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Intersectionalities and im/mobilities in family and marriage: a comparative study of Germany and India

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This article investigates comparative intersections of gender and family sociology internationally, with a specific focus on urban Germany and urban India. In particular, this research examines a central dynamic that informs family and marriage relations globally, and for this research context, in Germany and India: *What are the nuanced ways of conceptualizing changing gender roles in marriage and in family in Germany and India?* Bringing together a robust understanding of the theoretical frameworks of Intersectionality and of Mobility as large bodies of scholarship that examine geographic and symbolic power geometries, we adopt the lens of *Intersectional Im/Mobilities* to explore changing gender roles in family and marriage in Germany and India. We particularly focus on an intersectionality-based analysis of two primary themes that arise out of our primary and secondary data: (1) Women's employment and impact on family life/work-life balance; and (2) Changing gender roles in marriage (through the lens of the division of household labor and aspects of agency and decision making), questions which influence and inflect complex intersectional realities.

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Introduction and context

This article investigates comparative intersections of gender and family sociology internationally, with a specific focus on urban Germany and urban India. In particular, this research examines a central dynamic that informs family and marriage relations globally, and for this research context, in Germany and India: *What are the nuanced ways of conceptualizing changing gender roles in marriage and in family in Germany and India?* Over the past two decades, the nature of sociological inquiry for gender and family studies in both countries has witnessed considerable development, de-standardization, and has followed the “pluralization thesis” (*Pluralisierungsthese*) or “diversity” as is commonly understood in international debates (Richter, 2000; Konietzka et al., 2021, Uberoi, 2000, 2006). Not surprisingly, gender and associated social mobility are at the core of these debates.

The comparative analysis of family sociology in urban Germany and urban India discussed in this article, we believe, illustrates that gender roles in family and intimate relations such as marriage can be, and often are, strategic and fluid, even as many people view them as structural, static, and enduring. In this article, we particularly examine these questions using an intersectionality-based analysis of two primary themes that arise out of our primary and secondary data: (1) Women’s employment and impact on family life/work-life balance; and (2) changing gender roles in marriage (through the lens of the division of household labor and aspects of agency and decision making) (Table 1).

However, before proceeding to an argument for and discussion of the data through ‘big data’ (quantitative data) and ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz, 1973) (qualitative data), it is important to address, albeit briefly, in order to adhere to the scope of this article, the intellectual history of family and marriage as social institutions in both geographic regions through an intersectional lens.

Literature on family and marriage in Germany and India

Gender and associated mobility dynamics echo in German family sociology literature in distinct ways, converging with or diverging

from their South Asian contexts. Historically, in Germany and as scholars note, the male breadwinner model of family dynamics and policy prevailed until about the early 2000s (Leitner et al., 2008; Lewis et al., 2008; von Wahl, 2011; Windwehr and Fischer, 2021). For decades in Germany (particularly in its western parts), a strong male-breadwinner model represented the norm and normality, anchored in the gender pay gap, inadequate childcare provision, and the tax and social security systems, which favor families with one stay-at-home parent (Pfau-Effinger, 2005; Possinger, 2013; Shire and Nemoto, 2020). This single-breadwinner model found almost unanimous support by a largely conservative welfare regime until recently when it has been somewhat ‘modernized’. Most literature in this regard focuses on heterosexual-partner families to understand the extent to which male and female gender roles in the family are affected, negotiated, and even inflected. While the literature has explored that parenthood is a key process in adopting or maintaining traditional gender behavior (Chesley, 2017; Huinink and Reichart, 2008), research on female breadwinners has so far neglected the manner in which gender roles are performed or even reversed in these families.

However, what scholarship acknowledges is that the transitioning out of the conventional male breadwinner model of family has been a ‘path-shifting policy change’ (Morgan, 2013, p. 90) or even a ‘paradigm shift’ (Henninger et al., 2008, p. 289). In fact, socio-feminist literature such as *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies* by Esping-Andersen (1999) argued Germany to be a conservative and familistic welfare state, and scholars globally and unanimously agree that conceptualizing the family and associated family policies guiding mobility in Germany were highly conservative until the early 2000s, as discussed above. This was highlighted by low female employment rates, and it was only in 2005 that major family-policy reforms were enacted in Germany (Konietzka et al., 2021).

The literature in this context has outlined two main themes with regard to the female breadwinner model: (1) the role of assertive education, particularly for women and girls, and (2) the

Table 1 Primary themes from data and their quantitative and qualitative analytical indicators.

Themes	Analytical indicators from the quantitative dataset	Analytical indicators from the qualitative dataset
Women’s employment and impact on family life/work-life balance	1. Working woman: Family life suffers when woman has full-time job	1. Interdependence on societal standards for educational and professional decisions 2. Balancing family and marital duties with professional responsibilities 3. Perceptions of women’s employment as “un-ladylike” or “non-ambitious”
Changing gender roles in marriage through HH Labor	1. Division of household work: Care for sick family members 2. Division of household work: Shops for groceries 3. Division of household work: Household cleaning 4. Division of household work: Preparing meals 5. Sharing of household work between partners	1. Gendered division of household labor 2. Traditional norms and expectations influencing the gendered boundaries and expectations within marriage and family 3. Women’s employment reshaping the traditional gender roles creating conflict within marriage
Changing gender roles in marriage through Agency and Decision-Making	1. Men’s job [is to] earn money, women’s job [is to] look after home 2. Sharing of income between partners 3. Who makes decisions how to raise kids 4. Both should contribute to household income	1. Empowered women’s struggling to have autonomy within marital relationships 2. The influence of cultural and societal factors on women’s decision-making power.

changing job market precariously affecting the male labor force. Klesment and Van Bavel (2015) examine that in Europe, women's higher educational attainments have increased the probability of female breadwinning through changing patterns of educational and marriage practices—from women “marrying up” (hypergamy) to women “marrying down” (hypogamy). In fact, it appears from this scholarship based on German statistics that in couples where female breadwinners are the norm, hypogamy seems to be perhaps the only avenue to achieve it. Further, the rise in the numbers of female breadwinners in families is seen as a result of rising unemployment rates, poor labor market positions, and lower earnings for low-skilled men alongside professional, highly qualified women (Drago et al., 2005; Klammer et al., 2012). Scholars such as Brennan et al. (2001) assert the impact of earnings reversals within families for traditionally oriented men is linked with the latter having spouses who earn higher salaries and undermine the husband's perception of their role as primary providers. Not surprisingly, this often leads to perceptions of a low marital role quality. Similarly, Rogers and DeBoer (2001, p. 458) examine that “married men's well-being is significantly lower when married women's proportional contributions to the total family income are increased.” Couples' self-identity in the family remains intertwined with total earnings in the family (Medved, 2009). By contrast, women were shown to often experience higher marital happiness when their income increases. Fulltime employed women in dual-earner couples also experienced high marital role quality when their partners played a greater role in child care (Brennan et al., 2001; Kanji and Schober, 2014; Rogers and DeBoer, 2001). However, and not surprisingly, this scholarship points out that most women's identities tend to be rooted in mothering, and evidence shows that only in a few cases is female breadwinning motivated by ideals of gender equity and the majority driven by economic circumstances (Drago et al., 2005; Medved, 2009; Jurczyk et al., 2019), a situation not too distant from its South Asian particularly Indian scenario.

