't give me a baby, I took your husband for that”. That's when I decided to leave for good.”

Discussion

Findings suggested that in love marriages, even with years of familiarity, adjusting to married life can be challenging. The transition from being “boyfriend/girlfriend” to “husband/wife” can bring about shifts in behavior and communication patterns. Among love marriage couples, the most frequently reported reasons for divorce encompassed adjustment issues, behavioral issues, in-law interference, financial issues, torture, and extra-marital affairs. Conversely, in arranged marriages, the factors contributing to divorce often included in-laws' interference, pre-marriage misinformation about the partner, dowry, torture, and extra-marital affairs. It's

worth noting that in arranged marriages there was more evidence of excessive in-laws' interference, brutality, and extramarital affairs compared to love marriages. A Jaipur study found that love marriage couples have better marital adjustment than arranged marriage couples. In arranged marriages, the family use to involved deeply and that involvement continues throughout marriage life, almost in everything (Astha, 2017; Qamar, 2021).

The widely acclaimed Interdependence Theory of Relationships (Thibaut, 1959) provides a robust framework for comprehending the dynamics of marital breakdowns. This theory centers on the major balance of rewards and costs within relationships, where rewards indicate pleasure, and costs encompass adverse experiences. This balance can be destroyed for so many reasons, including adjustment issues, financial problems, role conflicts, childlessness, domestic violence, etc. Adjustment issues (i.e. lack of communication, understanding, intimacy) make partners incompatible with each other (Fura, 2018; Akter, 2012), sometimes this can be a major ground for divorce. How big these problems become depends on things like age, personality, and lifestyle (Khan, 2021). In our study, we found that some participants, especially those in love marriages, had these issues with their partners. But in arranged marriages, things were a bit different. Participants in arranged marriages expected to discover new things about their partners and were ready to make adjustments. That might be why they didn't face these problems as much or didn't get divorced over them. Some studies found that people with behavioral issues, such as rude, insecure, extreme possessiveness, revengeful, and careless attachment styles were more likely to get divorced (Akter, 2012). Another important factor for divorce is in-laws' interference. In some countries where it's customary for the bride to join the husband's family after marriage, like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India, interference from in-laws is a common factor leading to divorce (Qamar, 2021; Akter, 2012; Khan, 2021). A study of South Asian women in the United States found that in-laws can play a role in domestic violence, economic exploitation, and psychological abuse in such situations (Qamar, 2021; Raj, 2006). Issues like dowry disputes, not having children, tense relationships between the bride and her in-laws, and disagreements between the bride and her husband's family can all trigger in-law interference. When this interference goes on for a long time, it can harm the trust and understanding between the married couple, eventually causing marital problems (Qamar, 2021). In our study, we discovered that in love marriages, participants experienced domestic violence due to the behavioral issues of their partners. However, in arranged marriages, we noticed a significant participation of in-laws in these situations. In a Bangladesh study, it was observed that around 72.7% of respondents filed for divorce for dowry (Akter, 2012). Amato and Previti (2003) discovered that infidelity is the primary reason for divorce. This is because

extramarital affairs break trust, which is crucial in marriage (Akter, 2012; Amato, 2003). The rise of cell phone use has made it easier for people to have affairs because it facilitates personal communication. Harris (2013) pointed out that around 22–25% of married men and 11–15% of married women have been in extramarital relationships that resulted in divorce (Khan, 2021; Harris, 2013).

Divorce can happen for many different reasons, and it varies a lot from one marriage to another. It can also be different based on where you live or the culture you're from. In our study, some participants particularly those who had arranged marriages, said they got the wrong information about their partner before marriage, which created problems right from the start of their marriages. But what's important to know is that everyone in our study really tried hard to make their marriages work. Even when things were really tough, like when some people were treated badly, they still wanted to fix their marriages. One person in our study even stayed married for 18 years before deciding to get a divorce. The Interdependence Theory rightly explains that when the problems in a marriage become bigger than the good parts, that's when divorces usually happen.

Conclusion

This study has tried to uncover the main causes of divorce in both love and arranged marriages, particularly in West Bengal. The goal is to raise awareness so that couples can address these issues early on. In both types of marriages, it's crucial to really understand the partner before the marriage and also create an open space where one can talk about anything and everything with them. This study does not view divorce as a taboo nor does it advocate for divorce without valid reasons. After giving so much effort, when a marriage is not serving a good life to a person then that person should come out from that marriage. Everyone has the right to have a good and healthy life. The uniqueness of this paper is that it is not only restricted to women as the study participants, rather it includes both men and women. But this study has limitations too. The study is based on a very small sample size that restricts it from giving a definite conclusion. However, this study tried to bring out something different in the research platform and to give a new perspective to future researchers.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Background information of participants

Variables	Frequency	Variables	Frequency
Age-group		Educational Gap with Partner	
15-30	3	No gap	4
31-45	8	Husband more than Wife	7
45+	4	Wife more than Husband	4
Age at marriage		Known to your partner before Marriage (Years)	
Less than 18	1	At Wedding Day	1
18-25	8	Less than 1 year	6
26-30	4	2-5	7
30+	2	5+	1
Marriage Duration (Years)		Child composition	
less than 3 Years	3	No child	7
3-5	3	Son	3
5-10	5	Daughter	4
More than 10 Years	4	Both	1
Marriage Type		Working Woman (Respondent/ Wife)	
Love	8	No	7
Arrange	7	Yes	8
Age-gap with Partner		District-wise	
Less than 2 years	4	Kolkata	3
3-5	4	Hugli	3
6-10	6	Howrah	3
10+	1	North 24 Parganas	3
Place of Residence		South 24 Parganas	3
Rural	4	Divorce Type	
Urban	11	Mutual	13
Sex of Respondent		Contested	2
Male	5	Divorce Petitioner	
Female	10	Self	9
Caste		Opponent	3
Scheduled Caste	3	Both	3
Scheduled Tribe	1	Total (N)	15
General	11		

Source: Author calculation

