Original Article

Usage of Matrimonial Groups on Facebook: A Case of Pakistan

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Abstract

Marriage is a significant part of any cultured society. The technological evolutions of social media have increased the popularity of online matrimonial services. The current research aims to investigate the effectiveness of matrimonial groups among youth using Facebook. For this purpose, the data for this study was collected from three Facebook matrimonial groups through an online survey method. The study design is quantitative, and the sample size is 367 youth members between 20 and 29. Descriptive statistics were applied to determine the effectiveness of matrimonial groups among youth. The study results determined that these matrimonial groups actively help registered members find a life partner. Users are satisfied with the matrimonial services as these groups provide real-time interaction, are reliable, ensure confidentiality, and are easy to navigate. Of the 367 participants, 256 agreed they would get their life partner through these matrimonial groups. These results evidence that user satisfaction positively correlated with the effectiveness of matrimonial services. Therefore, it is recommended that matrimonial groups should improve search optimization tools, payment options against services, and quick responses to the query. This is the only research that explores the effectiveness of online matrimonial services. Future

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research can be conducted with different research designs and a bigger population for deeper insights.

Introduction

This is an information era where information is just a click away. Social media has become necessary for interactive communication among individuals or the general public (Yousaf et al., 2019; Manning, 2014). It has the fastest expansion because people can connect, express, and share happenings with minimum cost and less time (Yu & Kak, 2012; Hatgine et al., 2021). Among other social media networks, Facebook is the most extensive social networking and advertising platform used by approximately 2.9 billion individuals monthly, accounting for 36.9% of the world population (Lua, 2022). It caters to a vast population and fulfills their social, economic, cultural, political, domestic, and religious information needs. It is estimated that 49.2 million Pakistani uses Facebook daily, and they ranked among the top ten Facebook user countries after India (416.6 million), United States (240.0 million), Indonesia (176.5 million), Brazil (139.0 million), Philippines (91.0 million), (Mexico78.0 million), Vietnam (75.9 million), Thailand (58.5 million) and Japan (55.8 million) respectively (World population review, 2022).

Marriage is a lifelong commitment (Chia, Too, & Khor, 2021) and is considered a significant part of any cultured society that cannot be overlooked (Pal, 2011). For decades, finding a suitable life partner has remained challenging (Chia, Too, & Khor, 2021). In Western societies, marriage is an individual concern, but this is the reverse in Asian countries, as it is considered the reunion of two families' relations (Al-Dawood et al. 2021). A novel trend to find a suitable partner through virtual channels has emerged in recent decades. Specialized matrimonial websites and groups provide a platform to choose suitable life companions. These e-matrimonial websites and groups are considered substitutes for *Rishta* aunties (Conventional matchmakers). The matrimonial groups quickly pop up in the Facebook browser if search word "Rishta" with an amazing number of members (Al-Dawood et al., 2021). Khalid (2022) highlighted that these matrimonial groups have been popular among youth, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. (2022) also highlighted the growing trend of relationships and marriages from online interactions through social media platforms. Harms (2013) reported that couples who met through online interaction have happier and longer marriages.

Pal (2011) and Rajadesingan et al. (2019) highlighted that nationally and internationally, the regimes of conventional matrimonial affairs are trending into virtual communities where information is accessible, shareable, and verifiable smartly. This virtual matrimonial emergence is often criticized, too, but apart from its traditional means, a particular class of people prefers using electronic media as a spouse-seeking agent for a faster spread of information to a larger audience. Bajnaid and Elareshi (2018) shared that Facebook matrimonial groups have a safe setting that allows spouse seekers to communicate while maintaining their religious commitments. Lupa-Wójcik (2020) described social media as a creative form to initiate discussions and exchange of content, where brides and grooms interact with each other based on their matrimonial information provided by the candidates. These groups maintain individual information (candidate profile), i.e., photographs, family interest, age, location, caste, current work, etc. Facebook matrimonial groups show the connection with people with a nominal registration fee. The matchmaking groups on Facebook are created by matchmaking companies, followed by a massive group of people. Most matrimonial groups on Facebook take it as business to earn money and charge users when "Rishta" is done between two families. These groups are also a source of satisfaction for people who select a partner and suggest their surroundings (Rajadesingan, et al., 2019).