In South Asian contexts, vertical realities of social class operative in society historically and contemporaneously have influenced family and class construction and class subscription, which were heavily informed by, and in turn informed, their mobility. In India, the earliest studies on contemporary family described and examined the family in terms of its *structure*: the joint family (Gore, 1968). The joint family structure that this scholarship examines comprised elderly married (heterosexual) couple, their unmarried children, and/or their married sons and their families. This scholarship looks at the joint family as “a multiplicity of genealogically related units (akin to the nuclear family model) living under one roof and sharing in resources, rituals, and property” (D'cruz and Bharat, 2001, p. 168). But they also raise an important social science question that literature has continued to examine and problematize: *Who qualifies as a joint or extended family, and is the joint family an expression of extended family?* Undoubtedly, families are social constructs, and so it is key to figure out the boundaries to the concepts of family in general and extended family, in particular, to understand when and why gender roles in family take on the front stage. Historically the systematic study of the family in India, has, by and large, been a study of family *patterns* (Bharat, 1994), rather than of family *dynamics* (Uberoi, 2000, 2006; Banerji and Deshpande, 2021). Classic works include those by M.N. Srinivas (1942) and M.N. Banerjee (1944–45) (see Bharat and Desai, 1995 for a comprehensive bibliography). However, the earlier scholarly conceptualization of the joint family failed to capture the dynamism (as opposed to structure) of the joint family, living under the control of one “patriarch”—the elderly married male in the family. This literature, therefore, was overwhelmingly silent in addressing the dynamics between various family members, such

as between (immediate) family and extended family members, and was also quite silent about problematizing gender roles that defined relationships between these members. Existing scholarship has documented to some extent the relations in the joint family and thus captured some of the early ‘gendered geographies of power’ (GGP) (for more details on the theoretical framework of GGP, please see Mahler and Pessar, 2001, 2006; Pessar and Mahler, 2003; and for application of GGP to Indian family and marriage, please see Mahler et al., 2015) that operated within joint families.

Scholarship examining the Indian family forms and patterns, particularly through the gender lens, reveals that familial and fraternal bonds were encouraged. Problems in the fraternal relationship could arise because of age differences (D'cruz and Bharat, 2001) or differences in caste, class, or levels of education (Bhattacharya, 2005; Chatterjee, 1994; Majumdar, 2020; Ray et al., 2020) and in turn could give rise to status differences in the family precipitating rivalry and conflict. However, historically these were often thwarted by the principle of deference to age. In sibling relationships, however, particularly between brother and sister, the brother was deemed to be the protector irrespective of age, and the sister was a source of affection and emotional support but clearly inferior to her brother in terms of family social status.

Drawing from the literature, some of which are discussed above, one important gender dynamic that can be understood from this scholarship is by following how conjugal relationships operated in the joint family and, by extension, how such relationships were simultaneously a contributor and a product for the paradigmatic ‘women's question’ particularly in colonial South Asia. Scholars argue that the women's question that defined historical (colonial) gender dynamics in South Asia and, not surprisingly, continues in various degrees and manifestations in contemporary India focused on the centrality of the figure of the South Asian/Indian woman within a culture that was pre-defined by an indigenous cultural elite, the ‘sentinels of culture’ (Bhattacharya, 2005)—the middle-class (male) intelligentsia. Contextualizing the above, postcolonial theorist, Partha Chatterjee notes (1989, p. 623),

“What we must note is that the so-called women's question in the agenda of Indian social reform in the early 19th century was not so much about the specific condition of women within a determinate set of social relations as it was about the political encounter between a colonial state and the supposed ‘tradition’ of a conquered people—a tradition that, as Lata Mani (1986, 1987) has recently shown in her study of the abolition of *satidaha* [widow burning], was itself produced by colonialist discourse. It was colonialist discourse that, by assuming the hegemony of Brahmanical religious texts, the complete submission of all Hindus to the dictates of those texts, and the necessary basis of practices such as widow burning in the sanctions of the texts, defined the tradition that was to be criticized and reformed. We will now see how Indian nationalism, in demarcating a political position opposed to colonial rule, took up the women's question as a problem already constituted for it: namely, a problem of Indian tradition.”

Significant literature, including the above reflection on the women's question by Partha Chatterjee (1989), brings to the fore the “problem of Indian tradition” (Chatterjee, 1989, p. 623) around the women's question and reveals an interesting power geometry: the debates and discussions around the ‘women's question’ were never about the *women*, rather and in spite of the paradigmatic moniker, they were about patriarchal negotiations in private and public spheres. Conjugal relationships, which

marked the intimate, private sphere, were platforms where the ‘women’s question’ was negotiated actively and was a requirement by the then private and political agenda in South Asia to remain peripheral in the joint family for the maintenance of the family institution. This was so because if conjugal relations were allowed to develop and take over, it was assumed that they could set the atmosphere for the creation of a nuclear family, which was undesired. In order to avoid the undesired, the joint family was structured and institutionalized according to gendered principles such as sex segregation manifested in a sexual division of roles and internalized through gender role socialization, the disapproval of the romantic complex prior to marriage through arranged alliances orchestrated by the family, the absence of courtship and the discouragement of overt manifestations of emotional behavior between the couple (Banerji and Deshpande, 2021; D’cruz and Bharat, 2001). Despite these mechanisms, physical and emotional intimacy between the spouses and a strong mother–child bond did develop and coexisted with joint family sentiments. Earlier scholars also examined authority and leadership patterns in earlier forms of the joint family and how they were decided along gender and age lines. In terms of gender, the joint family followed the terms of a typical patriarchal society—where men are the breadwinners and inheritors, assuming greater power than women, and this persists even where wives are wage earners as well, a complex intersectional question that plagued the German context historically and in current times too, as per statistics.

Given this brief intellectual history of scholarly examination on family and gender dynamics in Germany and India, we now turn to our theoretical framework in this article *enroute* to examining our data and their discussion.

Theoretical framework: from intersectionality to intersectional im/mobilities

Since the advent of third-wave feminism in the late 1980s, a crucial shift in gender theorization was noticed in the emergence of “Intersectionality” as a theoretical toolkit (Crenshaw, 1991; Ferree, 2009; Hooks, 2000; Hernandez and Rheman, 2002). This theoretical framework underscores the interconnectedness of various axes of social differences defining one’s identity and shaping gender relations, acknowledging the active interplay of race, social class, sexuality, gender, and age, to name a few, within societal institutions (Riley, 2004; Andersen, 2005; Shields, 2008; Ferree, 2010). The intersectionality paradigm originated from feminist scholars of color critiquing the exclusive focus on white, middle-class, educated women and provides an inclusive perspective, considering the intersections of gender with other social identities (Knudsen, 2004).

