



Final Report

The Caste, Religion and Socio-Economic Factors in Punjabi Marriages

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Executive Summary

The research study titled “The Caste, Religion, and Socio-economic Factors in Punjabi Marriages” was designed to show a community perspective of the act of choosing spouse. The studies aim is to provide insight on the core values of the Punjabi community and how they are influenced by caste, religion, and socio-economic status in matrimonial ads. The research was conducted with the objective of determining core values used in matrimonial ads and how those values may be contributing to the arrangement of Punjabi marriages in Canada.

Methodology

The research team:

- The research team was comprised of a volunteer committee that gathered research from various sources of matrimonial ads available to the Punjabi community. The raw data was then meticulously analyzed and statistically interoperated to present the findings.
- The factors to be studied from the matrimonial ads were determined by the volunteer committee based on predominating issues of caste and other factors in arranging marriages in the Punjabi community.
- The scope of the study involved newspaper ads available to the Punjabi community, primarily in Brampton, as well as online matrimonial sites.
- Two focus groups were organized to gather a community perspective on the topic. The first focus group comprised of Punjabi men, a series of non-directive questions were asked to understand their perspective of marriage and the process of selecting a spouse. The second focus group also asked the same set of questions but was for Punjabi women. The probes and questions were in the same format to avoid discrepancy in analyzing the data and to clearly show the difference of opinion between men and women.

Major Findings

The institution of marriage is affected by various social, economic, cultural and geographical issues. For this purpose matrimonial ads from five Punjabi newspapers and one internet site were analysed. Table 2 highlights some important matrimonial related issues, those have major impact on the value, practice and institution of marriage among the Punjabi community. Caste was the core issue of a marriage, all the newspapers and internet matrimonial ads shows high percentage for demand of same caste for marriage. One paper has 100.0 percent matrimonial ads with demand of same caste as a major factor for marriage and other two papers have 98.0 percent ads for the same caste factor. Caste plays a crucial part in the completion of a marriage. Physical appearance and Economic consideration i.e. aspiration to settle down abroad were the two other major factors appeared in the matrimonial ads. One emerging issue of Immigration Swapping was also highlighted by different newspapers in the matrimonial ads. **The caste is as much of an issue in Canada as it is in Punjab, India.**

Major Recommendations

This forms a basis for further research to be conducted in order to obtain a better understanding of what happens to marriages that have focused on areas such as; caste, socioeconomic status etc. This research also supports the need to educate and spread awareness in the Punjabi Community about the prevalence of caste, socio economic and other factors. From this research it has become evident that the issues stated above are considered when marriages are arranged in Canada.

Outcome

The research study helped identify the need to develop programs to educate the community about the social prejudices associated with casteism.

Focus Group Reports:

Focus Group for Men:

A group of South Asian men were selected to participate in the focus group. All participants were above the age of 18, and were Canadian residents. The questions that were designed were from about various topics but our interest was only in the answers for questions related to South Asian Marriages.

Findings from the focus group:

- When asked if the caste system is an issue that exists in the Canadian Sikh community there was a positive response in which all members agreed that the caste system exists. It was discussed that caste is relevant to the Canadian Sikh community because of popular culture, and caste based Gurdwaras.
- One specific comment about the prominence of caste in marriage was “As educated men we are unable to say no to our parents/families if we decide we do not want to participate in these things, we compromise our own beliefs for our parents, and that is why the caste system continues”
- When asked the harm of allowing caste to exist, the general consensus was that the harm arises when two castes intersect through marriage. The parents of one person may not accept the other which will add pressure to the marriage.
- Members of the focus group were quick to point out that in matrimonial ads the emphasis is on caste and not characteristics of the boy or girl.
- It was brought up that the reason some caste marriages are valued is because of fear. There is a fear that if we do not keep our caste the legacy of it will not continue on.
- When asked how the institution of marriage had been affected in the Canadian Sikh community it was noted that members of the group felt that the marriage system had been commercialized through ‘immigration marriages’ in which case people make business deals through marriage.

Focus Group for Women:

A group of South Asian women (12) were selected to participate in the focus group. All participants were above the age of 18, and were Canadian residents. The questions that were designed were from about various topics but our interest was only in the answers for questions related to South Asian Marriages.

