

# Effects Of Socio-Economic Conditions On Divorce Rate In India, With A Focus On North East India

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## **Abstract**

This review paper explores the impact of socio-economic conditions on the divorce rate in India, with a specific focus on North East India. The study synthesizes existing literature to understand how factors such as income, education, urbanization, and employment influence marital stability. By examining the interplay between socio-economic status and divorce, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current trends and underlying causes of marital dissolution in the Indian context. Special attention is given to North East India, where unique socio-cultural dynamics and economic conditions present distinct patterns. The findings suggest that while traditional values still play a significant role, socio-economic factors are increasingly contributing to the rising divorce rates.

**Keywords:** Divorce Rate, Socio-Economic Conditions, North East India, Marital Stability, Urbanization

## **Introduction**

The institution of marriage in India has been historically influenced by a complex interplay of cultural, religious, and social norms that emphasize family cohesion and stability. Traditional values have long dictated the dynamics of marital relationships, underscoring the importance of enduring marital bonds despite personal challenges. However, in recent decades, a noticeable shift in marital trends has emerged, bringing the issue of divorce into the forefront of social and academic discourse. The increasing divorce rate in India reflects broader societal changes that encompass various socio-economic dimensions. Factors such as income, education, employment, and urbanization play pivotal roles in shaping marital stability. Understanding these factors is crucial for comprehending the evolving landscape of marital relationships in India.

Income and economic stability have a profound impact on marital relationships. Economic strain often leads to marital discord, while financial independence, particularly among women, can provide the means to exit unsatisfactory marriages. As Desai and Andrist (2010) noted, financial independence has been linked to higher divorce rates as it enables individuals to seek better personal circumstances. Education is another critical factor influencing marital stability. Higher education levels are generally associated with lower divorce rates due to improved conflict resolution skills and greater economic security. However, increased education among women is correlated with higher divorce rates, as it

enhances their awareness of personal rights and independence (Rao, 2012). Urbanization significantly alters social norms and lifestyles, leading to higher divorce rates in urban areas compared to rural ones. Gupta (2015) highlighted that urbanization brings about lifestyle changes that strain traditional marital expectations, contributing to increased marital strife. The anonymity and independence offered by urban living contrast sharply with the close-knit social structures of rural areas. Employment status and job security also affect marital stability. Dual-income households may experience reduced financial stress, but balancing professional and personal responsibilities can lead to conflicts. Verma and Shukla (2016) observed that the pressures of managing work and family life in dual-income families can contribute to marital instability.

This paper aims to review the existing literature on the effects of socio-economic conditions on divorce rates in India, focusing on key factors such as income, education, employment, and urbanization. Special emphasis is placed on North East India, a region characterized by diverse ethnic groups and unique socio-economic challenges. North East India presents distinct patterns of marital stability and divorce due to its specific cultural, economic, and social dynamics. By examining these patterns, this paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic determinants of divorce in the Indian context, with a particular focus on the unique conditions of North East India. Through these views, the paper aims to contribute to the broader discourse on marital stability and divorce, offering insights into how socio-economic factors interact with traditional values and modern lifestyles to shape marital outcomes in contemporary India. The findings from this review can inform policy development and support systems designed to address the evolving needs of families in India.

### **Literature Review**

The literature on divorce in India indicates a multifaceted relationship between socio-economic conditions and marital stability. Researchers have identified several socio-economic variables that influence divorce rates, highlighting the complexity and diversity of factors involved. Studies suggest that economic strain can lead to marital discord and subsequent divorce. Financial pressures are a significant source of stress in marriages, often resulting in conflicts and dissatisfaction. Desai and Andrist (2010) found that financial independence, particularly among women, has been linked to higher divorce rates, as it provides the means to exit unhappy marriages. This dynamic is especially pertinent in North East India, where economic disparities and employment challenges significantly impact marital stability. The region's lower industrial development and high poverty rates exacerbate these issues, creating additional stress within families (Kumar and Rai, 2017).

