

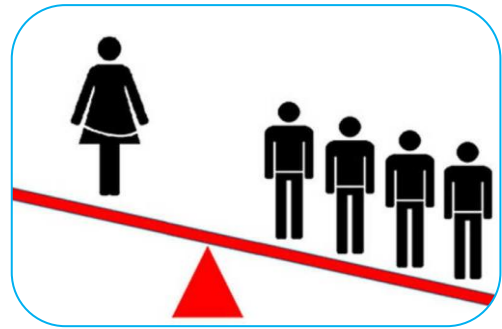


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**"SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF INVOLUNTARY BACHELORHOOD  
IN RURAL HARYANA."****Dr. Vijender Singh<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Pardeep<sup>2</sup>****<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, K.U. Kurukshetra.****<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, K.U. Kurukshetra.  
Assistant Professor, Govt. College, Alewa (Jind)****ABSTRACT:**

*This research paper delves into the multifaceted phenomenon of involuntary bachelorhood in rural Haryana, India, shedding light on its socio-economic, cultural, and psychological dimensions. Drawing from secondary data sources, including census data, government reports, and existing studies, the paper explores the roots, implications, and interventions related to this societal challenge. The study reveals that the skewed sex ratio, fuelled by female foeticide and cultural preferences for male heirs, contributes significantly to the scarcity of marriageable women, leading to the rise of involuntary bachelorhood. Families resort to unconventional practices such as bride buying, exacerbating the societal imbalance. The research highlights individual, family, and societal implications, emphasizing the psychological toll, strained familial relationships, and distorted gender dynamics perpetuated by this phenomenon.*



**KEYWORDS :** *Involuntary Bachelorhood, Rural Haryana, Skewed Sex Ratio, Bride Buying, Societal Implications*

**INTRODUCTION:**

Haryana, a state nestled in the heart of India, has long been recognized for its agricultural prowess and vibrant cultural heritage. However, beneath the surface of its bucolic landscapes lies a societal shift that demands scrutiny — the rising phenomenon of involuntary bachelorhood. As we delve into the social fabric of rural Haryana, the increasing prevalence of unmarried men, often involuntarily so, beckons us to explore the myriad factors shaping this phenomenon and its far-reaching implications.

In recent decades, Haryana has undergone substantial transformations in various spheres, such as economic development, education, and social structures. Traditionally an agrarian society, the state has experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization, altering the dynamics of familial and societal expectations. While these changes have ushered in progress, they have also given rise to new challenges, among which is the notable rise in the number of involuntarily unmarried men.

In the backdrop of Haryana's economic prosperity lies a deeply entrenched patriarchal social structure, where traditional gender roles perpetuate the notion of women as the weaker sex. Despite economic advancements, societal norms continue to prioritize male authority and privilege, relegating

women to subordinate positions. Compounding this gender disparity is the skewed sex ratio resulting from cultural preferences for male offspring and the misuse of prenatal sex determination technologies. Consequently, Haryana faces a demographic imbalance characterized by a surplus of males, exacerbating what scholars term the "male marriage squeeze." This phenomenon, rooted in the scarcity of marriageable women relative to eligible men, underscores the social and cultural complexities influencing marital dynamics in the region.

### Importance of Marriage

The institution of marriage holds profound significance in societal structures worldwide, playing a pivotal role in shaping individuals' lives and contributing to the stability and cohesion of communities. Numerous studies emphasize the positive impact of marriage on various aspects of well-being, including physical and mental health. Moreover, marriage has been associated with numerous health benefits, including reduced rates of cardiovascular diseases and improved longevity. Beyond the individual level, the importance of marriage extends to the broader social fabric, providing a foundation for family units, emotional support systems, and the nurturing of future generations. Additionally, studies suggest that children raised in stable, married households tend to fare better in terms of educational attainment, emotional well-being, and social development. Thus, the significance of marriage goes beyond personal fulfilment, playing a vital role in fostering individual and collective well-being.

### Review of Related Literature

The phenomenon of involuntary bachelorhood has garnered significant scholarly interest, not only within the confines of India but also across various global contexts. Despite the pervasive curiosity surrounding this subject, there exists a noticeable dearth of comprehensive studies. Limited research on Involuntary Bachelorhood in Rural India and Haryana exists. Globally also less study is available however China has similar studies in this field which are reviewed to establish a background. Some of the relevant studies are as under:

In exploring the phenomenon of involuntary bachelorhood in rural China, Yan Wei and Li Zhang sought to unravel its gendered characteristics within the broader marriage system. Employing a qualitative approach, they conducted interviews with unmarried men, families, and community members, delving into marriage practices, social norms, and the intricate dynamics of spouse selection. The findings illuminated the marginalization experienced by involuntary bachelors, as limited prospects led to their exclusion from the marriage market. Some men, faced with these challenges, adopted defiant choices and unconventional methods to secure marriage offers, resulting in a broader impact on marital stability beyond their singlehood.

