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**Gender Discrimination, Marital Attitude, and Perceived Choice and Awareness as
Explanatory Factors of Flourishing among Young Indian Unmarried Women**

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Gender Discrimination, Marital Attitude, and Perceived Choice and Awareness as Explanatory Factors of Flourishing among Young Indian Unmarried Women

Abstract

Background

Gender discrimination continues to exist across societies and unequally impacts women. These experiences could shape individuals' future choices and perspectives, including their views on marriage and overall well-being, underscoring the need to understand these factors among young unmarried women in the Indian context. Therefore, the present study aimed to examine the roles of gender discrimination, marital attitudes, perceived choice, and self-awareness in flourishing among young unmarried Indian women. Further, we examined the independent moderating roles of perceived choice and self-awareness on the relationship between marital attitude and flourishing.

Methods

A quantitative cross-sectional design was adopted, and standardized self-report measures of the variables were used to collect data via an online survey. The data were collected from 514 unmarried young Indian women aged 18-30 years.

Results

Experiences of gender discrimination by parents reduced the likelihood of flourishing among young women ($\beta = -.105$, 95% CI $[-.191, -.018]$), while positive marital attitudes, perceived choice, and self-awareness possibly increase it. The results of path analysis indicated the negative role of gender discrimination on marital attitude, while awareness of self ($\beta = .221$, 95% CI $[.121, .319]$) likely promoted flourishing, and the association between marital attitude and flourishing was not significant. Positive marital attitude ($\beta = .088$, 95% CI $[.002, .173]$) and perceived choice ($\beta = .216$, 95% CI $[.128, .301]$) increased the likelihood of flourishing. Gender discrimination indirectly reduced flourishing via the pathway of marital attitudes.

Conclusion

Gender discrimination has negative implications for women's well-being and marital attitudes, while perceived choice and self-awareness can play a protective role. Addressing gender

discrimination is crucial for promoting self-awareness, perceived choice, marital attitude, and flourishing among young unmarried women.

Keywords: *gender discrimination, marital attitude, self-awareness, perceived choice, flourishing, young adults, India*

Introduction

Gender discrimination is a widespread phenomenon that often results in unequal treatment of women and even exists in the modern era. Girls and women face discrimination at home, in education, health, and the labor market, and about 90% of men and women show gender biases against women globally, irrespective of being developed or developing countries (United Nations, 2020). The experiences of gender discrimination have a detrimental influence on mental and physical health (Perry et al., 2013; Vigod & Rochon, 2020; Wei et al., 2024; Boring & Mathur, 2025). Individuals experience gender discrimination at various walks of life, including education, employment, and healthcare access (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Pasha, 2023; Gupta & Kothe, 2024; Singh Rana Amanat, 2023). A study among middle-aged and older women identified that the individuals experiencing gender discrimination reported poorer well-being compared to their counterparts (Hackett et al., 2024), while it was positively associated with emotional vulnerability and hopelessness among young women (Jadhav et al., 2023). Similarly, a qualitative study among young women living in urban slums of Lucknow, India, using story circles identified mechanisms behind gender inequality that include increased sexual harassment in the community, mobility restriction, restricted education and work opportunity, and the utmost priority of marriage of young women (Hebert et al., 2020).

The experiences of gender discrimination and inequality could lead to a negative worldview and hamper various dynamics of relationships in life. As gender discrimination is rooted in socially constructed gender roles and culturally ingrained norms that dictate how women and men should be in society, it makes women feel entrapped (Manchana & Gannavarapu, 2024). This pressures women to do their socially prescribed gender roles, limiting their sense of agency and creating distress. The feminine gender role stress creates fear of victimization, and behaving with assertiveness and reduced agency in her regard was associated with psychological distress (Richardson et al., 2019; Kelmendi & Jemini-Gashi, 2022). Notably, gender role attitudes were associated with marital satisfaction and communication quality, where women placed greater value on egalitarian gender attitudes, while men focused on communication quality and marital satisfaction (Yoo, 2022). Further,

women's involvement in work outside the home promoted their decision-making within the family (Jana & Midya, 2024).