Matrimonial activities are enriched with cultural practices worldwide (Shako, 2004). Titzmann (2013) highlighted the evolution of media and its expanded usage, changing the matchmaking structure and choices of a suitable partner. He highlighted the active intervention of youth in their future planning. This revolution has transformed arranged marriage into digital matrimonial websites and groups to seek a suitable partner. This emergence of matrimonial activities through social media gained the attention of youth worldwide. (Kamal, et al., 2022 and Rabia, et. al, 2020). Face-to-face communication between marital partners has decreased, resulting in a firm reliance on communication technologies (Kamal et al., 2022). The matrimonial websites and groups are connective agents for brides and grooms. (Shako, 2004; Patnayakuni and Seth, 2009 and Al-Dawood et al., 2021). Sharma et al. (2020) highlight that matrimonial websites/groups provide suitable matchmaking options based on the preference of the spouse seeker. The research findings of Seth (2011) indicated that people prefer online matrimonial sites because they are simple to use, search, match, and interact with. He stressed that the sense of fulfillment of matrimonial group members increases more if they see more potential matches on their search results page and with controlled privacy information, which is positively correlated with customer satisfaction. Bajnaid and Al-Saggaf (2017) stated that we live in a gendered society, and seeking

online information is more accessible than in conventional (face-to-face) settings. Bajnaid et al. (2018) endorse that online chats and networks carry more information than face-to-face interaction because an online environment enables more intensive interaction than conventional meetings.

Al-Dawood et al. (2021) highlighted the matrimonial challenges in non-western countries where parents have the authority to find a suitable spouse for his/her child. The study indicates that parents like their involvement in protecting their children from any potential technological harm and keeping themselves intact with conventional matchmaking obligations. Annand (1965) and Plakhina and Belyakova (2020) stated that personal knowledge is limited due to technological advancement, and if matrimonial knowledge expands to a more significant number of people, the probability of finding a suitable partner will also be increased. Pal (2011) stated that online matrimony groups provide trustworthy information with an economical registration fee. He highlighted that developing an inclusive information system for potential marriage information seekers at the national, regional, and local levels is needed. Shako (2004) expressed that matrimonial websites play a moderating role. The youth between the age of 20-35 use it mostly, particularly the males. The finding reported the likelihood of social and religious norms positively affecting users' behaviors and decisions, similar to the findings (Bajnaid & Elareshi, 2018). (Rajadesingan et al. 2019; Virdi, Chugeja & Parwar, 2022 and Krishnan, Hemamala, & Krishnan, 2022) stated that a bride/groom can directly search for partners consistent with their required profile criteria. Moreover, along with different positive aspects, this digital communication does not discover the actual behavior of the bride and groom.

The above literature shows a boom in online matrimonial activities. No related study could be found on social media or Facebook usage for marriage purposes. All the literature on matrimony was mostly on matrimonial websites from India. Therefore, this study is based on Pakistani matrimonial groups on Facebook. This research study aims to explore the usage pattern and effectiveness of the matrimonial groups on Facebook. To meet the objectives of the study, the theory of "Social media matrix" and "Gratification theory" are considered for theoretical underpinning. The prior theory supports the media doing activities to get traffic on the website (Kasper et al., 2015). At the same time, the latter theory supports a prospective belief of media users toward any particular motivation Vinney (2021).

The study assumed that the more the youth interact on Facebook matrimonial, the more compelling these groups are. If the users are satisfied with matrimonial groups, which gender uses more? As far as the researcher knows, this study appeared unique as we did not find any study investigating

Facebook matrimonial groups, particularly in Pakistan. Considering the significant increase in matrimonial groups and popularity among youth, the current study is designed to explore the Facebook matrimonial group usage pattern and its effectiveness on youth in Pakistan. This research addresses the following research objectives;

  a. To investigate the usage patterns of matrimonial groups on Facebook among youth in Pakistan.
  b. To examine the effectiveness of matrimonial groups on Facebook in Pakistan.