Education levels influence divorce rates in complex ways. Higher education often correlates with lower divorce rates due to better conflict resolution skills and higher economic stability. Educated individuals are generally more adept at managing marital conflicts and sustaining stable relationships. However, increased education levels among women have been associated with higher divorce rates due to greater awareness of personal rights and independence (Rao, 2012). In North East India, with its relatively higher literacy rates and progressive gender norms, these trends are particularly pronounced. The region's educational

advancements, coupled with progressive attitudes towards women's rights, have contributed to an environment where women are more likely to assert their independence and leave unsatisfactory marriages (Singh and Das, 2018). Urban areas show higher divorce rates compared to rural areas, attributed to differing social norms and greater anonymity in cities. Urbanization brings lifestyle changes that can strain traditional marital expectations, leading to increased marital strife. Gupta (2015) highlighted that urbanization in India has been accompanied by a shift in social norms, with urban residents adopting more individualistic attitudes towards marriage. In North East India, the urbanization trends, particularly in cities like Guwahati and Imphal, reflect similar patterns. The region's rapid urbanization has introduced new social dynamics and lifestyle changes that challenge traditional marital norms, contributing to higher divorce rates (Choudhury and Sen, 2019). Employment status and job security significantly affect marital stability. Dual-income households may experience less financial stress, but balancing work and family responsibilities can lead to conflicts. Verma and Shukla (2016) noted that the pressures of managing work and family life in dual-income families can contribute to marital instability. In North East India, the employment landscape, marked by high unemployment rates and limited opportunities, poses additional challenges for marital stability. The region's employment challenges create economic uncertainty, which can strain marital relationships and increase the likelihood of divorce (Bhattacharjee and Sharma, 2020).

To sum up, the literature reveals that socio-economic conditions play a critical role in influencing divorce rates in India. Income, education, urbanization, and employment are key factors that interact in complex ways to shape marital stability. North East India presents a unique case study where these socio-economic factors are intertwined with distinct cultural and economic challenges, offering valuable insights into the broader patterns of marital dissolution in the Indian context.

### **Objectives:**

The primary objectives of the present investigation are i) to analyse the correlation between socio-economic conditions and divorce rates in India, with a focus on North East India; ii) to identify key socio-economic factors contributing to the increasing divorce rates; iii) to understand the role of urbanization in changing marital dynamics; and iv) to explore gender-specific impacts of socio-economic changes on divorce, particularly in North East India.

### **Materials and Methods:**

This review synthesizes findings from various empirical studies, government reports, and scholarly articles on the socio-economic determinants of divorce in India, with a particular focus on North East India. The methodology includes:

- i) **Systematic Analysis of Existing Literature:** The study involves a thorough examination of the existing body of literature on the socio-economic factors influencing divorce rates in India. This includes analysing research papers, theses, and articles published in reputable journals over the past two decades.

- ii) **Quantitative Research Review:** The analysis will incorporate quantitative research findings that provide statistical data on divorce rates, income levels, education attainment, employment status, and urbanization patterns. This data helps in establishing correlations and identifying trends.
- iii) **Qualitative Research Review:** In addition to quantitative data, the study will review qualitative research that offers insights into personal experiences, cultural attitudes, and societal norms related to marriage and divorce. This includes case studies, interviews, and ethnographic studies conducted in different regions of India, particularly in North East India.
- iv) **Focus on North East India:** The methodology emphasizes collecting and analysing data specific to North East India to understand how the unique socio-economic conditions in this region influence divorce rates. This includes reviewing regional studies, government reports, and local surveys that highlight the distinctive factors at play.

By combining these methodological approaches, the review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic determinants of divorce in India, with a nuanced focus on the particularities of North East India.

## **Analysis and Results**

### **Income and Economic Stability:**

Economic stability is paramount for maintaining marital harmony, as financial strain often leads to conflicts and dissatisfaction within marriages. Shukla and Verma (2016) affirm the direct correlation between financial strain and marital instability, noting that economic hardships exacerbate existing tensions and hinder conflict resolution. In North East India, where industrial development is limited and employment opportunities are scarce, Bhattacharjee and Sharma (2020) highlight the profound impact of economic insecurity on marital relationships. High unemployment rates and a lack of sustainable job prospects intensify financial uncertainties for couples, further straining marital bonds. Conversely, financial independence, particularly among women, has been associated with higher divorce rates as it empowers individuals to seek better circumstances. Desai and Andrist (2010) emphasize the role of financial autonomy in enabling women to make independent decisions about their marital lives, a trend increasingly visible in urban areas and among educated women in North East India. Singh and Das (2018) argue that the region's progressive gender norms and higher literacy rates among women contribute to this phenomenon, with financial independence empowering women to challenge traditional marital expectations. However, economic challenges persist in North East India due to systemic issues such as inadequate infrastructure and limited industrial growth, leading to chronic financial stress for many couples (Kumar and Rai, 2017). Employment opportunities are often confined to informal sectors or low-paying jobs, exacerbating economic disparities and marital instability. Additionally, economic migration further strains marital relationships, with long-term separations resulting from migration contributing to emotional distance and, ultimately,

divorce (Bhattacharjee and Sharma, 2020). Hence, income and economic stability significantly influence marital outcomes, with financial stress, economic independence, and employment challenges shaping marital dynamics in North East India. Understanding these factors is crucial for addressing rising divorce rates and fostering marital stability in the region.