Similarly, societal gender roles were related to authority distribution between spouses, income, and opinions of domestic violence, while a positive association between marital attitude and egalitarian gender role and a negative association with marriage gender roles and traditional gender role aspects exists (Sonkaya & Öcal, 2024). In addition, gender role attitude significantly predicted marriage desire among women but not among men (Yoon & Park, 2025). Therefore, when it comes to marriage, some women choose to break the traditional gender norms by being independent in crucial aspects, including finance, career, and in making decisions when they should get married, rather than following what society expects them to do. In addition, a study among Indian young adults (majority female) found that positive marital attitudes were associated with subjective well-being, whereas the intention to marry was not (Bhattacharyya & Range, 2025). Another study among adolescents shows that those with higher agency had reduced endorsement of early marriage, greater support for continuing education post-marriage, greater advocacy against early sibling marriage, and better in making their own future choices (Chandarana et al., 2023). Also, what essentially matters is the individual's choice and decision in the long run, as individuals also choose to be single due to various reasons, such as a sense of freedom, identity, and reduced emotional and financial responsibilities, yet the perceived disadvantage of it (Kislev, 2024; Gupta et al., 2025).

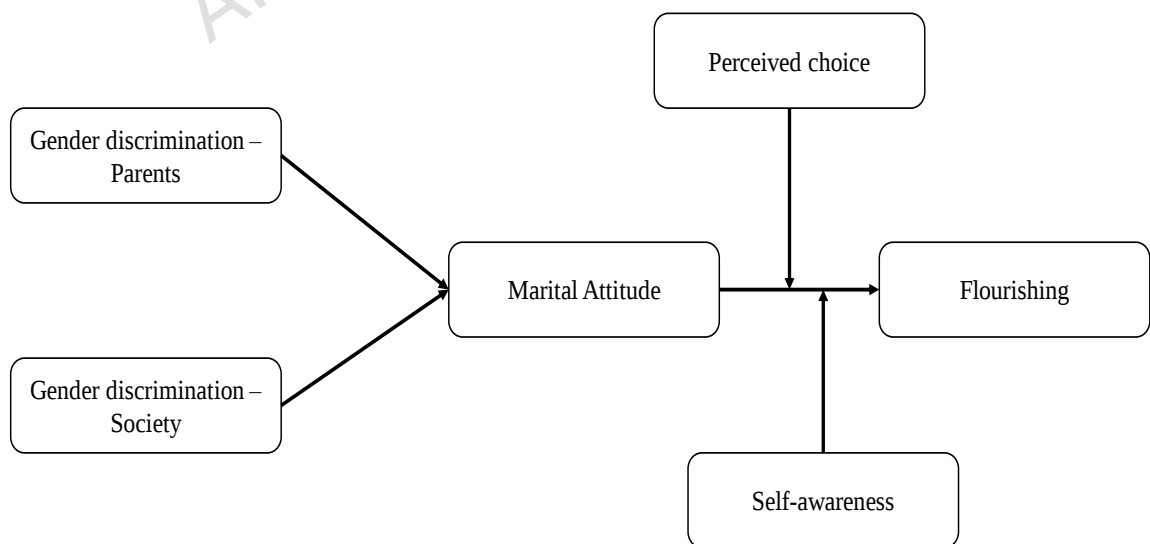


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the study

Currently, there is a shift in the marital age of women due to various reasons, including the negative attitude towards marriage that arises from traditional gender roles and possible experiences of gender discrimination. The experiences of gender discrimination could tune individuals' perception of self, further playing a role in marital attitudes among young women, contributing to their well-being. Moreover, with increased mental health issues among emerging adults, with higher levels of anxiety and depression among females (Suresh & Dar, 2025), there is a need for understanding various psychosocial dynamics of well-being. However, there are few studies in this context, and, to our knowledge, earlier works have not considered the role of marital attitude in the relationship between gender discrimination, sense of agency, and flourishing. In the present study, sense of agency is understood through the lens of self-determination, which includes perceived choice (sense of choice in one's own behavior) and self-awareness (awareness of one's feelings and sense of being) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Sheldon & Deci, 1993). The sense of agency plays an influential role in women's mental health (Richardson et al., 2019).

