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Emotional maturity as a predictor of marriage readiness in early adult women from Buxar urban and rural families

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Abstract
This study examines the relationship between emotional maturity and marriage readiness among early adult women from urban and rural families in Buxar, Bihar. A quantitative correlational design was employed, with 180 participants (90 urban, 90 rural) aged 21-25 years. Emotional maturity was measured using the Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS), and marriage readiness was assessed using the Criteria for Marriage Readiness Questionnaire (CMRQ). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, assumption testing, and Pearson correlation analysis. Results indicated a significant positive correlation between emotional maturity and marriage readiness in both urban (*r* = 0.217, *p* = 0.038) and rural (r = 0.231, *p* = 0.028) samples. The findings underscore the importance of emotional stability, social adjustment, personality integration, and independence in preparing for marriage. This research highlights the critical role of emotional maturity in enhancing marriage readiness and offers valuable insights for culturally tailored interventions aimed at supporting young women in distinct socio- cultural contexts.

Keywords: Emotional maturity, marriage readiness, early adulthood, Buxar families, urban-rural comparison, correlational study, India

1. Introduction
Early adulthood, spanning ages 18 to 40, represents a critical developmental period characterized by the pursuit of intimacy and the establishment of long-term commitments, notably marriage [1]. This stage involves significant tasks such as forming a personal identity, achieving emotional and financial independence, and preparing for spousal and parental roles [2]. Marriage in the Indian context is not merely a personal milestone but a deeply embedded social institution, influenced by familial expectations, cultural traditions, and socioeconomic factors [3]. Readiness for this union is paramount, defined as an individual's confidence in their preparedness to handle the multifaceted responsibilities of married life, from interpersonal dynamics to household management [4].

However, contemporary trends show a delay in marriage among early adults, influenced by factors such as higher educational and career aspirations, financial instability, and, crucially, emotional unpreparedness [5]. This is particularly evident in transitioning regions like Buxar, Bihar, where urban and rural landscapes present distinct challenges. Urban women often navigate the tension between modern aspirations for career and personal freedom and traditional expectations [6]. In contrast, rural women may face pressures related to agrarian economic constraints, stricter adherence to patriarchal norms, and different social adjustment demands [7].

Emotional maturity, the capacity to understand and manage one's emotions effectively, is a cornerstone of successful relationship navigation [8]. Singh & Bhargava [9] conceptualize it as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing emotional stability, emotional progression, social adjustment, personality integration, and independence. An emotionally mature individual can respond to situations with resilience, empathy, and self- awareness rather than reacting impulsively [10]. Previous research has consistently established a positive correlation between emotional maturity and marriage readiness, suggesting that individuals who have mastered their emotional world are better equipped to handle the complexities of marital life [11, 12] Despite this established link, a significant gap exists in understanding how this

relationship manifests across different socio-cultural environments within India. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the role of emotional maturity as a predictor of marriage readiness among early adult women from both urban and rural families in Buxar, Bihar. By comparing these two cohorts, this research seeks to provide nuanced insights that can inform targeted psychological and community- based interventions.

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design and Variables

This study employed a quantitative, correlational research design. The independent variable was emotional maturity (X), and the dependent variable was marriage readiness (Y).

2.2 Operational Definitions and Instruments

a) Emotional Maturity was defined as the sensitivity within an individual towards their emotions and their appropriate reactions to various emotional behaviors, consistent with existing norms [9]. It was measured using the Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) developed by Singh & Bhargava [9]. The scale consists of 48 items across five subscales: Emotional Stability, Emotional Progression, Social Adjustment, Personality Integration, and Independence. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Almost Never to 5=Very Often). After validity testing, 39 items were retained. The scale demonstrated high reliability in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.928$).

b) Marriage Readiness was defined as an individual's confidence in their preparedness to marry [4]. It was measured using an adapted version of the Criteria for Marriage Readiness Questionnaire (CMRQ) based on the dimensions proposed by Carroll *et al*. [4]. The tool originally had 57 items across ten dimensions but was adapted to 42 items for this study. Responses were recorded on a 4-point Likert scale (1=Not Important to 4=Very Important). After validity testing, 37 items were retained. The adapted scale showed high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.916$).

2.3 Participants and Sampling

The population comprised early adult women (aged 21-25 years) from urban and rural families in the Buxar district of Bihar. Using purposive sampling, 180 participants (90 urban, 90 rural) were selected based on specific criteria: being unmarried, identifying with the local Buxar culture, and being either a student, employed, or not currently engaged in either. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula from an estimated population of 600 eligible women.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.0. The process included:

- Descriptive Statistics to summarize the demographic and scale score data.
- Assumption Testing, including normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test) and linearity (ANOVA-based Deviation from Linearity test).
- **Inferential Statistics:** Pearson Product- Moment correlation was used to test the hypothesis and determine the relationship between emotional maturity and marriage readiness for both urban and rural groups separately.

