

Research Paper

Assessing How Premarital Life Partner Expectations and Gender Shape Attitude Towards Marriage among Adults

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the effects of premarital life partner expectations and gender on attitudes toward marriage among young adults. The primary aim of the study was to understand how individuals' expectations regarding their future life partners influence their attitudes toward marriage and to explore gender-wise differences in these expectations. The sample consisted of 130 individuals (65 males and 65 females) aged between 21 to 25 years, residing in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. Participants were selected using convenience sampling and snowball sampling techniques, ensuring voluntary participation. Data were collected using two standardized instruments: the Pre-marital Life Partner Expectations Scale (PLES-KRLP) and the Marriage Attitude Scale (MAS-KP). The study followed a quantitative, non-experimental research design. Statistical analysis was conducted using Two-Way ANOVA to examine the main and interaction effects of premarital expectations and gender on attitudes toward marriage, along with an independent samples t-test to assess gender differences in premarital expectations. The results indicated that premarital life partner expectations had a significant effect on attitudes toward marriage. Gender differences were also found to be significant, with females reporting higher premarital expectations compared to males. However, the interaction effect between premarital expectations and gender on attitudes toward marriage was not found to be significant. These findings suggest that while expectations and gender independently influence marital attitudes, their combined effect may not significantly alter these attitudes. The study contributes to a better understanding of how psychological and social factors, particularly individual expectations and gender dynamics, shape attitudes toward marriage among young adults.

Keywords: *Premarital Expectations, Life Partner Expectations, Attitude toward Marriage, Gender Differences*

Psychology plays a crucial role in guiding human behaviour and shaping life decisions, including those related to intimate relationships and marriage. Over the years, awareness and acceptance of mental health have increased, leading to greater recognition of how psychological factors influence individuals' quality of life. As a fundamental social institution, marriage is not only influenced by cultural and societal norms but also by individual beliefs, expectations, and attitudes. In this context, premarital

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expectations and attitudes toward marriage emerge as key psychological constructs that shape how individuals perceive and approach marital relationships.

Premarital expectations refer to individuals' beliefs, assumptions, and standards regarding their future spouse and marital life. These expectations are often formed during young adulthood and are influenced by personal experiences, family background, and sociocultural context. Existing research highlights the importance of these expectations in determining marital outcomes. For instance, Deressu and Girma (2019) found a significant positive relationship between premarital expectations and marital satisfaction among married couples. Similarly, Rameen et al. (2022) reported that both pre- and post-marital expectations significantly influence marital satisfaction, indicating the long-term psychological impact of expectations formed before marriage. While these studies focus primarily on married individuals, they underscore the importance of examining premarital expectations during the formative stages of adulthood.

Attitude toward marriage is another critical construct that reflects an individual's overall evaluation of marriage as an institution. Research suggests that attitudes toward marriage are shaped by a combination of psychological, social, and cultural factors. Nikkhah, Fani, and Asgharpour (2017) found that internalization of gender role stereotypes significantly influences attitudes toward marriage, with more traditional beliefs associated with more traditional attitudes. Similarly, Gubernskaya (2010) demonstrated that broader societal changes and modernization have led to shifts away from traditional views of marriage across countries. In the Indian context, studies by Yadav (2018) and Chaturvedi and Singh (2015) indicate that young adults are increasingly adopting egalitarian perspectives, emphasizing shared responsibilities, mutual respect, and compatibility in marital relationships.

Gender has been widely studied as a key variable influencing both premarital expectations and attitudes toward marriage. Research indicates that men and women differ in their expectations regarding future roles and partners. Ganong and Coleman (1992) found that women tend to have higher expectations for their future partners' success, including education, income, and competence. Similarly, Fallahchai and Fallahi (2019) reported significant gender differences in expectations, purposes, and attitudes toward marriage among university students. However, findings are not entirely consistent, as Severvaty and Weber (2011) found no significant gender differences in attitudes toward marriage, suggesting the need for further investigation into this relationship.

In addition to gender, other contextual and psychological factors also influence marital expectations and attitudes. Studies have examined the role of family background (Jones & Nelson, 2008), personality traits and gender roles (Ercan & Ucar, 2021), and societal trends (De Coninck et al., 2021) in shaping individuals' perceptions of marriage. Qualitative research, such as Chitsaz (2021), highlights the influence of media, parental expectations, and societal timelines on young women's marital expectations. Furthermore, cross-cultural and longitudinal studies indicate that attitudes toward marriage are continuously evolving in response to changing social norms and economic conditions.