Further, the study is rooted in causal agency theory, an extension of the functional theory of self-determination (Shogren et al., 2015). The theory defines '*self-determination as dispositional characteristics manifested as acting as a causal agent in one's life*', acknowledging that this could vary with the context. The three layers of agency include volitional action (keeping one's own preferences, making conscious decisions), agentic action (self-directed action to achieve a particular goal), and action-control belief (the belief that one can reach the goal). Further, there is a mutual relationship between these factors and the social context, which can facilitate or impede individuals' movement towards an agentic self. In addition, involvement in these three factors may result in better well-being.

Considering this theory, the present study conceptualized gender discrimination to be one of the socio-contextual threats that hampers the lives of women, as the enforced gender roles limit their choices and obstruct flourishing. As discussed earlier, facing gender discrimination could also shape attitudes towards marriage, which could, in turn, either facilitate or have a detrimental effect on flourishing. However, as theory suggests, the relationship between marital attitude and flourishing can be moderated by perceived choice and self-awareness (see Figure 1). Therefore, the current study examined the roles of gender discrimination, marital attitudes, perceived choice, and self-awareness in flourishing among young women aged 18-30 in India. Further, we aimed to examine the independent moderating

roles of perceived choice and self-awareness on the relationship between marital attitude and flourishing.

Methods

Study design and Sample: The present study used a quantitative cross-sectional design to fulfill the study objectives. Participants were unmarried young women aged 18-30 years residing in India. Married women, men, and individuals with severe physical and mental health problems were excluded from the study. The research team has circulated the invitation to participate in the study through social media platforms by detailing the eligibility criteria. The study used an online survey. Interested participants were provided with the survey link or QR code and instructions ($n = 514$). All the participants received a list of functioning women's helplines and support contact details as a token of appreciation for their participation.

Tools/ Measures used

Outcome

Flourishing: Flourishing was assessed using 8 items of 'The Flourishing Scale' measure with response pattern of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) developed by Diener et al. (2010). A composite score on this scale ranges from 8 to 56, with higher scores indicating greater flourishing. This measure has been validated among adults in the Indian context, with Cronbach's α ranging from .80 to .85 (Singh et al., 2016). This measure showed excellent internal consistency in the present study (McDonald's $\omega = .91$).

Predictors

Gender Discrimination: The Gender Discrimination Inventory was developed by Kira et al. (2015) and consisted of 7 items related to gender discrimination due to parental attitudes, 6 items related to parental behavior, and 8 items focused on gender discrimination by society. The measure has five-point likert response (1 – *I strongly disagree* to 5 – *I strongly agree*) for parental attitude and behavior while the gender discrimination by society was assessed through its frequency of occurrence by a six-point likert scale (1- *If the event has NEVER happened to you* to 6- *If the event happened ALMOST ALL OF THE TIME or more than 70% of the time*). The composite score for parental attitude and behavior ranges from 13 to 65, with higher scores indicating greater perceived discrimination by parents; the score for gender discrimination by society ranges from 8 to 48, with higher scores indicating greater perceived discrimination by society. The measure has been used among female emerging adults in India (Shergill & Rathore

Hooja, 2025). In the present study, the sub-scales gender discrimination by parents and society showed good internal consistency with McDonald's $\omega\alpha = .94$ and $.92$, respectively.