The history of intersectional perspectives thus stems from the early feminist recognition that the ties binding women are stronger than the lines dividing them. This perspective acknowledges that women’s experiences with gender are inseparable from intersections with race, ethnicity, sexuality, and beyond (Mahler et al., 2015). Intersectionality as a framework analyzes how social and cultural categories intersect (Crenshaw, 1991; Knudsen, 2004), adapting and addressing power relations, social inequalities, and social exclusions. The intersectional lens is crucial for examining gender dynamics across diverse social-geographic scales, from the nation to the family and the individual. In the context of families as institutions existing at the intersections of structural inequalities, family members negotiate complex gender roles within and beyond the household (Ferree et al., 1999; McCall, 2005; Ferree, 2010). Negotiations of gender relations across various scales are context-specific and vary cross-culturally, giving rise to socially constructed gendered

geographies maintained through culture-specific power relations (Mahler et al., 2015). Globally and particularly in the context of South Asia/India, intersectionality faces challenges unraveling identity negotiations in gendered geographies marked by prolonged colonial histories. Literature on “Postcolonial Intersections” (Chaudhuri and Thimm, 2018) underscores that while the global rise of nation-states may suggest the waning of European colonialism, its historical and cultural consequences persist into the current millennium. Such consequences are also inflections of another emerging social science perspective: *Mobilities*.

The mobility perspective in social sciences emerged in the 1990s, focusing particularly on migration dynamics through qualitative methods. Research extended beyond households and related surveys, exploring employment dynamics and the state’s role in relation to migrants (Espiritu, 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Sassen, 1988). Saskia Sassen’s pioneering work, “The Mobility of Labor and Capital” (1988), identified globalization as feminized and highlighted the increasing feminization of migration. In the early 2000s, a “new mobilities turn” emerged across disciplines, exploring diverse movements like walking, virtual mobility, migration, and tourism (Hannam et al., 2006; Salazar, 2017; Sheller and Urry, 2016). This “turn” argued that mobile people, regardless of their position on the continuum from structural objects to cultural subjects, experience structure, agency, and identity negotiations influenced by factors like gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexuality, and nationality. In colonial history, and as discussed above, such intersectionality-inflected mobility experiences were significant, shaping the portrayal of South Asian/Indian women and influencing their mobility in gendered spaces, as well as their nuptial and family ties (Chatterjee, 1989), which continues in nuanced ways to impact professional and intimate relationships. In this article, to examine gender and family dynamics, we adopt the “new mobilities” approach and “regimes of mobility,” arguing that power geometries induce or oppose gendered mobility beyond exploitative confinement (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013). Understanding mobility and immobility requires embedding these concepts within a larger framework of unequal global power relationships (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013) and adopting an intersectionality-based approach.

Bringing together a robust understanding of the theoretical frameworks and underpinnings of Intersectionality and Mobility as large bodies of scholarship that examine geographic and symbolic power geometries, we now adopt the lens of *Intersectional Im/Mobilities* (Shukla and Chaudhuri, 2021) toward understanding the data for this research. *Intersectional Im/Mobilities* (Shukla and Chaudhuri, 2021) comprises two theoretical pillars: (1) the *geographic* aspect of Intersectional Im/Mobilities draws from the analytical framework of GGP extensively used in the studies of gender and migration to examine social locations, geographic scales, and power geometries (Mahler and Pessar, 2001). This multiscale approach expands our understanding of Intersectional Im/Mobilities, acknowledging its non-linear nature and connection to negotiations of diverse social locations and statuses (Shukla and Chaudhuri, 2021). Geographic Intersectional Im/Mobilities consider gender-based oppression globally, emphasizing the interconnectedness of gender, ethnicity, race, class, disability, and sexual orientation within socio-geographic contexts (Crenshaw, 1991); and (2) *Symbolic* Intersectional Im/Mobilities, on the other hand, draws from Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptualization of symbolic or ‘soft’ capital (Bourdieu, 1989), exploring the significance of “respectability” of family through gender negotiations across geo-social scales, influencing decision-making processes across geo-social scales—from the individual to professional networks.

With this toolkit of Intersectional Im/Mobilities, we now proceed to our data and research methods section, initiating with a brief discussion around mixed methods and then presenting detailed statistical and ethnographic cases from secondary and primary data collected between October 2018 and December 2022. Our analysis using the intersectionality lens illustrates how geographic im/mobilities and symbolic capital shape gender dynamics across historical and geographic contexts, as discussed above.

Data and methods

We adopt a mixed-method approach to explore changing gender roles in family and marriage in Germany and India. A mixed-method approach provides a comprehensive analysis, integrating multiple data sources and analysis techniques to capture the complexity of gender dynamics. Qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and observation, delve into individual experiences and perceptions of gender roles, offering rich insights into their complexities. Quantitative methods provide a broader perspective, examining patterns and trends in a larger sample size. Synthesizing data from both methods enhanced the study's understanding. Triangulation, comparing findings from different sources, boosted validity and reliability. The mixed method approach addresses each method's limitations, combining qualitative depth with quantitative breadth. The use of both primary and secondary datasets responds to the ongoing debate on 'big data' and 'thick data' in humanities and social sciences (Jemielniak, 2020). While the methodological debate's details are beyond this article's scope, we acknowledge its impact on our findings, contributing to gender and family sociology in Germany and India, offering nuanced insights into changing gender roles in marriage and family within their social, cultural, and historical contexts (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), discussed further below.

Statistical (quantitative) data on family and changing gender roles. Our dataset for the statistical observations and analyses with regard to the research focus in this article is drawn from the Family and Changing Gender Roles IV—ISSP 2012 (International Social Survey Program) (Scholz et al., 2014). The ISSP Family and Changing Gender Roles series comprises four cross-national surveys conducted in 1988, 1994, 2002, and 2012. The ISSP Family and Changing Gender Roles datasets primarily deal with gender-related issues, such as popular and public attitudes towards women's employment, marriage, children and financial support, household management, and partnership. From the ISSP 2012 dataset and based on our research questions, we identified the following ten parameters which we believe strongly inform our argument in this article:

1. V7—Q1c Working woman: Family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job
2. V10—Q2a Both [women and men] should contribute to household income
3. V11—Q2b Men's job earn money, women's job [is to] look after home
4. V41—Q18 Sharing of income between partners
5. V44—Q19c Division of household work: Care for sick family members
6. V45—Q19d Division of household work: Shops for groceries
7. V46—Q19e Division of household work: Household cleaning
8. V47—Q19f Division of household work: Preparing meals
9. V48—Q20 Sharing of household work between partners
10. V64—Q31 Who makes decisions on how to raise kids

“Working woman: Family life suffers when woman has full-time job”. For the data on the Indian sample, we find a higher agreement (strong and regular) trend in males compared to the females, and while combining both, we find a higher trend in agreement rather than disagreement; from the German counterpart, we see agreement and disagreement are of almost equal nature in terms of strength and in terms of gender, their numbers are close in comparison to each other: Therefore it shows that the dataset pertaining to Indian sample (and as well the masculine gender amongst the sample) agree to the statement (“Working woman: Family life suffers when woman has full-time job”) much stronger while dataset pertaining to German sample tally on agreement and disagreement count. With a contingency table analysis through χ^2 statistics, we found there is no relationship between the genders and the agreement categories for both the Indian and German data samples (Figs. 1 and 2).