Method

The study design is quantitative. A cross-sectional survey method using an online survey was conducted to investigate the usage of matrimonial groups on Facebook in Pakistan. The cross-sectional survey method is appropriate to get relevant data from participants participant at one point in time, to assess the prevalence of attitude and behavior toward any particular issue (Olsen & StGeorge, 2004; Kesmodel, 2018; Wang & Cheng, 2020). A structured questionnaire was prepared to collect data from the study participants. The questionnaire consists of 24 items categorized into three sections, including demographic information (2 items), general questions (6 items), and survey questions (16 items). The survey questions were analyzed on a five-point Likert scale: "strongly agree =5, agree =4, Neither agree nor disagree = 3, disagree =2, and strongly disagree =1". The designed questionnaire was sent to the panel of experts for review. After finalization, questionnaire items were entered into Google Forms, and a link was established to initiate data collection. The member using Pakistani matrimonial groups on Facebook was the population of the study. The youth/adults (male and females) aged 18-29, using Facebook matrimonial groups, were selected as the study population. The data for this study was collected from three matrimonial groups on Facebook, including Two Rings Official Global, Everlasting Companionship, and Soul Wonders. These groups were selected because these three groups ranked among the top 10 matrimonial groups offering their services in Pakistan.

The study sample size was determined using the Krejci and Morgan sampling method table (Krejci & Morgan, 1970). The total known population of the selected three Facebook groups was 8000, and by using the Krejci and Morgan formula, a sample size of 367 was determined. After getting consent from group admins, the study questionnaire link was posted on the selected matrimonial Facebook group. Facebook Messenger was also used to get the data from the group participants on time. The researchers carefully screened the collected data, and ethical considerations were ensured for this research.

The screened data was coded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To gain real insights from study participants. The data analysis was performed. Descriptive statistics were applied to determine the effectiveness of Facebook matrimonial groups in Pakistan.

Results

The current research explores the effectiveness of Facebook matrimonial groups among youth. Keeping the study objectives in view, a descriptive analysis is performed. The data for this study was collected from both genders (males and females). The study sample consisted of 367 participants using Facebook matrimonial groups. The demographic results indicated that 207 (56.40%) and 160 (43.59%) males and females participated, respectively. It is evident from the results that males used this group more than females, which supports the finding of Shako, 2004. This present study has taken the age group from 18 to 29, in which a family's dependent childhood turns into an independent, responsible, mature person in society who can get married as per law in Pakistan. The results determine that 98 (26.06%) of the participants belonged to the age groups of 18-23. Whereas most of the group's participants, 296 (78.72%), fall in the age group of 24-29, using Facebook matrimonial groups indicated in Table 01. In brief, males use these groups more, and the majority of the study participants fall between the ages of 24 and 29.

Table 01:
Demographics of survey participants

Gender	Frequency	Age Group	Frequency
Male	207	18-23	98
Female	160	24-29	296

The participants were asked for their preferred information medium to seek a suitable spouse. The results indicate that the majority of the participants, 281(76%), prefer online matrimonial groups, followed by family/friends 50 (13.6%), Parents 25 (6.8%), Print media 6 (1.6%), and broker/agents 5 (1.4%) respectively. The results in Table 02 support the findings of Mehmood (2022) and Khalid (2022), highlighting the popularity of online matrimonial groups among the youth.

Table 02:
Preferred approach to search for a prospective groom/bride

Items	Broker/ Agent	Newspaper Classifieds	Family/ Friends	Parents	E-matrimonial groups
Frequency	5	6	50	25	281
Percentage	1.4	1.6	13.6	6.8	76.6

The E-matrimonial groups were selected based on their popularity among the youth using Facebook in Pakistan. Table 03 results showed that out of 367 youth members participating in the survey reported that Two Rings Official (Global) is famous among youth 171 (46.6%), followed by Soul Wonders 94 (25.6%) and Everlasting Companionship 75 (20.4%), respectively.

Table 03:
Youth awareness about matrimonial groups

Items	Two Rings Official (Global)	Everlasting Companionship	Soul Wonders
Frequency	171	75	94
Percentage	46.6	20.4	25.6

The results in Table 04 indicated that the majority of the study participants were registered in Two Rings Official 172(46.9%), followed by Soul Wonders 93 (25.3%), Everlasting Companionship 73 (19.9%), and others 29 (7.9%).

Table 04:
Profile registration on Facebook matrimonial group

Items	Two Rings Official (Global)	Everlasting Companionship	Soul Wonders	Others
Frequency	172	73	93	29
Percentage	46.9	19.9	25.3	7.9

The participants were asked how they got information regarding Facebook matrimonial groups. The results indicated that friends 164 (44.7%) and social networks 135(36.8%) were the biggest sources of information for them. 50 (13.6%) participants get the matrimonial group information from family, followed by other sources 14 (3.8%). On the other hand, TV/radio 4 (1.1%)

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was the least used source of information for study participants, as shown in Table 05.