Marital attitude: This was assessed using the Marriage Attitude Scale (MAS) developed by Braaten & Rosén (1998), comprising 23 items with a four-point response scale (0 = strongly agree; 3 = strongly disagree). In this scale, 6 items focused on an individual's own thoughts and feelings about present or future marriage, while the rest of the items are general statements about marriage, with 8 items to be reverse scored. The total score ranges from 0 to 69, with higher scores indicating a positive attitude towards marriage. MAS was used among Indian young adults in an earlier work by Agarwal (2024). Further, the scale showed good internal consistency with McDonald's ω of $.74$).

Perceived choice and awareness: We used the Perceived Choice and Awareness Scale (PCASS), previously known as the Self-Determination Scale, developed by Sheldon & Deci (1993), to assess individuals' perceived choice and awareness. A study by McKinney (2020) used this measure to conduct a study among adults in India. The scale consists of 10 items across two sub-scales: perceived choice and self-awareness. Each item has a pair of statements (A and B), with one representing perceived choice/self-awareness and the other lacking it. This measure uses a five-point Likert scale, with 1 – Only A feels true and 5 – Only B feels true. The composite score for each sub-scale ranges from 5 to 10, with higher scores indicating greater perceived choice or self-awareness. In the present study, the perceived choice and self-awareness sub-scales showed good internal consistency (McDonald's omega of $.86$ and $.78$, respectively).

Data analysis: We used JAMOV version 2.66.4.0 for all analyses. Descriptive and correlational analyses were employed to examine the sample characteristics and the relationships among variables, respectively. In addition, regression and path analysis were conducted to test the conceptual model. All the analyses are reported in 95% confidence intervals.

Ethical considerations: The study adhered to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), and written informed consent was obtained from participants before their participation. Participants were briefly informed of the study's purpose and the voluntary nature of their participation, which allowed them to leave the study at any time without consequences. No identifiable information, such as names, email addresses, or contact details, was collected from the participants. This study was approved by the Research

Ethics and Review Board (RERB), O P Jindal Global University, Sonipat, Haryana, India (No: RERB/ 2025/ 269).

Results

The present study aimed to examine the roles of gender discrimination, attitudes towards marriage, self-awareness, and perceived choice in flourishing. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1 (n = 514). The majority (83.1%) of participants were aged 18-24 years. More than half of the participants had completed a Bachelor's degree. About 72.8% of participants lived with their parents, and 85% hailed from middle socio-economic status. Furthermore, 65% of participants resided in urban areas.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample (n = 514)

Variables	Frequency	%
Age		
18 - 24	427	83.1%
25 - 30	87	16.9%
Educational level		
Secondary and Higher	66	12.8%
Secondary		
Bachelors	282	54.9%
Masters	166	32.3%
Living with		
Parent	374	72.8%
Alone	61	11.9%
Friends	79	15.4%
Socio-economic status		
Lower	27	5.3%
Middle	437	85%
High	50	9.7%
Locality		
Urban	334	65%
Rural	180	35%

Note: %- Percentage

Table 2 presents a summary of the descriptive and correlational analyses. Considering the mean as the cutoff, it is evident that about 40% and 41% experienced gender discrimination from parents ($M = 27.1$, $SD = 11.9$) and society ($M = 19.6$, $SD = 9.55$), respectively. In addition, 49% of participants reported high self-awareness, and 48% felt they had perceived choice. About 44% and 57% of the participants expressed a negative attitude towards marriage ($M = 32.7$, $SD = 8.32$) and flourishing ($M = 42.1$, $SD = 9.09$), respectively. It is evident from the

results of correlational analysis that gender discrimination of parents (attitude and behavior) is negatively associated with flourishing ($r = -.105$, $p < .05$). Further, presence of awareness of self ($r = .235$, $p < .01$), perceived choice ($r = .218$, $p < .01$) and positive marital attitude ($r = .125$, $p < .01$) was positively associated with flourishing.