“Both [women and men] should contribute to household income”. From Figs. 3 and 4, we see a high level of agreement rather than disagreement with this statement (“Both [women and men] should contribute to household income”) in consideration of the samples. For the Indian data sample, men agree more than women, for the German dataset women lead in count. With a contingency table analysis through χ^2 -statistics, we found there is a relationship between the genders and agreement categories, both for the Indian and German datasets.

“Men's job earn money, women's job [is to] look after home”. From the bargraphs of Figs. 5 and 6, we see that the Indian dataset agrees more than disagrees with the statement (“Men's job earn money, women's job [is to] look after home”) in consideration and men dominating the response, while for the German dataset, we see an exact opposite: men disagree more to the statement than agree, and female counts are dominating in the response.

“Sharing of income between partners”. From this statement just above, the following Figs. 7 and 8 are the bar graphs we derive for gender-wise agreement categories from the data sample.

Here the categories of focus for these bar graphs as well as the coming ones, are presented in acronym format and they are:

- IMAAGPHS: I manage all and give the partner his share
- NAN: Not applicable number.
- PMAAGMMS: Partner manages all and gives me my share
- WEKOMS: We each keep our own money separate
- WPAMETO: We pull all money, each take-out
- WPSMRS: We pull some money, rest separate

The bar graph of Fig. 7 (for the Indian sample) shows even distribution for the categories with the high male count in each category except the spike in the unidentified (NAN) category but for the German sample (Fig. 8), “We pull all money, each take out” shows a stronger response than any other category.

“Division of household work: Care for sick family members”. The categories of focus for Figs. 9 and 10 are presented in the following acronym format:

- AEBT: About equal or both together
- AM: Always me
- AMSP: Always my Spouse/partner
- IDBATP: Is done by a third-person
- UMSP: Usually, my spouse/partner
- UM: Usually me

From Figs. 9 and 10, we see “Is done by a third person” has a very low count in the German data as well as in the Indian data and in every category, male responses are much higher other than

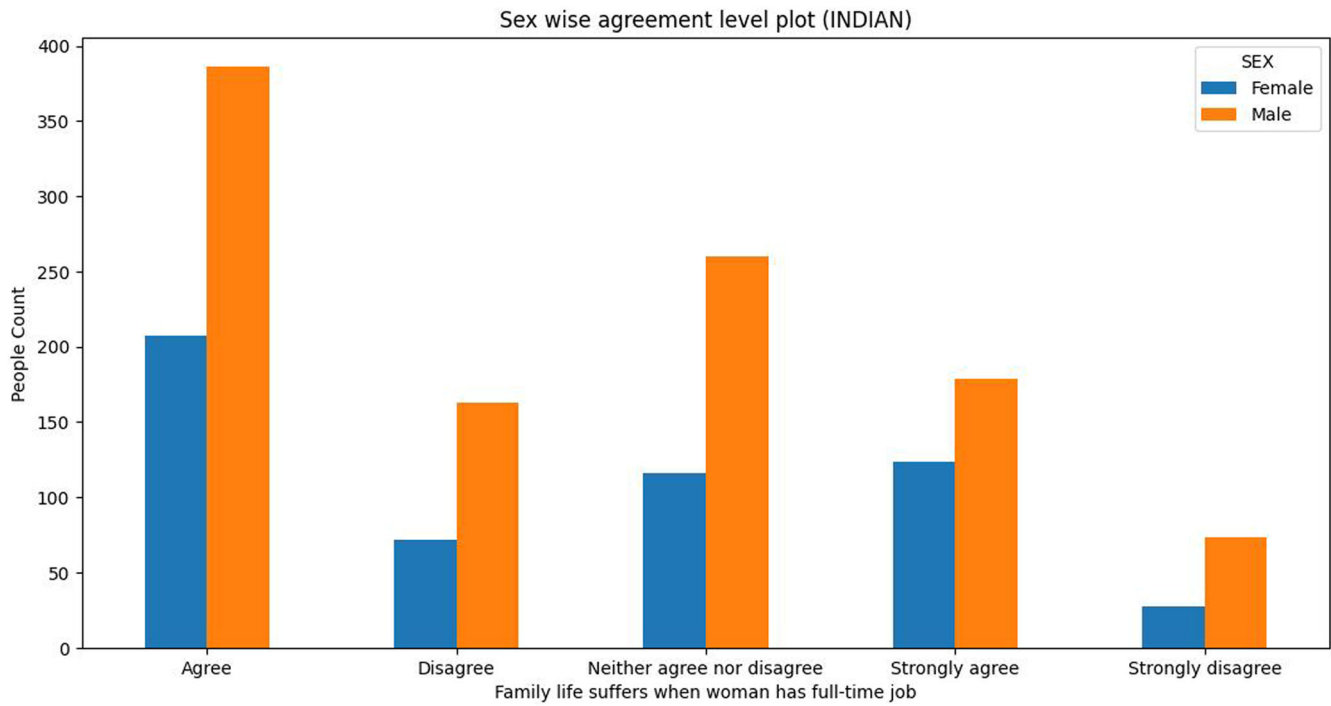


Fig. 1 Sex-wise agreement level plot (Indian data sample) of “Working woman: Family life suffers when woman has full-time job”.