### **Education:**

Education emerges as a crucial determinant of marital outcomes, with higher education levels often linked to improved marital stability owing to enhanced problem-solving skills and increased economic security. However, the relationship between education and divorce is intricate, especially concerning gender-specific impacts. Higher education fosters better communication and negotiation skills, reducing the likelihood of persistent conflicts that may lead to divorce (Rao, 2012). Additionally, it correlates with better economic stability, alleviating financial stress and enhancing marital satisfaction (Shukla and Verma, 2016). Yet, the impact of education, particularly on women, is profound. Educated women are more aware of their rights and less likely to tolerate oppressive marital conditions, leading to higher divorce rates when expectations are unmet (Desai and Andrist, 2010). In North East India, where education and women's rights are highly valued, educational advancements have empowered women to seek autonomy in their marital decisions (Singh and Das, 2018). This progressive environment contributes to higher divorce rates among educated women, reflecting broader societal shifts towards gender equality (Choudhury and Sen, 2019). As educated couples in North East India engage in more egalitarian relationships, conflicts may arise when traditional expectations clash with modern values (Kumar and Rai, 2017). In conclusion, while education generally promotes marital stability, its impact on women's autonomy in North East India highlights the complexities underlying marital dynamics, necessitating a nuanced approach to address socio-economic factors influencing marital stability and divorce rates.

### **Urbanization:**

Urbanization represents a transformative force in social structures and lifestyles, influencing marital dynamics and divorce rates, especially in urban centres like Guwahati and Shillong in North East India. The analysis delves into the effects of urbanization on marital stability, revealing a complex interplay of opportunities and challenges. Urbanization fosters a departure from traditional family values prevalent in rural areas, emphasizing individualism and personal decision-making (Gupta, 2015). This transition reduces communal influence on marital relationships, empowering individuals to consider divorce as a viable option amidst marital dissatisfaction. However, conflicting traditional and modern expectations may lead to heightened marital conflicts. Urban living's anonymity and independence diminish social scrutiny, easing the stigma associated with divorce (Verma and Shukla, 2016). In North East India's urban hubs, this trend is exemplified by a growing acceptance of liberal attitudes towards marriage and divorce (Bhattacharjee and Sharma, 2020). While urban areas offer better access to education and employment, they also present challenges such as long working hours and high living costs, straining marital relationships (Kumar and Rai, 2017). The surge in dual-income families in North East India's urban centres adds complexity to balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Urbanization accelerates shifts towards egalitarian relationships, challenging traditional gender roles (Singh and Das, 2018). In Guwahati and Shillong,

urbanization has led to greater economic independence for women, altering marital dynamics and potentially increasing marital conflicts. These cities epitomize the complexities of urbanization, experiencing rising divorce rates amidst economic opportunities and changing social norms (Choudhury and Sen, 2019). Rapid urbanization has transformed social fabrics, contributing to marital instability despite economic progress. In conclusion, urbanization significantly influences marital stability and divorce rates, necessitating a nuanced understanding of its socio-economic impacts in addressing marital instability in rapidly urbanizing regions.