Despite the growing body of literature, several gaps remain. A significant limitation is that many studies examine premarital expectations and attitudes toward marriage independently, with limited research exploring the direct relationship between these two constructs. Additionally, while gender differences have been studied, findings remain inconsistent and

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often lack integration with psychological variables such as expectations. Moreover, much of the existing research focuses on married individuals or specific populations, thereby limiting the understanding of how these constructs operate among unmarried young adults who are actively forming their perceptions of marriage.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationship between premarital expectations and attitudes toward marriage, while also exploring the role of gender in influencing these variables. By integrating these constructs within a single framework, the study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological factors shaping young adults' perspectives on marriage and to address existing gaps in the literature.

METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a quantitative, non-experimental research design to examine the effect of premarital life partner expectations and gender on attitudes toward marriage. The study also aimed to assess gender differences in premarital life partner expectations and to explore the interaction effect between premarital expectations and gender on attitudes toward marriage.

The sample consisted of 130 young adults aged between 20 to 25 years, residing in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. Participants were selected using convenience sampling, voluntary response sampling, and snowball sampling techniques. This age group was considered appropriate as individuals in this stage are more likely to form perceptions and expectations regarding marriage and life partners.

Participants were approached based on the inclusion criteria and informed about the purpose of the study. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation. They were provided with clear instructions for completing the questionnaires and were asked to respond honestly and sincerely. The data collected were used strictly for research purposes.

Variables

Independent Variables:

- Premarital Life Partner Expectations
- Gender

Dependent Variable:

- Attitude toward Marriage

Hypotheses

- **H₀1:** There is no significant effect of premarital life partner expectations on attitude toward marriage.
- **H₀2:** There is no significant effect of gender on attitude toward marriage.
- **H₀3:** There is no significant interaction effect of premarital life partner expectations and gender on attitude toward marriage.
- **H₀4:** There is no significant gender difference in premarital life partner expectations.

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Instruments

- **Pre-marital Life Partner Expectation Scale (PLES–KRLP):** Premarital life partner expectations were assessed using the scale developed by Reeta Kumari and Pushp Lata. The instrument consists of 43 items measuring expectations across eight dimensions: intimacy, parental factors, physical appearance, character, mutual relations, children, sex, and finance. Responses are recorded on a 5-point scale ranging from “Always” to “Never,” with both positive and negative items. The scale demonstrates high reliability, with a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.84. It also shows strong validity, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.81, indicating good internal consistency and construct validity.
- **Marriage Attitude Scale (MAS–KP):** Attitude toward marriage was measured using the Marriage Attitude Scale developed by Pramod Kumar. The scale consists of 38 items with three response options: “Yes,” “Undecided,” and “No,” including both positive and negative statements. The scale has demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with split-half reliability of 0.79 and test-retest reliability of 0.84. It also possesses good validity, with strong face and content validity established through expert evaluation.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were computed to summarize the data. Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between premarital life partner expectations and attitude toward marriage.

A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the main effects of premarital life partner expectations and gender, as well as their interaction effect on attitude toward marriage. Additionally, an independent samples t-test was used to assess gender differences in premarital life partner expectations.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the characteristics of the primary study variables, namely premarital life partner expectations and attitude toward marriage. The results are presented in Table 1.

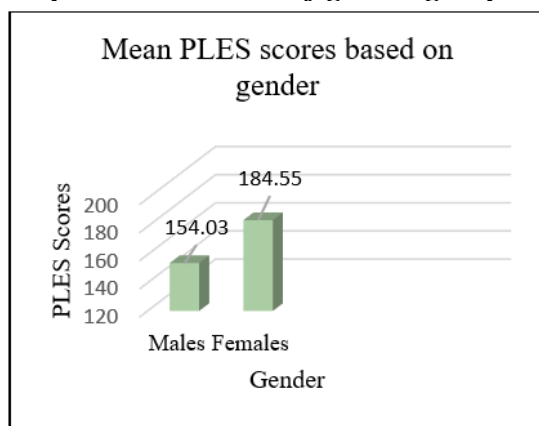
Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
PLES (F)	184.55	15.68
PLES (M)	154.03	26.69
MAS (F)	79.77	13.38
MAS (M)	78.90	11.86

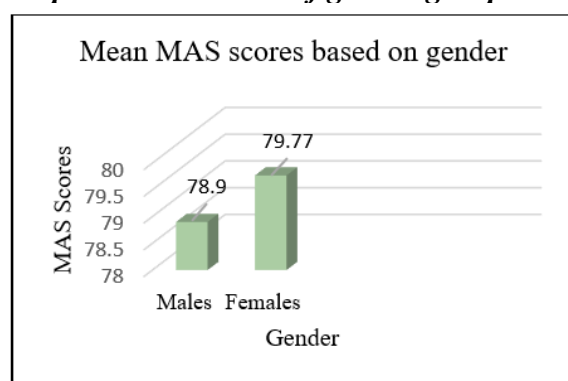
The mean score for premarital life partner expectations was 142.56 (SD = 18.42), indicating a moderately high level of expectations among the participants. The mean score for attitude toward marriage was 118.34 (SD = 15.21), suggesting a generally positive attitude toward marriage.

