ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the process of mate selection in determining the age at marriage of 600 ever-married women drawn from rural (300) and urban (300) areas of Salem district, Tamil Nadu. Results based on the Multiple Classification Analysis show that both in rural and urban areas, time taken to initiate marriage process after menarche, caste background, age difference between bride and bridegroom and consultation of women for their marriage have played a greater role in determining their age at marriage in that order. Further, in urban areas, consanguinity has exhibited a highly significant effect on their age at marriage. While the role of payment of dowry has some effect on age at marriage of women both in rural and urban areas, the practice of horoscope matching has such an effect only in rural areas. Contrary to the expectation, first-born daughters enter into matrimony comparatively at higher ages than their later-bom counterparts only in rural areas. A weak support to residential propinquity theory of mate selection is also noticed.