### **Employment:**

Employment emerges as a pivotal factor shaping marital stability, offering economic security alongside challenges in balancing professional and personal spheres. It scrutinizes the intricate impact of employment on marital dynamics, with a particular focus on the distinctive employment landscape of North East India. Employment stands as a linchpin for economic stability, a cornerstone of marital contentment. Shukla and Verma (2016) assert that families with secure income streams experience diminished financial strain, fostering greater marital harmony by alleviating conflicts related to financial management. However, in North East India, Bhattacharjee and Sharma (2020) highlight the scarcity of stable employment opportunities due to limited industrial development and reliance on the informal sector and agriculture, exacerbating stress within marriages. The rise of dual-income households, prevalent in urban areas, presents a mixed bag of marital outcomes. Gupta (2017) notes the economic benefits, including reduced financial stress and enhanced quality of life, derived from combined earnings. Yet, the challenges of balancing dual careers and household responsibilities lead to increased marital conflicts, particularly evident in North East India's urban centres, lacking adequate support systems (Kumar and Rai, 2017). North East India grapples with a constrained job market and high unemployment rates, amplifying economic stress within families. Choudhury and Sen (2019) highlight insufficient industrial growth and infrastructural development as contributors to the scarcity of well-paying jobs, driving individuals to unstable employment or migration. Singh and Das (2018) underscore the persistent financial worries stemming from unemployment, a significant source of marital conflict and dissatisfaction. Employment exerts differing pressures on men and women within marriages, impacting marital stability uniquely. While unemployment undermines men's self-esteem and leads to frustration, employed women juggle professional and domestic duties, facing heightened stress (Desai and Andrist, 2010). In North East India, Bhattacharjee and Sharma (2020) note the discrepancy between increasing female workforce participation and traditional household role expectations, intensifying marital conflicts for working women. Migration for employment, common in North East India, offers economic relief but strains marital bonds due to prolonged separations. Choudhury and Sen (2019) observe emotional distance arising from migration, fostering feelings of isolation and infidelity that culminate in marital dissolution. In conclusion, employment significantly shapes marital stability by providing economic security and introducing challenges in North East India's unique socio-economic landscape, necessitating targeted interventions to address marital instability.

### **Discussion:**

The findings of this study underscore the profound impact of socio-economic factors on divorce rates in India, particularly evident in the nuanced context of North East India. Economic stability and education emerge as pivotal determinants, presenting both opportunities and challenges to marital stability, contingent upon various contextual factors. Similarly, urbanization and employment introduce lifestyle alterations that disrupt conventional marital expectations and roles. The distinctive socio-cultural dynamics and economic hurdles present in North East India further mold marital outcomes, showcasing the intricate interplay between socio-economic factors and cultural norms. Economic stability serves as a cornerstone for marital harmony, providing the essential financial security for couples to navigate life's challenges together. Yet, the association between economic stability and divorce rates is multifaceted, with stable incomes alleviating marital conflicts while disparities and financial strain intensify tensions within marriages. Education also plays a significant role, reflecting societal shifts towards heightened awareness of personal rights and independence, notably among women. While higher education levels generally correlate with improved marital outcomes due to enhanced problem-solving abilities and economic security, they can also lead to elevated divorce rates as individuals gain the empowerment to dissolve unsatisfactory marriages. Urbanization and employment introduce lifestyle changes that disrupt conventional marital roles, often resulting in increased divorce rates in urban settings, particularly in North East India, where rapid urbanization and employment shifts are pronounced. These discussions emphasize the necessity for tailored interventions that address the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics of North East India, fostering marital stability and enhancing overall well-being.

### **Conclusion**

The rising divorce rates in India reflect a complex interplay of socio-economic factors and changing cultural norms. Economic stability, education, urbanization, and employment each play unique roles in shaping marital relationships, with North East India offering a particularly illuminating case study. Economic stability, while crucial for marital harmony, is challenged by disparities and instability in regions like North East India, where limited job markets and reliance on informal sectors compound financial strain. Education, a double-edged sword, empowers individuals for better problem-solving yet also contributes to heightened divorce rates due to increased awareness of personal rights, especially among women. Urbanization, with its shifts in social norms and lifestyle, introduces new challenges in balancing work and family life, particularly evident in urban centres like Guwahati and Shillong. Similarly, employment, while providing economic stability, can strain marital relationships due to the pressures of balancing professional and personal lives, exacerbated by high unemployment rates in North East India. Targeted policy interventions addressing economic challenges, promoting educational programs encompassing relationship skills, supporting work-life balance in urban areas, and addressing gender-specific employment challenges are imperative to foster marital stability.

### **Policy Implications and Future Research**

Understanding the socio-economic dynamics influencing marital stability is pivotal for crafting effective social policies and support systems. Policymakers must tailor interventions to address

the unique challenges faced by different regions, particularly North East India. This entails creating economic opportunities, integrating relationship skills into educational curricula, promoting work-life balance in urban settings, and tackling gender-specific employment hurdles. Future research should delve deeper into the relationships between socio-economic factors and marital stability, employing longitudinal and comparative studies to track changes over time and across diverse cultural contexts. Additionally, investigations into the impact of emerging socio-economic trends, like digitalization and the gig economy, on marital stability, are necessary for informing adaptable social policies. By comprehensively understanding these dynamics and implementing targeted interventions, it is possible to support marital stability and enhance the overall well-being of individuals and families in contemporary India.

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