Findings from the focus group:

- The women expressed being powerless as parents tend to make decisions about marriages.
- The caste system is very much prevalent in the Sikh community. Even “Amritdhari” Sikh (devout Sikhs) practice caste prevalence in marriage.
- How do we know that caste is an issue in the Sikh community, the following answers were elicited and noted:
 - Gurdwaras based on caste
 - Predominantly, marriages are based on caste
 - Look at the matrimonial advertisements in newspapers
- Why is caste prevalence such a dominating factor in the community? The answers were:
 - Status in the community – higher caste marrying within higher castes
 - Prejudice against “lower” castes
 - Culture perpetuates prejudices against “lower castes”
- Are there other social evils? The answers were:
 - Preference of boys over girls
 - Female infanticide (even in Canada)
 - The prevalence of dowry
- What other issues are you concerned about? Answers were:
 - Excessive alcohol use by men
 - Excessive drug involvement by youth
 - Excessive work – no time for family

Findings:

Issue-wise distribution of Matrimonial ads from Different Punjabi Newspapers and Internet

Table-1						
ISSUES	Punjab Daily Post	Parvasi Weekly	Punjab Star	Hamdard	Ajit Weekly	Shaadi.Com
Social Factors (Caste)	16	69	12	49	47	8
Immigration Swapping	2	23	3	14	18	0
Economic Factors (desire/ wanted immigration)	12	2	12	11	70	0
Geographical and Cultural Factors	5	12	1	13	18	10
Education/ Professional Factors	4	1	-	17	93	4
Physical Appearance	8	64	2	12	84	10
Family's Socio-Economic Status	1	18	-	5	15	0
Miscellaneous (Focus on caste by amritdaris/consider astrology/no substance abuse/vegetarian/consider divorcee partner etc.)	3	2	-	8	48	10
Total Matrimonial ads	22	70	12	50	240	10

Note: Due to multiple responses total are more than hundred.

Issue-wise Percentage distribution of Matrimonial ads from Different Punjabi Newspapers and Internet

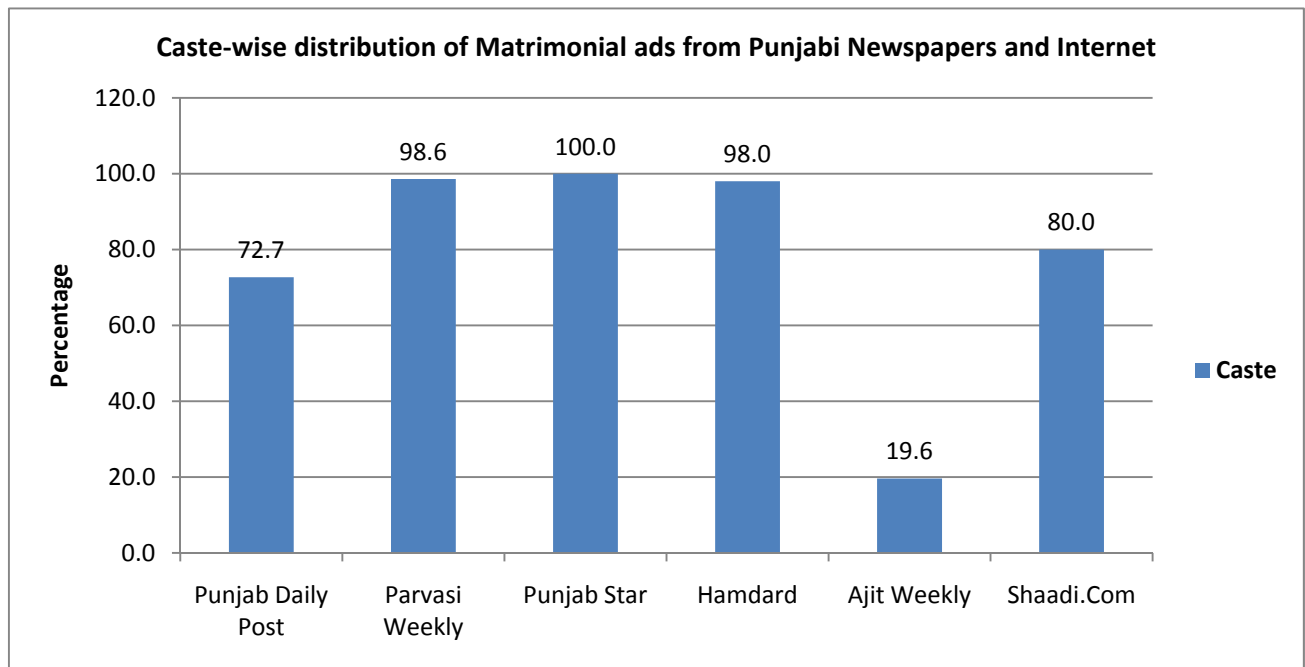
Table-2						
ISSUES	Punjab Daily Post	Parvasi Weekly	Punjab Star	Hamdard	Ajit Weekly	Shaadi.Com
Social Factors (Caste)	72.7	98.6	100.0	98.0	19.6	80.0
Immigration Swapping	9.1	32.9	25.0	28.0	7.5	0.0
Economic Factors (desire/wanted immigration)	54.5	2.9	100.0	22.0	29.2	0.0
Geographical and Cultural Factors	22.7	17.1	8.3	26.0	7.5	100.0
Education/ Professional Factors	18.2	1.4	0.0	34.0	38.8	40.0
Physical Appearance	36.4	91.4	16.7	24.0	35.0	100.0
Family's Socio-Economic Status	4.5	25.7	0.0	10.0	6.3	0.0
Miscellaneous (Focus on caste by amritdaris/consider astrology/no substance abuse/vegetarian/consider divorcee partner etc.)	13.6	2.9	0.0	16.0	20.0	100.0
Total Matrimonial ads	22	70	12	50	240	10