From a social network perspective, scholars such as Tucker and Van Hook delved into the consequences of involuntary bachelorhood and proposed alternative forms of marriage. Their methodology involved the analysis of social networks and their influence on men's well-being, as well as an investigation into coping mechanisms and support systems. The findings highlighted the psychosocial toll experienced by unmarried men, including loneliness, stigma, and mental health challenges. Additionally, some men explored alternative, unconventional unions as a coping mechanism to mitigate their situation.

Examining the socio-economic implications of involuntary bachelorhood, researchers including Dyson, Liu, and Lu utilized demographic data, census reports, and economic indicators. Their objective was to understand the impact on men from lower social strata. The findings pointed to the economic vulnerability faced by unmarried men due to a lack of family support, further exacerbating their socio-economic hardships. The scarcity of eligible brides disproportionately affected socio-economically disadvantaged men, contributing to social disparities within the context of involuntary bachelorhood in rural China.

The research paper titled "Bride Buying In Rural Haryana" by Dr. Monica Munjial Singh, Mr. Aditya Parihar, and Dr. Nirmala Devi explores the phenomenon of bride buying in the state of Haryana, shedding light on the intricate social, economic, and cultural factors contributing to this practice.

Ahlawat, N. (2012) in her paper titled "The Political Economy of Haryana's *Khap*" trying to understand the political and socio-economic dynamics of Haryana, setting the stage for the research on bride buying. It suggests that *Khaps*, traditional village councils, play a role in shaping the social fabric, providing a broader context for the paper's focus on societal norms and structures.

Devi, N. & Parihar, A. (2014) in their paper titled "Social Consequences of Declining Sex Ratio in Haryana" focusing on the social consequences of a declining sex ratio, this study aligns with the primary theme of the paper. It establishes a foundation for the examination of sex ratios and their impact on marriage patterns, which is crucial for understanding the root causes of bride buying in Haryana.

Kaur (2004, 2013, 2014) in her different works on Across Regional Marriages, Mapping the Adverse Consequences of Sex Selection, Sex Ratio and Marriage Reform, provide insights into the complexities of marriages in regional contexts, the consequences of sex selection, and reforms related to marriage. The references highlight the broader societal issues that may contribute to the practice of bride buying.

Study titled "Sign of Change" by Larsen, M., & Kaur, R. (2013) is crucial in exploring signs of change within the societal norms, potentially providing a comparative perspective on evolving marriage practices in Haryana. It complements the research by examining shifts in cultural and societal attitudes towards marriage.

Mishra, V. (2013) in his research paper titled "Human Trafficking the Stakeholders Perspective" tried to find out the factor behind human trafficking. Though not directly related to bride buying, Mishra's work on human trafficking may offer insights into the broader consequences and ethical considerations surrounding practices that involve the movement of individuals across regions, providing a parallel context to bride buying.

Kukreja, R., & Kumar, P. (2013) in their documentary "Tied in a knot: Cross-region marriages in Haryana and Rajasthan" provide visual and narrative accounts of cross-region marriages in Haryana. And the study is offering a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural, economic, and gender-related aspects influencing marriage practices in Haryana and Rajasthan.

While existing literature provides valuable insights into involuntary bachelorhood in various contexts, there is a noticeable gap in understanding the specific dynamics of this phenomenon within the context of rural Haryana, India. Previous studies have primarily focused on urban areas or broader national perspectives, neglecting the unique socio-cultural and economic landscape of rural Haryana. Limited research has been conducted to unravel the intricate interplay of factors such as caste, class, and regional disparities that contribute to involuntary bachelorhood in this particular setting. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that address the psychological and emotional challenges faced by involuntarily unmarried men in rural Haryana. To bridge this gap, our research aims to provide a nuanced exploration of the factors influencing involuntary bachelorhood in this specific region, offering valuable insights into the socio-economic, cultural, and psychological dimensions of the phenomenon.

### **Justification of the Present Study:**

The significance of conducting this research in rural Haryana lies in its potential to contribute context-specific knowledge that can inform targeted interventions and policy initiatives. The socio-cultural fabric of Haryana, characterized by deeply rooted traditions, gender norms, and economic structures, necessitates a dedicated examination of involuntary bachelorhood within this unique context. Understanding the factors contributing to the high prevalence of unmarried men in rural Haryana is essential for developing effective strategies to address the challenges faced by this demographic group. Moreover, as rural areas often bear the brunt of societal inequalities and limited access to resources, our study can shed light on the intersectionality of factors influencing involuntary bachelorhood, emphasizing the need for socially inclusive and region-specific interventions. This research, aims to fill the existing gap in the literature and provide actionable insights for policymakers,

social workers, and community leaders to foster a more equitable and supportive environment for involuntarily unmarried men in rural Haryana.

### OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the socio-economic factors contributing to involuntary bachelorhood in rural Haryana.
- To examine the psychological and emotional challenges faced by involuntarily unmarried men.