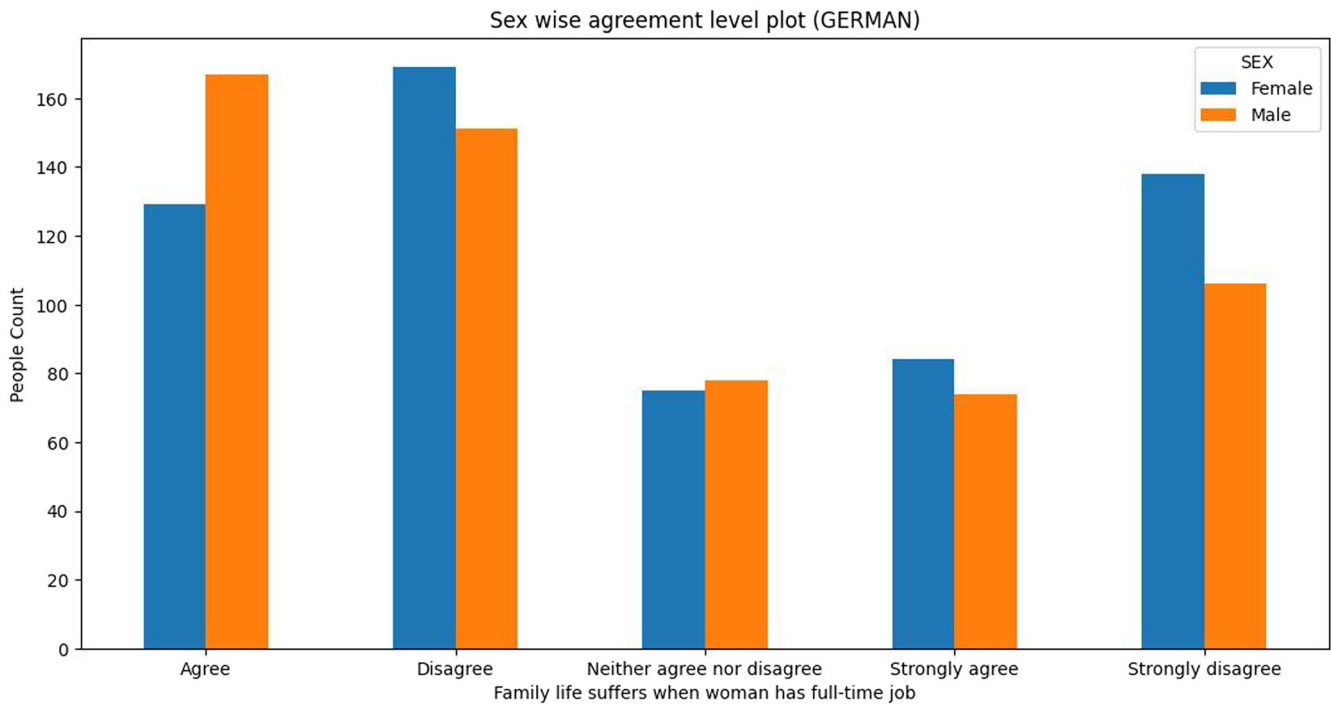


Fig. 2 Sex wise agreement level plot (German data sample) of “Working woman: Family life suffers when woman has full-time job”.

the “Always me” or “Usually me” category for German data where female responses are leading.

“Division of household work: Shops for groceries”. Figures 11 and 12 are bar graphs that we derive for gender agreement categories from the data sample.

Here the categories of focus are presented in the following acronym format:

AEBT: About equal or both together

AM: Always me

AMSP: Always my Spouse/partner

IDBATP: Is done by a third-person

UMSP: Usually, my spouse/partner

UM: Usually me

From Figs. 11 and 12 we see “Is done by a third person” has a very low count in German data as well as in Indian data, and in every category, male responses are much higher, except for “Always me” or “Usually me” category for German data as well as “Always me” category for Indian data where female responses are leading.

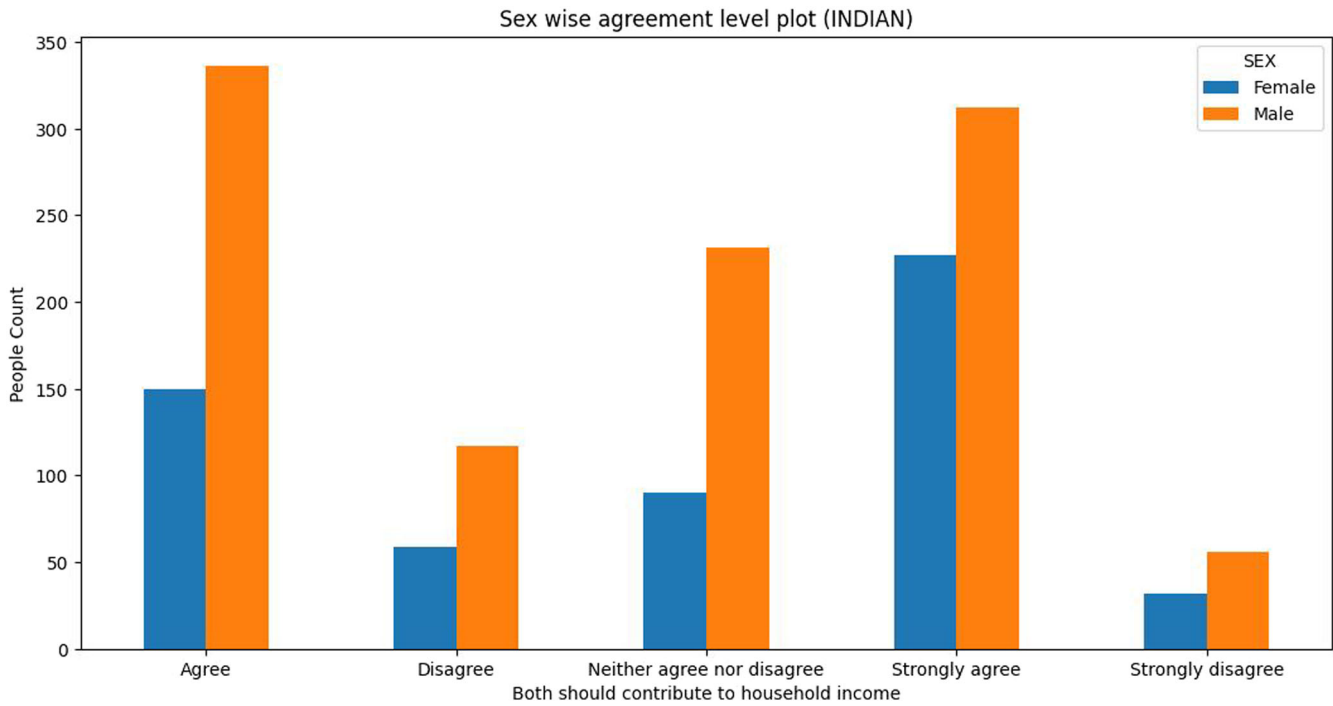


Fig. 3 Sex-wise agreement level plot (Indian data sample) of “Both [women and men] should contribute to household income”.