Note: Due to multiple responses total of percentages is more than hundred.

Caste-wise Percentage distribution of Matrimonial ads from Different Punjabi Newspapers and Internet

ISSUES	Punjab Daily Post	Parvasi Weekly	Punjab Star	Hamdard	Ajit Weekly	Shaadi.Com
Caste	72.7	98.6	100.0	98.0	19.6	80.0

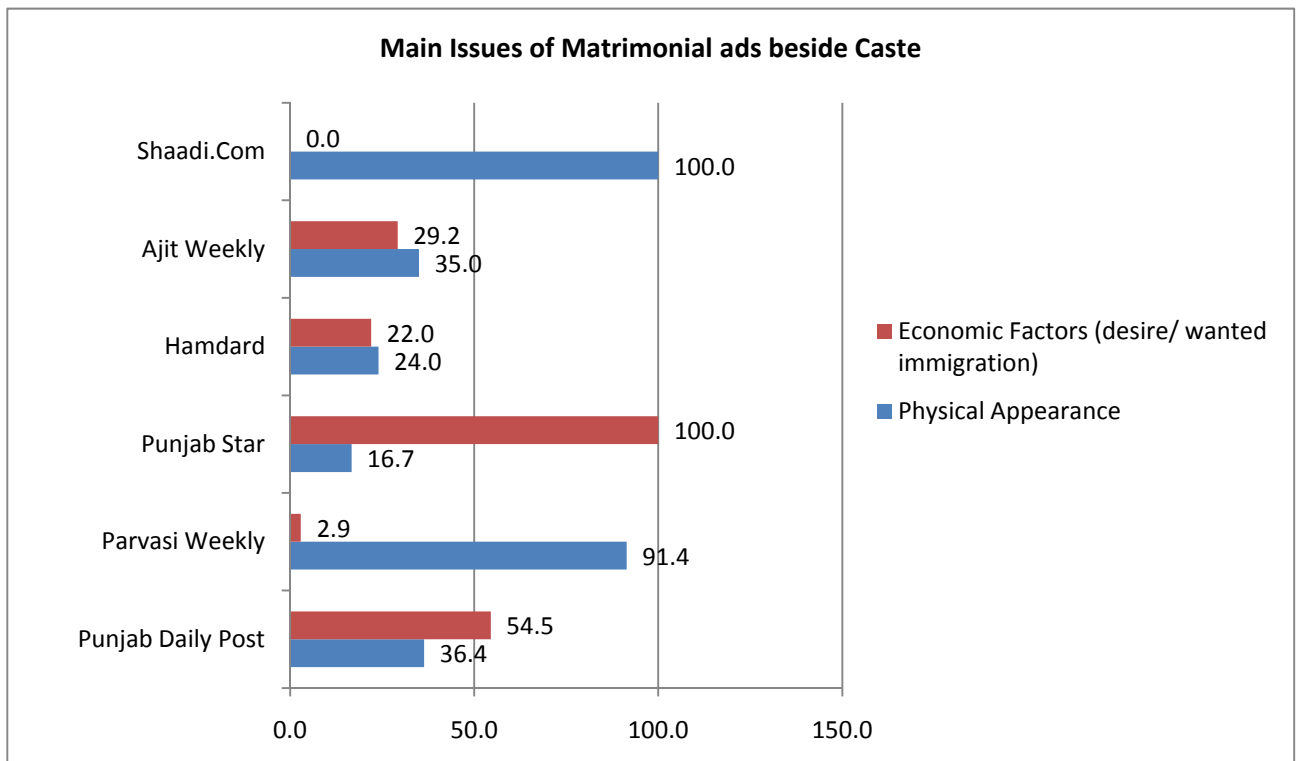
Note: Due to multiple responses total of percentages is more than hundred.