Table 2: Descriptive and correlational analysis

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. GD -Parents	27.1	11.9					
2. GD- Society	19.6	9.55	.555**				
3. Self-awareness	16.2	5.21	-.355**	-.177**			
4. Perceived choice	17.9	5.17	-.509**	-.391**	0.207**		
5. Marital attitude	32.7	8.32	-.450**	-.406**	0.231**	0.217**	
6. Flourishing	42.1	9.09	-.105*	.011	0.235**	0.218**	0.125**

Note: GD- Gender discrimination; SD – Standard deviation; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The summary of the multiple regression model with flourishing as the outcome is presented in Table 3. The results suggest that parental gender discrimination reduced the likelihood of flourishing among young adults ($\beta = -.105$, 95% CI [-.191, -.018]), whereas societal gender discrimination did not. However, a positive attitude towards marriage ($\beta = .125$, 95% CI [.038, .211]), awareness of self ($\beta = .235$, 95% CI [.151, .319]) and perceived choice ($\beta = .218$, 95% CI [.133, .303]) increased the likelihood of flourishing.

Table 3: Results of the multiple regression model with flourishing as the outcome

Variables	β	SE	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Gender discrimination -Parents	-.105*	.044	-.191	-.018
Gender discrimination -Society	.011	.044	-.075	.098
Marital attitude	.125**	.044	.038	.211
Self-awareness	.235**	.043	.151	.319
Perceived choice	.218**	.043	.133	.303

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 4 presents the summary of the path analysis with self-awareness as a moderator. It is evident from the results that gender discrimination by parents ($\beta = -.324$, 95% CI [-.418, -.224]) and society ($\beta = -.226$, 95% CI [-.318, -.134]) reduced the likelihood of a positive marital

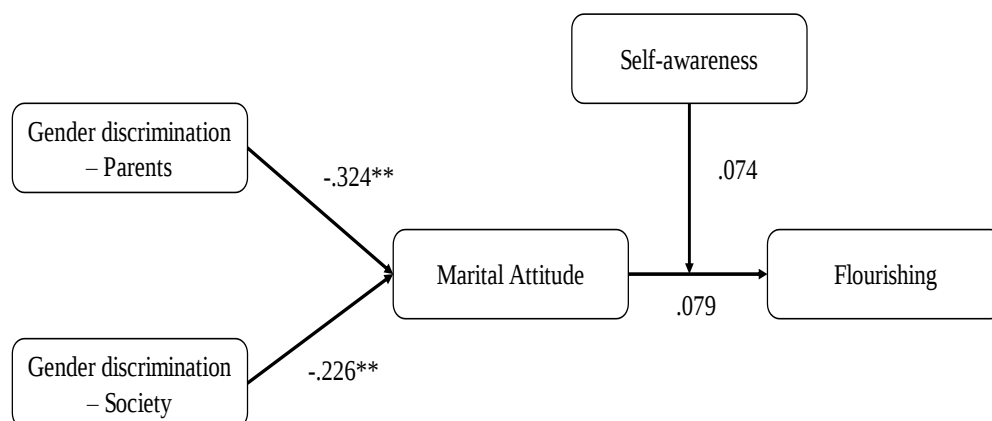
attitude. There is no significant association between marital attitude and flourishing in this model, and self-awareness did not moderate this relationship (Refer to Figure 2). However, self-awareness increased the likelihood of flourishing among young unmarried women ($\beta = .221$, 95% CI [.121, .319]). The model showed an excellent fit with CFI = .970, RMSEA = .050, and SRMR = .021.