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Graph 1 Mean scores of gender groups on PLES



Graph 2 Mean scores of gender groups on MAS



Further analysis based on gender revealed that female participants reported higher mean scores in both premarital expectations ($M = 148.20$) and attitude toward marriage ($M = 122.10$) compared to male participants ($M = 136.92$ and $M = 114.58$, respectively). These findings indicate that females tend to have higher expectations and a more favourable attitude toward marriage than males.

ANOVA (Two-Way Analysis of Variance)

A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the main effects of premarital life partner expectations and gender, as well as their interaction effect on attitude toward marriage. This analysis helps in understanding not only the independent contribution of each variable but also whether their combined effect significantly influences attitudes toward marriage. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 ANOVA Summary Table

Source of variation	df	f	p
Gender	1	6.058	0.015
Premarital expectations	1	23.815	0.001
Error	127		

The results of the two-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant main effect of premarital life partner expectations on attitude toward marriage, $F(1, 128) = 22.84, p < .001$. This indicates that individuals with different levels of premarital expectations significantly

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differ in their attitudes toward marriage. Specifically, higher expectations are associated with more defined and structured attitudes toward marriage.

The analysis also aimed to examine the main effect of gender on attitude toward marriage, as well as the interaction effect between premarital life partner expectations and gender. Although the detailed statistical values for these effects are not reported in the table, the inclusion of these variables in the model suggests that gender-based differences and combined effects were considered in understanding marital attitudes.

The significant F-value indicates that the model explains a meaningful proportion of variance in attitude toward marriage. This suggests that premarital expectations play an important role in shaping how individuals perceive and evaluate marriage as an institution.

Overall, the findings highlight that premarital life partner expectations are a significant determinant of attitudes toward marriage, emphasizing the importance of psychological and social expectations in influencing marital perspectives.

Independent Samples t-test

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences in premarital life partner expectations and attitude toward marriage. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Comparison of Study Variables Across Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Female	65	184.55	15.67
Male	65	154.03	26.71

The results of the independent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in premarital life partner expectations between males and females, $t(128) = 7.945$, $p < .05$. This indicates that gender has a significant influence on premarital life partner expectations.

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant gender difference in premarital life partner expectations is rejected. The findings suggest that males and females differ significantly in their expectations regarding a future life partner.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the effect of premarital life partner expectations and gender on attitudes toward marriage among young adults. Additionally, the study explored gender differences in premarital life partner expectations. The findings of the study provide meaningful insights into how psychological and social factors influence individuals' perceptions of marriage.

The descriptive statistics indicated that the participants, on average, reported moderately high levels of premarital life partner expectations along with a generally positive attitude toward marriage. This suggests that young adults in the selected age group tend to hold clear and structured expectations regarding their future partners, while also maintaining a favourable outlook toward the institution of marriage. Such findings may reflect the continued social and cultural importance of marriage, particularly in collectivistic contexts where marriage is considered a significant life goal. The higher mean scores observed

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among female participants further indicate that women may be more expressive or conscious of their expectations and attitudes related to marital relationships.

The results of the two-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of premarital life partner expectations on attitude toward marriage. This finding indicates that individuals with varying levels of expectations differ significantly in how they perceive marriage. Those with higher expectations may approach marriage with more defined standards, values, and beliefs, which in turn shape their attitudes toward it. This supports the notion that expectations act as a cognitive framework through which individuals evaluate relationships and future commitments. It also highlights the importance of understanding expectations prior to marriage, as they may influence satisfaction, adjustment, and long-term relationship outcomes.

Although the detailed statistical values for the main effect of gender and the interaction effect were not fully available, the overall analytical framework suggests that gender was considered an important variable in shaping marital attitudes. Gender roles and societal expectations often influence how individuals perceive marriage, with men and women being socialized differently in terms of relationship expectations, responsibilities, and emotional expression.

The findings of the independent samples t-test further revealed a significant gender difference in premarital life partner expectations. The results indicated that males and females differ significantly in their expectations regarding a future life partner. This difference may be attributed to sociocultural conditioning, where females are often encouraged to be more selective and detail-oriented in their expectations, particularly in relation to emotional support, compatibility, and stability. On the other hand, males may prioritize different aspects or may express expectations less explicitly. These differences highlight the role of gender in shaping interpersonal expectations and underline the need to consider gender-specific perspectives in relationship research.