Main Issues of Matrimonial ads beside Caste

ISSUES	Punjab Daily Post	Parvasi Weekly	Punjab Star	Hamdard	Ajit Weekly	Shaadi.Com
Physical Appearance	36.4	91.4	16.7	24.0	35.0	100.0
Economic Factors (desire/ wanted immigration)	54.5	2.9	100.0	22.0	29.2	0.0

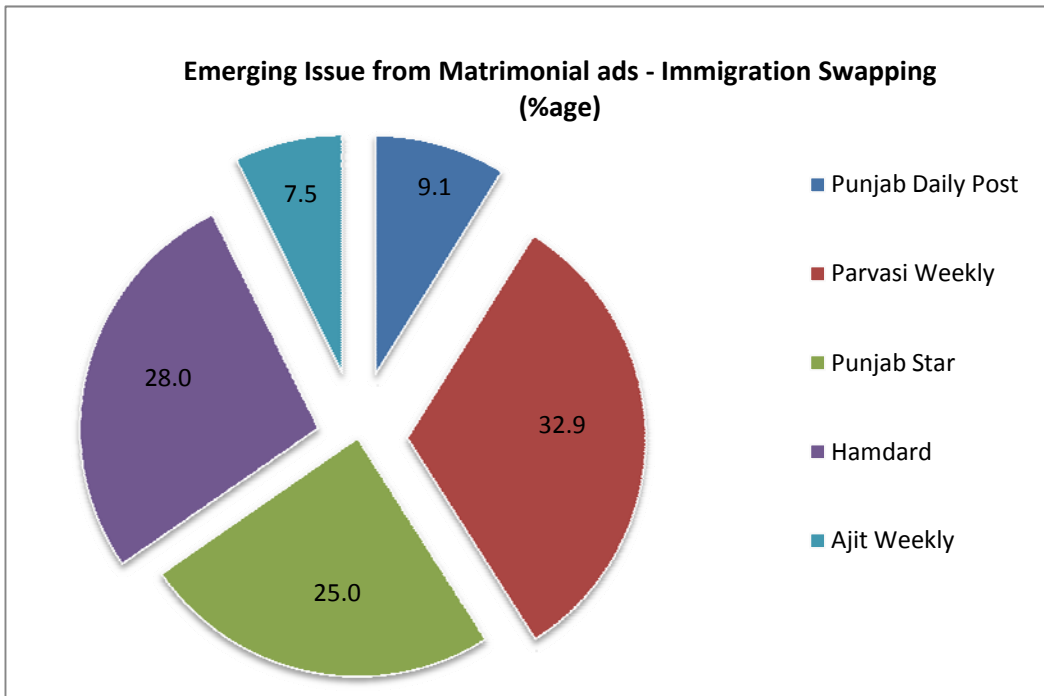
Note: Due to multiple responses total of percentages is more than hundred.



Emerging Issue from Matrimonial ads

ISSUES	Punjab Daily Post	Parvasi Weekly	Punjab Star	Hamdard	Ajit Weekly
Immigration Swapping	9.1	32.9	25.0	28.0	7.5

Note: Due to multiple responses total of percentages is more than hundred.



ABOUT PUNJABI COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

History of PCHS

Developed in the spring of 1990, the Punjabi Community Health Project in Peel was an innovative Health Promotion Project based on the principles of Community Development. It was incorporated as a community based agency and a resource centre in 1995.

Vision

PCHS strives to create a healthy and vibrant community which values the cultural mosaic of the Region of Peel.

Mission

The Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS) will serve the Punjabi community through community development and outreach, culturally appropriate service delivery, partnership with other organizations, research and asset inventories, health promotion, resource development, developing volunteers from within the community, and consulting and promoting diversity.

Partnership

Punjabi Community Health Services works in partnership with other agencies, community groups, and stakeholders. It relies on sharing its expertise and penetrating the community by using grass roots community development principles.

Theoretical Principles of Operation

PCHS operates from a culturally relevant model of operation. It uses a framework of client centred approach and defines the approach as adjusting the clinical and other services to meet the needs of the client. The staff members are given the flexibility to meet at a space and time determined by the client. This approach is one of the many reasons why this agency has been so successful. The clinical staff at PCHS is intertwined with community development approaches.

The clinical staff is allowed to venture out of the office to meet and counsel clients. The agency uses an integrated holistic model to provide intervention to the Punjabi Community. The integrated holistic model is defined by the agency as “a model which wraps the client and other loved ones in a variety of programs and services offered by PCHS”.

Contact us at: 905.790.0808 or www.pchs4u.com