Table 05:

Information received about Facebook matrimonial groups

Items	Friends	Family	Tv\Radio	Social Networks	Any other source
Frequency	164	50	4	135	14
Percentage	44.7	13.6	1.1	36.8	3.8

The participants were asked about factors influencing them to prefer matrimonial groups over websites. The results in Table 06 indicated that prompt matrimonial service was the key influencing factor for participants. On the other hand, the authenticity of the information 78 (21.3%) and easy navigation 67 (18.3%) were likely factors that influenced the preference of groups over websites. While confidentially of information 35 (9.5%), access to database full information 22 (6.0%), and free of cost 30 (8.2%) were the least influencing factors to prefer Facebook matrimonial groups.

Table 06:

Influencing factor to choose the matrimonial groups on Facebook over websites

Items	Prompt Service	Authenticity of information	Easy navigation	Confidentiality of information	Availability of a vast database	Free of cost	Others
Frequency	133	78	67	35	22	30	2
Percentage	36.2	21.3	18.3	9.5	6.0	8.2	5

The participants were asked how frequently they use Facebook matrimonial groups. The results indicated that most use matrimonial groups daily, as shown in Table 07. While 36(9.8%) of participants use it once a week, followed by not regular users, 16 (4.4%) and 8(2.2%) check when any matrimonial group notification pops up on the screen, respectively. This supports the finding of Pingle & Kaushik (2022) that e-matrimonial services offer huge. Database of potential matches that are equally convenient and secure.

Table 07:

Frequency to use matrimonial groups on Facebook

Items	Everyday	Once a week	Once a month	Not Regularly	notification pops up on the screen
Frequency	296	36	11	16	8
Percentage	80.7	9.8	3.0	4.4	2.2

Effectiveness of Facebook Matrimonial Groups

An item-level analysis was also performed to determine the effectiveness of Facebook matrimonial groups among youth in Pakistan as shown in table 08. The Facebook groups entitled Two Rings Official, Everlasting Companionship, and Soul Wonders were selected for data collection. The data normality was checked and internal consistency among items was determined through Cronbach Alpha = .893. The item score is above the cutoff threshold of 3.0 to. 3.5. The results indicated that participants strongly agree with the statement that the anonymous confidentiality of female participants is ensured (M = 3.89, SD = .917), followed by item 09, information of male and female participants remained confidential (M = 3.84, SD = .938). While participants agreed that their parents significantly support them in finding a suitable partner through online matrimonial groups (M = 3.79, SD = .895), and as happy users, they recommend others to register in Facebook matrimonial groups (M = 3.76, SD = .931), the groups do not disclose information to unregistered users ((M = 3.76, SD = .931), registration guidelines are easily understandable (M = 3.78, SD = .876), participants profile updated on time (M = 3.74, SD =. 914), respectively.

Moreover, the participants seemed to slightly agree with the statement that the Facebook matrimonial groups are a timely and reliable source (M = 3.70, SD = .919), allowing me to easily contact prospective alliances suited anywhere in Pakistan (M = 3.70, SD = .924), restrict my sharing of my profile photograph (M = 3.71, SD = .949), and allow me to interact in real-time (M = 3.72, SD = .800) receptively.

The study participants seemed to disagree with the statement that Facebook matrimonial groups provide multiple options for paying for their services (M = 3.50, SD=.969). Whereas the participant results highlighted the concern that needs the attention of group admin like optimization to search profile of suitable partner (M = 3.50, SD = .943) and the on-time response to the candidate by the service providers (M = 3.63, SD = .901)

Table 08:

Effectiveness of Facebook matrimonial groups

#	Items	MPI	S.D
1	The matrimonial groups on Facebook are a reliable source.	3.70	.919
2	These groups allow me to interact with members in real-time.	3.72	.800
3	The service personnel responds to my quires on time.	3.63	.901
4	Do matrimonial groups on Facebook provides me with multiple options for payment for the services?	3.50	.969
5	The matrimonial group on Facebook allows me to easily contact prospective alliances situated in any region of Pakistan.	3.74	.815
6	These groups on Facebook provides easy instruction to register me easily.	3.78	.876
7	Matrimonial group members give me a timely update on interest received from prospective alliances	3.70	.924
8	Matrimonial Groups on Facebook update my profile changes within 24 hours.	3.74	.914
9	Matrimonial groups on Facebook ensure that my information remains confidential	3.84	.938
10	Matrimonial groups on Facebook do not disclose my information to unregistered users.	3.76	.931
11	The Groups on Facebook restrict sharing my profiles with photographs.	3.71	.949
12	Are females allowed to post anonymously?	3.89	.917
13	Do parents play part in finding proposals through online matrimonial groups?	3.79	.895
14	Are you recommending others register themselves in online matrimonial groups/pages?	3.76	.931
15	The matrimonial groups on Facebook are easy to navigate and provide the required information	3.74	.998
16	The Matrimonial groups on Facebook allow me to search through my profiles that cater to my needs.	3.50	.943
MPI= Mean Per Item, SD= Standard Deviation			

Figure 4.1 below is aanalyzes in table 08 by taking the analysis of the Mean score per item (MPI).
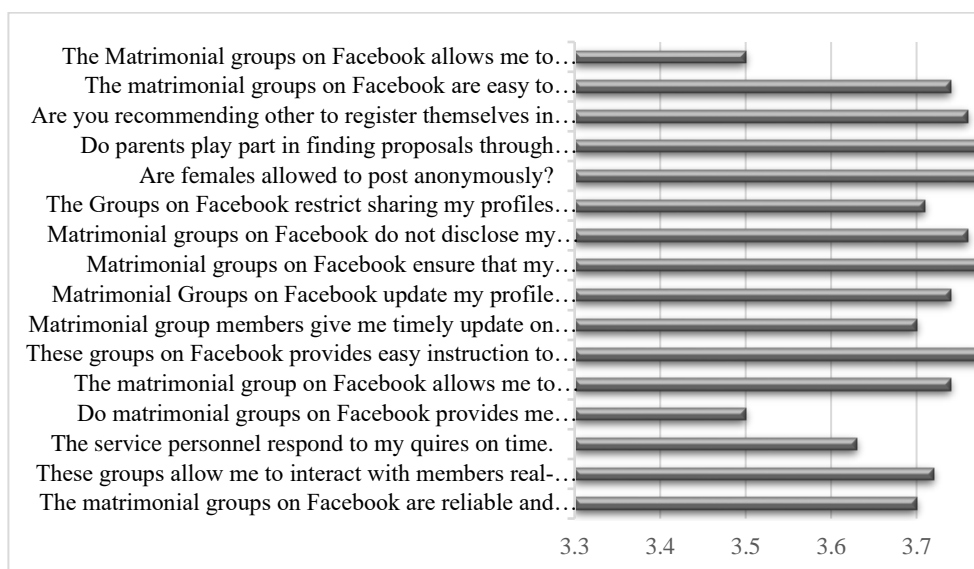

Figure 4.1: Mean Score per item

Find a suitable partner through these groups

The participants were asked if they got a suitable partner in life by using these matrimonial groups. The results in Figure 4.2 indicated that out of 367 survey participants, 265 (72.2%) agreed they got their life partner by using these matrimonial groups on Facebook. At the same time, 42 (11.44%) did not get a life partner through Facebook groups. At the same time, 60 (16.3%) remained neutral. Overall, the results show that most participants found these groups a good matchmaking source.

Users' experience while using these groups

It is evident from the results that 254(69.2%) of the participant's experiences were positive, and only 113(30.8%) were experienced negatively, as shown in Figure 4.3. These results indicate that members of Two Rings Official, Global Everlasting Companionship, and Soul Wonders have good experiences using these groups on Facebook.