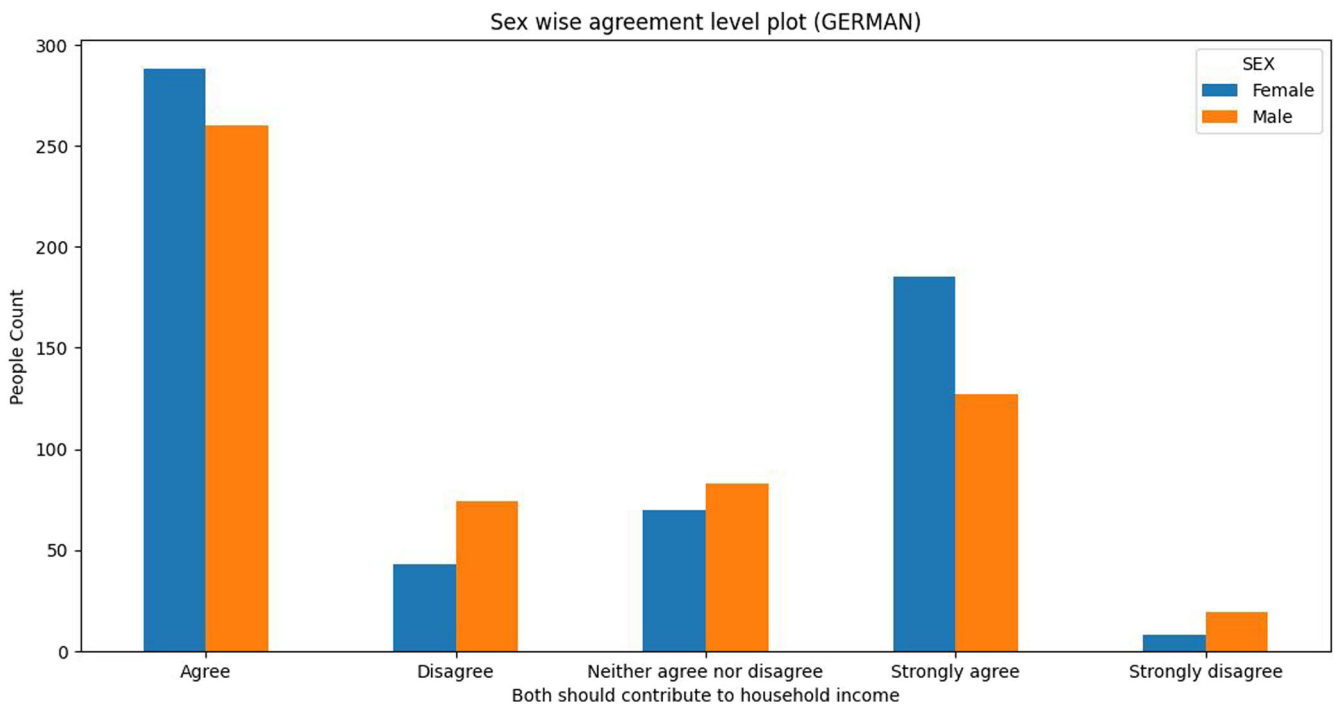


Fig. 4 Sex-wise agreement level plot (German data sample) of “Both [women and men] should contribute to household income”.

“Division of household work: Household cleaning”. Here the categories of focus for these bar graphs (generated from statement 7) are presented in the following acronym format:

- AEBT: About equal or both together
- AM: Always me
- AMSP: Always my Spouse/partner
- IDBATP: Is done by a third-person
- UMSP: Usually, my spouse/partner
- UM: Usually me

From Figs. 13 and 14, we see “Is done by a third person” has a very low count in German data as well as in Indian data, and in every category, male responses are much higher other than the “Always me” or “Usually me” category for German data as well as “Always me” category for Indian data where female responses are leading.

“Division of household work: Preparing meals”. Here the categories of focus for these bar graphs (generated from statement 8) are presented in the following acronym format and they are:

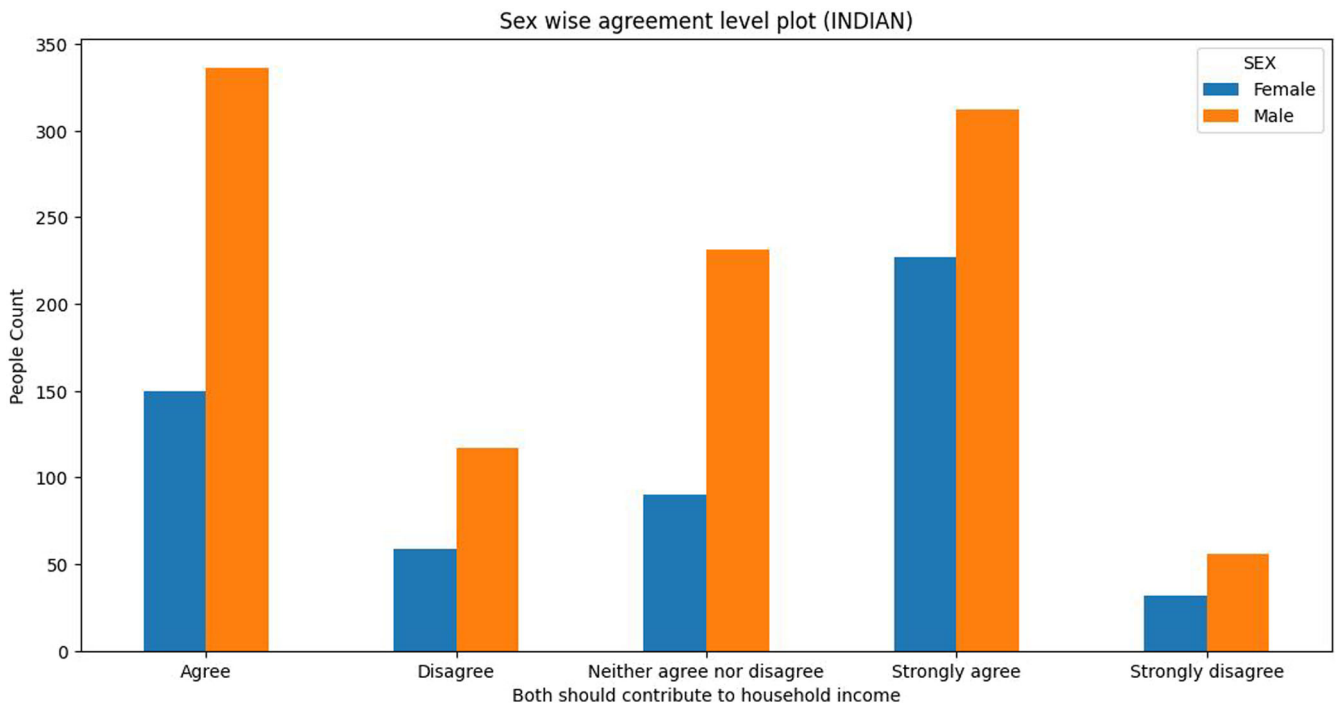


Fig. 5 Sex-wise agreement level plot (Indian data sample) of “Men’s job earn money, women’s job [is to] look after home”.