Table 4: Summary of path analysis with self-awareness as moderator

Paths		β	SE	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
GD- Pa→rent	→ Marital attitude	-.324**	.049	-.418	-.224
GD- Society	→ Marital attitude	-.226**	.047	-.318	-.134
Marital attitude	→ Flourishing	.079	.044	-.005	.166
Self-awareness	→ Flourishing	.221**	.050	.121	.319
Interaction	→ Flourishing	.074	.0513	-.036	.164
Indirect					
GD- Parent	→ Flourishing	-.026	.015	-.061	.000
GD- Society	→ Flourishing	-.018	.010	-.041	-.001

Note: Interaction – Marital attitude X Self-awareness; Bootstrap – adjusted bias corrected at 5000; Model Summary- χ^2 (4) = 9.24, $p = .055$, CFI = .970, RMSEA = .050, SRMR = .021; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 2: Conceptual representation with self-awareness as moderator



Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

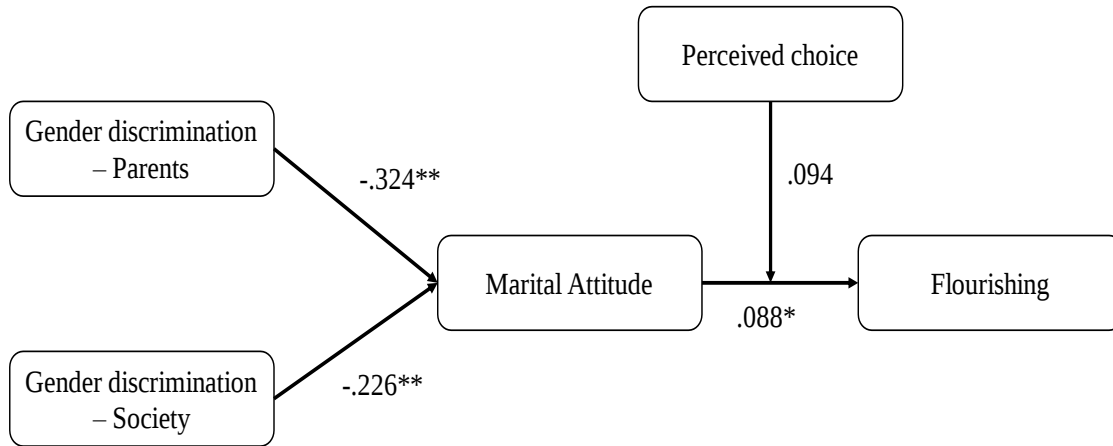
The summary of the path analysis, with perceived choice as a moderator, between marital attitude and flourishing is presented in Table 5. Similar to the earlier model, gender discrimination by parents ($\beta = -.324$, 95% CI [$-.417$, $-.226$]) and society ($\beta = -.226$, 95% CI [$-.317$, $-.136$]) reduced the likelihood of positive marital attitude (Refer to Figure 3). However, positive marital attitude ($\beta = .088$, 95% CI [$.002$, $.173$]) and perceived choice ($\beta = .216$, 95% CI [$.128$, $.301$]) increased the likelihood of flourishing. Further, societal gender discrimination reduced the likelihood of flourishing by lowering positive marital attitudes ($\beta = -.020$, 95% CI [$-.042$, $-.002$]). At the same time, parental gender discrimination played a minimal role in flourishing in this model; it was non-significant (p-value), but, given the confidence interval, it was significant, suggesting an underpowered indirect relationship between these study variables that needs to be explored further in future studies. The model exhibited good fit (CFI = .957, RMSEA = .061, SRMR = .023).

Table 5: Summary of path analysis with perceived choice as moderator

Paths			β	SE	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
GD- Parent	→	Marital Attitude	-.324**	.048	-.417	-.226
GD- Society	→	Marital Attitude	-.226**	.046	-.317	-.136
Marital attitude	→	Flourishing	.088*	.044	.002	.173
Perceived choice	→	Flourishing	.216**	.044	.128	.301
Interaction	→	Flourishing	.094	.053	-.019	.188
Indirect paths						
GD- Parent	→	Flourishing	-.029†	.016	-.065	-.002
GD- Society	→	Flourishing	-.020*	.010	-.042	-.002

Note: Interaction – Marital attitude X Perceived choice; Bootstrap – adjusted bias corrected at 5000; Model Summary- $\chi^2 (4) = 11.6$, $p = .021$, SRMR = .023, RMSEA = .061, CFI = .957; † minimal association through the path of marital attitude, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 3: Conceptual representation with perceived choice as moderator



Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the roles of gender discrimination, marital attitudes, perceived choice, and self-awareness in flourishing among young unmarried women in India. The results suggest that gender discrimination by parents reduced the likelihood of flourishing, while a positive attitude towards marriage, perceived choice, and awareness of self increased its likelihood among young unmarried women. To our knowledge, no earlier work has been conducted with these factors among young women in India. However, similar to the present study's results, earlier work suggests that gender equality was associated with reduced risks of ill-being, increased life satisfaction, and a higher proportion of people thriving, irrespective of gender (Araki & Olivos, 2025). Gender discrimination has a detrimental effect on well-being and health among women (Vigod & Rochon, 2020; Hackett et al., 2024). In the present study, societal gender discrimination was not a significant direct factor in hindering flourishing among unmarried women in India. This could be because the majority of participants are from urban areas, where direct restrictions on women and girls are comparatively lower. Moreover, evidence suggests that the majority of women do not perceive widespread gender discrimination in India (Corichi et al., 2022), though it exists.

However, gender inequality within the household still possibly led to poor flourishing among young unmarried women. Further, in line with the present study's results, a study found

that positive attitudes towards marriage were associated with subjective well-being among young adults, but the intention to marry was not (Bhattacharyya & Range, 2025). A few studies examined the roles of perceived choice and self-awareness in flourishing. While earlier work on similar constructs such as self-determination, autonomy, and sense of agency generally indicated a positive relationship with well-being (Welzel & Inglehart, 2010; Hui & Tsang, 2012; de Hoop et al., 2014; Kumar et al., 2024). Further, the study's results align with the causal agency theory developed by Shogren et al. (2015), as gender discrimination is identified as one of the socio-contextual impediments to positive marital attitudes, potentially reducing young unmarried women's sense of agency and flourishing. Although self-awareness and perceived choice did not act as moderators in the present study, future work can deepen the understanding of them by using different study designs and exploring these factors across different samples.

Although women in the modern era have excelled through education and economic independence (Kumari & Siotra, 2023), this may not apply to all, as many women are subjected to gender discrimination and ill-treatment. The experiences of gender discrimination by parents and society likely reduced the positive attitude towards marriage, as evidenced in the present study. Gender discrimination rooted in forced gender norms in society is one of the reasons that turned young women averse towards marriage. Marriage attitude was positively associated with egalitarian gender roles, while it was negatively associated with gender-specific and traditional roles (Sonkaya & Öcal, 2024). Although the association between marital attitude and flourishing was not significant in the model with self-awareness, greater self-awareness increased the likelihood of flourishing among young women. The insignificant relationship between marital attitude and flourishing can be attributed to the presence of self-awareness. Given the greater self-awareness among young women, the role of marital attitude may not be a significant contributor to flourishing. Future studies should explore this further to substantiate the results. There is very little work on this aspect, specifically in the context of unmarried women. Previous work on positive youth development and self-awareness suggests that emotional self-regulation and self-esteem were positively related to resilience and psychological well-being (Mertens et al., 2022). Although self-awareness has been a buzzword due to its overlap with other constructs, such as self-consciousness and self-knowledge (Carden et al., 2022), and its complex nature, there has been a poor understanding of this construct among young adults, especially among women.

In addition, with perceived choice as a moderator in the model, the presence of positive marital attitude and perceived choice increased the likelihood of flourishing. Further, gender discrimination indirectly reduces flourishing through the path of marital attitude. An earlier work suggested that stable marriages were associated with higher well-being than being single or having less stable relationship histories (Mäki et al., 2025). Although there exist various studies pointing to the good health and well-being among married individuals compared to singles, the characteristics of the relationship mattered, playing a crucial role in the overall well-being of the individuals (Shapiro & Keyes, 2008; Huntington et al., 2022; Apostolou et al., 2024; Hewitt & Vidal, 2025). However, there exists no significant difference between single and partnered individuals in family and friends, personal growth, satisfaction with physical health, leisure, and social participation (Adamczyk, 2026).