Finding and Discussions

Matrimony is a prestigious tradition enriched with religious and cultural practices worldwide. Since the last three decades, the social context of marriage has changed from the preceding years. (Coontz, 2005). While the emergence of electronic media has introduced the concept of a global village, access to information is quick for all masses. The usage pattern of the users of matrimonial groups indicates that most male members are a part of these groups. As far as their age is concerned, the age group of 24-29years use these groups more. This finding supports (Shako, 2004) that the youth between the age group of 24-35 seriously spend time in matrimonial groups for spouse seeking. It is also found that youth prefer matrimonial groups over family and friends, which does not support Al-dawood's (2021) finding that parents like their involvement in the decision-making process. The participants agreed that matrimonial groups allow interaction with a candidate in real-time. This means that online interaction is more comfortable for the users; within no time, they get the whole bio-data of the person. Thus, these matrimony platforms have made it easy for people to connect rather than the old way of greeting families repeatedly. Through the online matrimony platform, users check their profiles. If it suits you, then further proceedings will take place. The study of Bajnaid and Al-Saggaf (2017) investigated the same phenomenon for youth living in Saudi Arabia and found that finding a suitable partner through matrimonial sites does not encounter all social standards of marriage, i.e., behavior (Rajadesingan et al., 2019 and Virdi, Chugeja & Parwar, 2022). Still, it is easier to get information through online interaction than face-to-face meetings.

Moreover, the services of these groups on Facebook are satisfactory for the members as these groups respond to all the queries of their members and ensure the upgradation of their profile within 24 hours. Moreover, most survey members using online matrimonial groups on Facebook agreed that they found their life partners from this online interaction, which indicates the trustworthy nature of matrimonial groups toward their users. This result is in line with the findings of (Khalid 2022) and (Mehmood, 2022). Furthermore, the findings indicated that matrimonial groups allow members to make easy contact in any location in Pakistan and that the group members receive a timely update on interested candidates. This result supports the findings of Sharma et al. (2020) that matrimonial service quality is the most preferred parameter for searching and matchmaking options. Bajnaid and Elareshi (2018) find that Saudi and Western users restrict photos to be added with the profiles on matrimonial websites, while the current study shows that it is the choice of females to post their profiles anonymously or not. (Al-Dawood et al. (2021) reported that Saudi Arab parents see the usage of technology in finding the future life

parents of their kids through online websites, while our study results indicate that youth prefer matrimonial groups over parents and family. The present study finds that matrimonial groups on Facebook allow users to search through profiles that match the user's criteria for spouse-seeking. The users add their requirements for the person they are looking for, which supports Al-Dawood et al. (2021) finding that Saudis and Western users of matrimonial websites plan to portray when creating their profile, as well as the traits they want in their life partners. According to Pal (2011), information systems and the services of famous Indian online matrimony seem to affect the user positively. Whereas the present study also shows the positive experience of users. This means that the effectiveness of online matrimony platforms gains group members' trust by providing them with the right platform according to their needs.

The study results highlighted the factors enforcing youth to use online matrimonial groups/sites for spouse seeking because of prompt services, information authenticity, easy navigation, confidentially of information, and a vast pool of spouse seekers, etc., indicating that social media is being more adopted by the youth and to use these matrimony platforms in finding the proposal through any location of the country. Krishnan, Hemamala, & Krishnan (2022) also find that people prefer using an online matrimonial site over conventional ones because of characteristics such as simplicity of use, search, match, interaction, convenience, and website features, similar to the findings of the current study. Furthermore, users' happiness with online matrimony services can be increased with customized search and user-friendly websites to seek potential matches. Thus, online portals must guarantee they create a confidentiality strategy for their customers when they expose users' personal information because trust positively correlates with customer satisfaction. In the current study results, we found that the privacy policies of these groups are being administered strictly. The information is not disclosed to any unregistered person; females can post anonymously, and males and females can post their profiles without pictures. This means that privacy is maintained between the members of the groups, and that's the reason users' trust is being gained, similar to the findings of Bajnaid & Al-Saggaf (2017) and Pal (2011).

Conclusion
It is concluded that social media platforms are famous among youth, and they frequently use them as active members. The results show that the matrimonial groups have established a strong emergence among youth seeking spouses per their requirements. The study findings prove that these matrimonial groups are reliable, allow real-time interaction, make contact with prospective potential

users easy, and ensure privacy policies and strict information control for unregistered users. Whereas there is a need to improve search optimization tools and payment options against matrimonial services and to be an efficient service provider, the admins of matrimonial groups should respond to queries promptly. The study insights will be helpful for researchers, e-matrimonial companies, related stakeholders, and members of matrimonial websites. The scope of this study can be broadened by conducting this research in other southern regions or comparing countries that provide matrimonial services. A qualitative inquiry on the same topic can also be designed.

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