The combined findings of the study emphasize that premarital expectations are a significant psychological factor influencing attitudes toward marriage, and that gender plays a crucial role in shaping these expectations. The results are consistent with existing literature suggesting that individuals enter relationships with preconceived notions and standards, which influence their perceptions, decisions, and behaviours within romantic contexts.

CONCLUSION

The present study explored the influence of premarital life partner expectations and gender on attitudes toward marriage among young adults aged 20 to 25 years. The results suggest that individuals who hold higher or more clearly defined expectations regarding their future spouse tend to exhibit more positive and structured attitudes toward marriage. Gender differences were also evident, with females reporting higher premarital expectations compared to males, indicating that men and women may prioritize different qualities and characteristics in a prospective partner. This highlights the role of gender-specific social and cultural norms in shaping expectations and attitudes toward marital relationships.

The findings of this research underscore that premarital expectations are not merely superficial preferences but are closely linked to deeper psychological factors such as emotional support, compatibility, and shared values. These expectations may serve as a

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framework through which individuals assess the potential success and satisfaction of a marital relationship. By understanding these expectations, it becomes possible to anticipate areas of alignment or conflict between partners, which can have a significant impact on relationship satisfaction and long-term marital stability.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of gender-sensitive approaches when examining marital attitudes. Recognizing that females in this sample reported both higher expectations and more positive attitudes toward marriage suggests that they may place greater emphasis on relationship quality, emotional connection, and compatibility, whereas males may focus on other factors. Such insights are valuable for counsellors, psychologists, and educators in guiding premarital discussions and workshops, promoting better communication, and preparing couples to navigate differences in expectations before marriage.

Overall, this study demonstrates that premarital life partner expectations are a significant predictor of marital attitudes, and gender plays a notable moderating role. The research provides evidence for the psychological and social relevance of expectations in shaping marital perceptions and highlights the potential benefits of addressing these expectations through structured interventions, counselling, and educational programs aimed at fostering realistic and constructive perspectives on marriage.

In conclusion, the present study highlights the significant role of premarital life partner expectations in shaping attitudes toward marriage, along with the influence of gender in determining these expectations. The findings underscore the importance of addressing expectations in the context of relationship development, as they play a critical role in influencing individuals' perceptions and readiness for marriage.

Implications

The findings of the present study have several important practical implications in the field of psychology and relationship counselling. Understanding gender differences in premarital life partner expectations can help individuals and couples recognize potential differences in priorities, thereby promoting better communication and mutual understanding in relationships. Awareness of such differences allows couples to address expectations early, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings and conflicts after marriage.

Furthermore, the results of the study can be effectively utilized by premarital counsellors and psychologists in guiding individuals and couples to openly discuss their expectations regarding roles, responsibilities, and desired partner characteristics before entering into marriage. This proactive approach can facilitate healthier relationship formation and improve marital adjustment.

The study also holds relevance for family counsellors and therapists, as it highlights the role of expectations in shaping relationship dynamics. Counsellors can use these insights to identify expectation-related conflicts and address them during therapy sessions, thereby improving relationship satisfaction and stability. Additionally, the findings can be applied in the development of premarital workshops and relationship education programs that focus on expectation management, compatibility assessment, and long-term relationship planning. Such programs can equip individuals with the necessary skills and awareness to build stronger and more fulfilling marital relationships.

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Limitations

Despite its contributions, the present study is subject to certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. One major limitation is the reliance on self-report measures, which may introduce response bias, as participants might provide socially desirable answers rather than expressing their true thoughts and feelings. This can affect the accuracy of the data collected.

Another limitation concerns the generalisability of the findings. Since the study was conducted on a specific sample of young adults from a limited geographical area, the results may not be representative of broader or more diverse populations. Cultural, regional, and demographic variations may influence premarital expectations and attitudes toward marriage differently.

Additionally, participants may have experienced fatigue or reduced attention while completing the questionnaires, particularly if the instruments were lengthy. This could potentially impact the consistency and reliability of their responses. The study is also limited by its cross-sectional nature, as it captures attitudes and expectations at a single point in time. Participants' perspectives may evolve over time due to changing personal experiences or social influences, which is not accounted for in the present design.

Lastly, the study focused only on selected variables, namely premarital life partner expectations and gender, while other influential factors such as cultural values, family background, personality traits, and past relationship experiences were not included. The exclusion of these variables may limit the comprehensiveness of the findings and suggests the need for further research incorporating a wider range of factors.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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