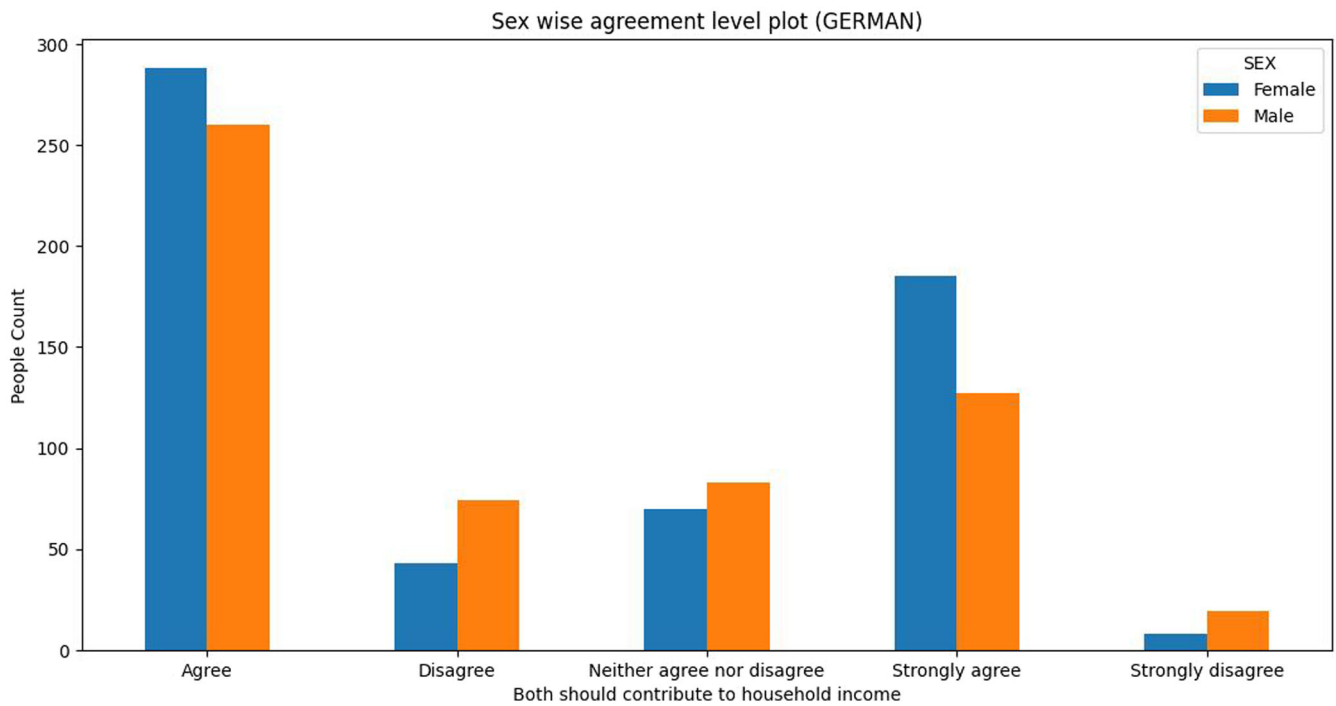


Fig. 6 Sex-wise agreement level plot (German data sample) of “Men’s job earn money, women’s job [is to] look after home”.

AEBT: About equal or both together
 AM: Always me
 AMSP: Always my Spouse/partner
 IDBATP: Is done by a third-person
 UMSP: Usually, my spouse/partner
 UM: Usually me

From Figs. 15 and 16 we see “Is done by a third person” has a very low count in German data as well as in Indian data and in every category, male responses are much higher other than the “Always me” or “Usually me” category for German data as well

“Always me” category for Indian data where female responses are leading.

“Sharing of household work between partners”. Here the categories of focus for these bar graphs are presented in the following acronym format:

- IDABLTMFMS: I do a bit less than my fair share
- IDABMTMFMS: I do a bit more than my fair share
- IDMLTMFMS: I do much less than my fair share
- IDMMTMFMS: I do much more than my fair share

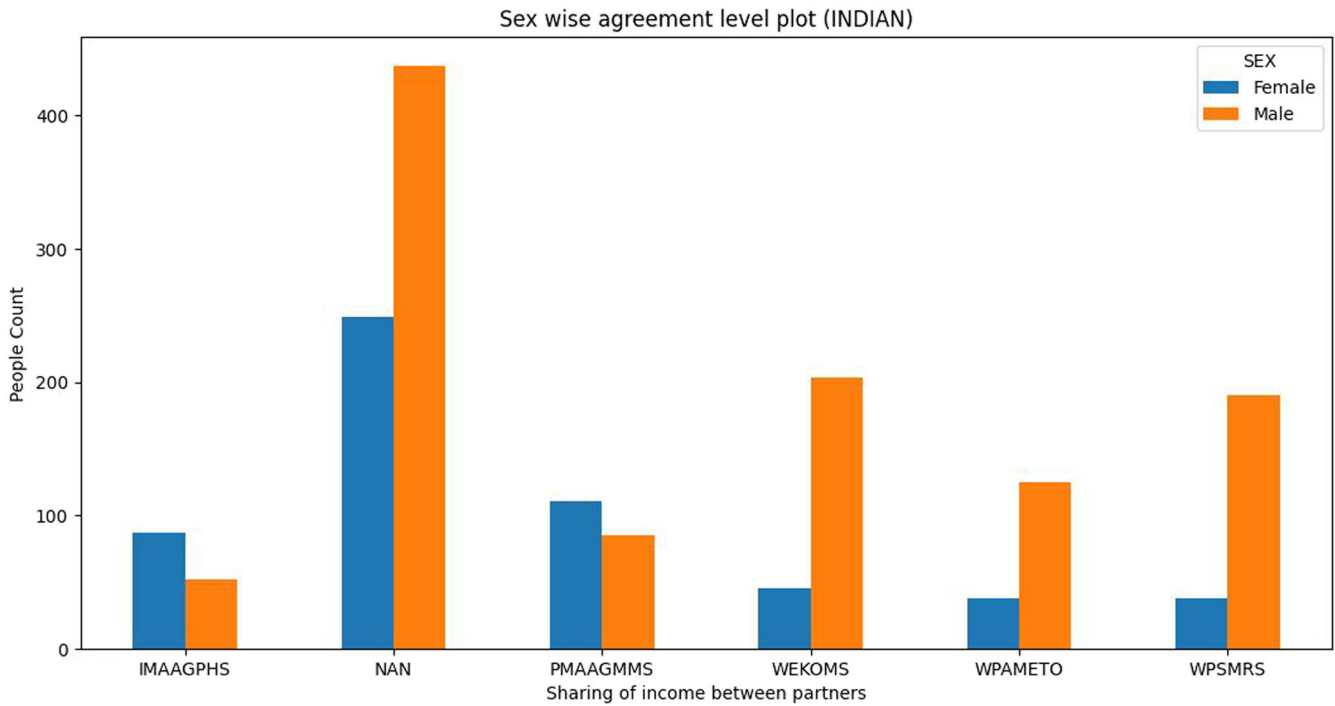


Fig. 7 Sex-wise agreement level plot (Indian data sample) of “Sharing of income between partners”.