The present study's results are of their kind, as previous work on unmarried young women's attitudes towards marriage and the role of these factors in flourishing is very limited. However, studies on a similar construct, such as perceived choice, align with the results of the present study. Earlier studies reported that conscientiousness, extraversion, and self-love were associated with flourishing among adults (Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016; Rahe & Jansen, 2023). In addition, perceived control helped individuals navigate everyday stressors, thoughts, and actions (Cerino et al., 2024). The sense of agency facilitated individuals in advocating for making their own choices in the future, supported the continuation of education post-marriage, and stood against early marriage (Chandarana et al., 2023). Importantly, although flourishing is considered higher among females than among males (de la Fuente et al., 2020), social constraints, such as gender discrimination, may reduce flourishing by undermining positive marital attitudes among young women. Since one's upbringing, traditional values, and men being valued over women could significantly shape individuals' thinking and behavior (Qiu, 2023), with these negative experiences as gender bias and discrimination having a negative connotation towards various dynamics of life. Future studies should explore these constructs in depth across different participant groups to substantiate these results and better understand these factors within a broader socio-cultural context in India.

Although the present study is novel, it is not devoid of limitations. First, this study is cross-sectional and does not examine the causal relationships among these variables. Second, the study's results must be generalized with caution. As the majority of participants in the study are from middle-class backgrounds, educated, and from urban areas, the results might differ

for individuals from different socio-economic statuses, including those from rural areas. Future studies can consider these demographic factors and identify the deviations from the present study results. Third, less than 50% of the individuals experienced gender discrimination in this study. At the same time, the perspectives on marriage and flourishing would differ among vulnerable groups with extreme experiences of ill treatment due to gender discrimination. Future studies can explore these factors through longitudinal studies to gain insight into how gender discrimination shapes individuals' lives. Further, qualitative studies can be designed to have a deeper understanding of these socio-culturally constructed factors among young women from different settings in India.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the roles of gender discrimination, marital attitudes, perceived choice, and self-awareness in flourishing among young unmarried women. The results of the study suggest that gender discrimination by parents reduces the likelihood of flourishing among young women. At the same time, the presence of a positive marital attitude, perceived choice, and self-awareness increased it. Further, the results of path analysis pointed to the negative role of gender discrimination on marital attitude, and awareness of self-likely promoted flourishing. In addition, in the model with perceived choice, positive marital attitude and perceived choice increased the likelihood of flourishing. Gender discrimination by society indirectly reduces flourishing through the path of marital attitude, with a minimal role of gender discrimination by parents.

These results are among the first to identify a novel relationship between these variables among unmarried women in the Indian context. Further, the results point to the need for addressing gender discrimination for promoting better self-awareness, perceived choice, marital attitude, and flourishing among young unmarried women. This can be effectively achieved through family and community sensitization and by promoting egalitarian gender roles across all aspects of life, including the home, the workplace, health care, and the community. The future studies should specifically focus on rural and vulnerable groups who experience extreme gender discrimination and violence to develop a target-specific intervention program for promoting better self-awareness, choice, and flourishing.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

All procedures performed in this study involving human participants followed the Helsinki Declaration. The Research Ethics and Review Board, O P Jindal Global University, Sonipat, India, granted ethical approval for this study (No. RERB/2025/269). Written informed consent was obtained from all the study participants.

Consent for publication

Not Applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The data used for this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Clinical trial number

Not applicable.

Funding

The authors have not received any funding for carrying out this study.

Authors' contribution

PP: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft. **EP:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Methodology, Validation, Writing – review & editing. **KP:** Data curation, Writing – review & editing. **AK:** Data curation, Writing – review & editing. **AS:** Data curation, Methodology, Writing – review & editing. All authors read and approved the final draft.

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