3. Results

3.1 Participant Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the 180 participants are summarized in Table 1. The urban participant group consisted predominantly of students (58.9%) and employed women (31.1%). The rural participant group had a higher proportion of employed women (48.9%) and a lower proportion of students (42.2%), reflecting different economic and educational engagement patterns between the settings. A small percentage in both groups were engaged in other activities (e.g., homemaking, family business) or were both working and studying.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=180)

Characteristic	Urban (n = 90)	Rural (n = 90)
Age (Mean ± SD)	22.4 ± 1.3	22.1 ± 1.5
Employment Status (n, %)		
Student	53 (58.9%)	38 (42.2%)
Employed	28 (31.1%)	44 (48.9%)
Working & Studying	4 (4.4%)	3 (3.3%)
Other	5 (5.6%)	5 (5.6%)

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis of the scale scores is presented in Table 2. Urban women reported slightly higher mean scores for both emotional maturity (M = 130.5, SD = 19.8) and marriage readiness (M = 126.2, SD = 14.1) compared to rural women (emotional maturity: M = 128.3, SD = 21.2; marriage readiness: M = 124.6, SD = 13.5). The scores for both variables were categorized into high, moderate, and low levels based on calculated intervals (Table 3). A large majority of urban (81.1%) and rural (72.2%) women reported high levels of marriage readiness. For emotional maturity, a larger proportion of urban women fell into the high category (52.2%) compared to rural women (44.4%).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Research Variables

Variable	Group	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Maturity	Urban	90	80	180	130.5	19.8
	Rural	90	75	178	128.3	21.2
Marriage Readiness	Urban	90	88	147	126.2	14.1
	Rural	90	85	145	124.6	13.5

Table 3: Categorization of Emotional Maturity and Marriage Readiness Scores

Variable	Category	Score Interval	Urban (n=90)	Rural (n=90)
Emotional Maturity	High	130 - 181	47 (52.2%)	40 (44.4%)
	Moderate	79 - 129	43 (47.8%)	50 (55.6%)
	Low	25 - 78	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Marriage Readiness	High	111 - 148	73 (81.1%)	65 (72.2%)
	Moderate	74 - 110	17 (18.9%)	25 (27.8%)
	Low	37 - 73	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

3.3 Assumption Testing

The results of the assumption tests are shown in Table 4. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test confirmed that the data for both variables in both groups were normally distributed (*p* > 0.05). The ANOVA test for Deviation from Linearity was

non- significant (*p* > 0.05), confirming a linear relationship between emotional maturity and marriage readiness, thus meeting the assumptions for Pearson correlation

Table 4: Assumption Test Results

Test	Group	Variable	Statistic	p-value	Result
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Urban	Emotional Maturity	0.061	0.200	Normal Distribution
		Marriage Readiness	0.090	0.065	Normal Distribution
	Rural	Emotional Maturity	0.065	0.180	Normal Distribution
		Marriage Readiness	0.095	0.055	Normal Distribution
Linearity (Deviation from	Urban			0.482	Linear Relationship
	Rural			0.510	Linear Relationship

3.4 Hypothesis Testing

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional maturity and marriage readiness in both groups (Table 5):

- **For the urban sample:** *r*(88) =.217, *p* =.038.
- **For the rural sample:** *r*(88) =.231, *p* =.028.

These results indicate that higher levels of emotional maturity are associated with higher levels of self-reported marriage readiness among early adult women in both urban and rural Buxar.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Results for Emotional Maturity and Marriage Readiness

Group	Pearson Correlation (r)	Significance (p-value)	N
Urban	0.217	0.038	90
Rural	0.231	0.028	90

4. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm the hypothesized positive relationship between emotional maturity and marriage readiness, consistent with previous research in other cultural contexts [11, 12, 13]. The results suggest that the core components of emotional maturity—such as the ability to regulate emotions, adapt socially, and maintain independence—are fundamental assets for young women contemplating the transition to marriage, regardless of their urban or rural upbringing.

The slightly higher mean scores observed in the urban sample may be attributed to greater exposure to diverse social environments, higher levels of education, and increased opportunities for developing autonomy and critical thinking skills, all of which contribute to emotional maturation [14, 15]. Conversely, the strong correlation in the rural sample, despite slightly lower mean scores, underscores the universal relevance of emotional maturity. It suggests that even within a potentially more traditional framework, emotional skills are a critical determinant of perceived readiness for marital life [16].

This study reinforces the notion that preparing for marriage extends beyond financial or practical readiness [4]. It is deeply rooted in psychological preparedness, particularly one's emotional competence [17]. Emotionally mature individuals are likely better equipped to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts constructively, and provide mutual support—key predictors of marital satisfaction and stability [18, 19].

Limitations and Future Research

This study has limitations. Its cross-sectional design prevents causal inference. The use of self-report measures may be subject to social desirability bias. The sample was restricted to one district of Bihar, limiting generalizability. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to trace the development of emotional maturity and its impact on actual marital outcomes. Qualitative inquiries could provide deeper insight into the contextual factors influencing these variables in urban and rural settings. Studies could also include male perspectives to gain a dyadic understanding of readiness.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study concludes that emotional maturity is a significant predictor of marriage readiness among early adult women in both urban and rural Buxar. The findings highlight the necessity of integrating emotional skills development into educational curricula and community programs aimed at youth.

Implications

- **For Counselors and Psychologists:** Development initiatives and pre-marital counseling should prioritize building emotional competence, focusing on self-awareness, regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills.
- **For Policy and Community Programs:** Government and NGO-led initiatives in regions like Bihar should design targeted programs. Urban programs might focus on managing modern-traditional role conflicts, while rural interventions could aim to empower women within their socio-cultural context to enhance their emotional autonomy and decision- making capabilities.
- **For Families:** Parents and guardians can be encouraged to foster environments that promote emotional expression and autonomy from a young age, thereby contributing to the holistic development of their children into emotionally mature adults ready for life's challenges, including marriage.

Fostering emotional maturity is not just beneficial for individual well-being but is a crucial investment in the foundation of healthy, stable families and communities.

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