### METHODOLOGY

This study employs a secondary data analysis methodology to explore the sociological aspects of involuntary bachelorhood in rural Haryana. Drawing from diverse sources, including census data, government reports, academic journals, and research studies, the research will investigate long-term trends in demographics, gender ratios, and socio-economic indicators.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that Skewed Sex Ratio and Female Foeticide are major cause behind involuntary bachelorhood in the Haryana rural context. Factual data supports this finding as Haryana has consistently demonstrated a skewed sex ratio, revealing a male-dominated population, currently standing at 879 females per 1000 males, below the national average of 940. The 2001 Census reported an even lower sex ratio of 861 females per 1000 males.

Although the scenario briefly improved in 2015 after the launch of the *Beti-Bachao, Beti-Padhao* scheme, aiming to increase the sex ratio at birth, the trend has since reversed. The sex ratio at birth (SRB) in Haryana reached a peak of 923 in 2019 but declined to 906 female births per 1000 male births in the first seven months of 2023. It shows that the struggle to protect girl children remains an ongoing battle in Haryana, contributing to a dearth of eligible brides and presenting families with the daunting challenge of finding suitable matches for their sons due to the shortage of marriageable women.

The study also found that in rural Haryana, the intricate interplay of deep-seated cultural norms and dowry demands has contributed significantly to the phenomenon of involuntary bachelorhood. The region's entrenched cultural norms prioritize male children. This preference not only shapes family dynamics but also perpetuates the societal pressure to secure male heirs.

Dowry demands further exacerbate the challenges faced by families seeking brides, imposing considerable economic burdens. The alarming statistics on dowry harassment complaints in Haryana between 2010 and 2023, totalling 4,797, underscore the prevalence of this issue. In 2022 alone, the state witnessed 234 dowry-related deaths, alongside 805 complaints of sexual harassment, 605 of cybercrime, 472 of stalking, and 409 of honour crimes.

The study highlights that the involuntary bachelorhood crisis in rural Haryana is intricately woven with the prevalence of illegal sex determination and bride buying practices, creating a complex socio-cultural landscape. Illegal sex determination tests have cast a shadow over the efforts to improve the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB). Investigations have exposed the smuggling of Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) kits and the use of ultra-modern pocket-size ultrasound machines, undermining the enforcement of the PCPNDT Act. This trend perpetuates a preference for male children, contributing to the skewed sex ratio in the region.

The scale of this phenomenon is evident in the survey conducted by the Selfie-With-Daughter foundation, revealing that nearly 1.30 lakh brides have been "purchased" from outside Haryana. Additionally, National Crime Records Bureau data highlights over 20,000 girl children and women between the ages of 10 and 30 being kidnapped for marriage in 2013, often leading to a life of slavery and abuse.

Another finding of the study suggests that involuntary bachelors grapple with a poignant dilemma, yearning for companionship and family life yet finding themselves in a challenging quest for willing partners. The skewed sex ratio perpetuates distorted gender norms and expectations, influencing community harmony. Frustrated aspirations contribute to social unrest.

It is also found that Government and NGOs collaborate to conduct impactful awareness campaigns, educating communities on gender equality, family planning, and the significance of marriage. These initiatives yield positive results, fostering increased awareness, altering attitudes, and reducing societal stigma associated with unmarried individuals. For instance Haryana Government has launched a pension scheme tailored for unmarried individuals both men and women over 40 years old, will receive a monthly pension of ₹ 2,750 until they reach the age of 60, serving as an old-age pension thereafter anticipated to benefit nearly 200,000 people.

In short the scale of this harsh reality of involuntary bachelorhood is widely evident. And due to this the involuntary bachelors grapple with profound challenges. Loneliness, social stigma, and mental health struggles emerge, as evidenced by studies conducted by Yan Wei and Li Zhang. Lacking the traditional economic support tied to marriage, these unmarried men face a heightened psychological toll. The repercussions of involuntary bachelorhood extend beyond individual experiences as the impact of involuntary bachelorhood resonates within broader societal dynamics. In short, addressing the involuntary bachelorhood crisis demands a comprehensive approach, including combatting illegal sex determination, promoting gender equality, and raising awareness about the detrimental consequences of bride buying. Efforts in these areas are crucial to reshape the socio-cultural fabric and foster a more equitable future for rural Haryana.

### CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, this research paper provides a nuanced exploration of involuntary bachelorhood in rural Haryana, India by offering valuable insights into its complex socio-economic, cultural, and psychological dimensions. The findings underscore the role of skewed sex ratios, fuelled by female foeticide and cultural preferences for male heirs, in perpetuating the scarcity of marriageable women and the rise of involuntary bachelorhood. The practice of bride buying, influenced by economic pressures and cultural norms, further exacerbates this societal challenge.

The study reveals individual-level challenges, including loneliness and mental health issues, family-level struggles as they navigate cultural expectations and economic burdens, and broader societal dynamics with distorted gender norms. Government and civil society initiatives have led to a rise in tailored support systems, recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by involuntarily unmarried men. Counselling centres and helplines specifically designed for unmarried men play a pivotal role in offering emotional support and guidance. But this is not sufficient we must focus on more intensive research so that the root cause of the problem can be addressed effectively.

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