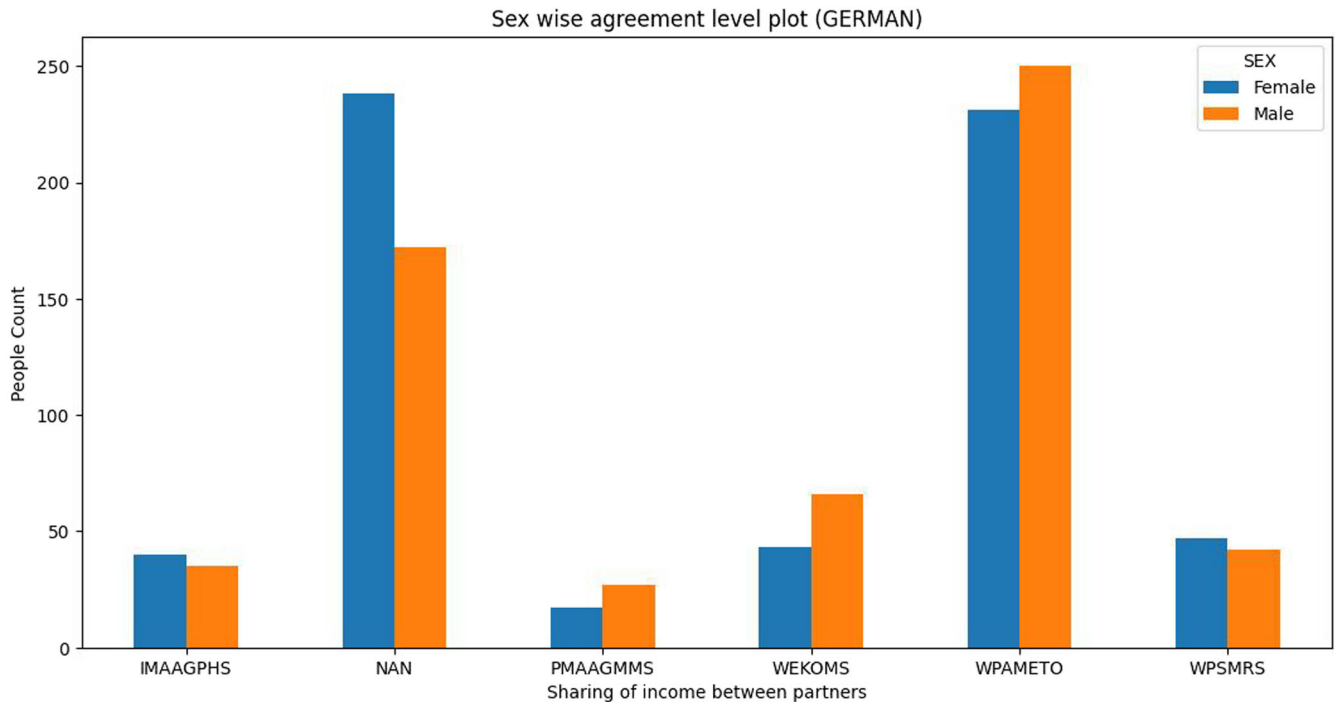


Fig. 8 Sex-wise agreement level plot (German data sample) of “Sharing of income between partners”.

IDRMFS: I do roughly my fair share

Figures 17 and 18 record higher male responses except for “I do a bit more than my fair share” or “I do much more than my fair share” category for German data.

“Who makes decisions how to raise kids”. Here the categories of focus for these bar graphs are presented in the following acronym format:

MM: Mostly me

MMSP: Mostly my spouse/partner

SMSMSP: Sometime me/sometimes my spouse, partner

WDDT: We decide/decided together

SE: Someone else

Figures 19 and 20 record higher responses for males in the Indian sample whereas male and female counts almost tally in the German data, and the category of “We decide/ decided together” is quite strong in the German sample data.

We now turn to examining the data through “thick descriptions” or a qualitative analytical lens.

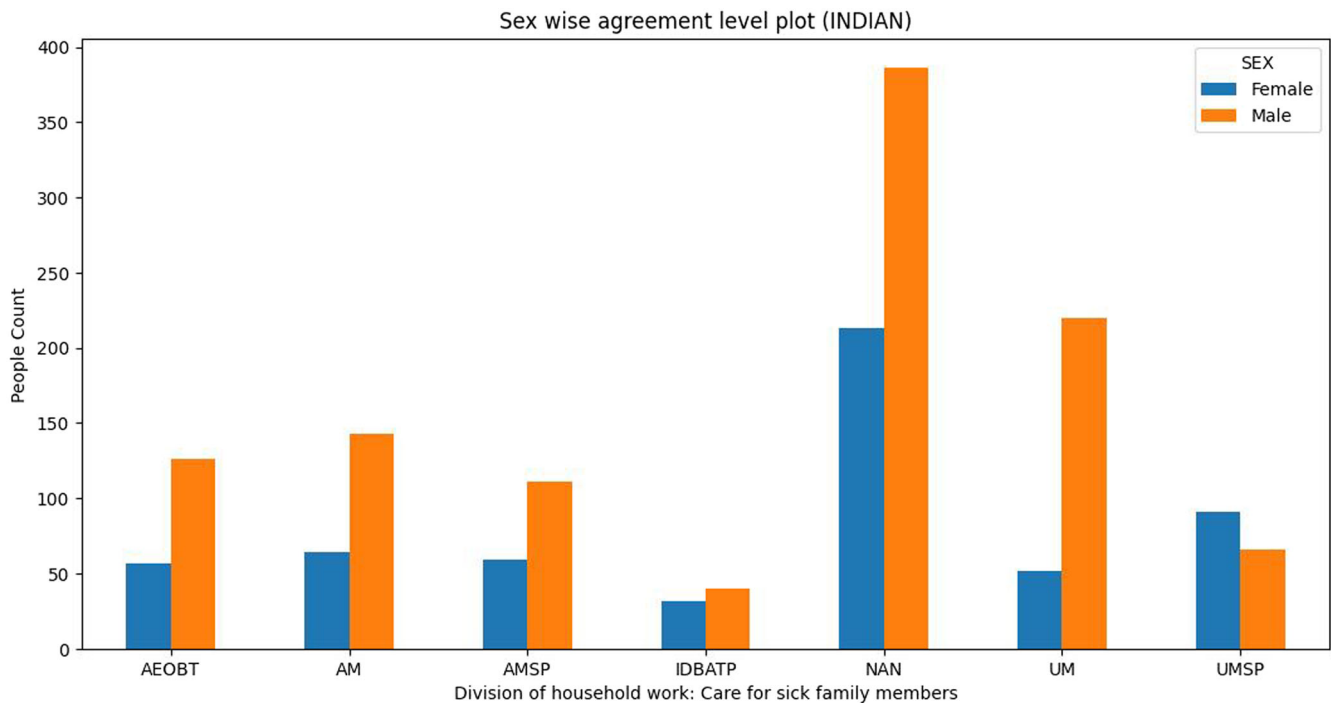


Fig. 9 Sex-wise agreement level plot (Indian data sample) of “Division of household work: Care for sick family members”.

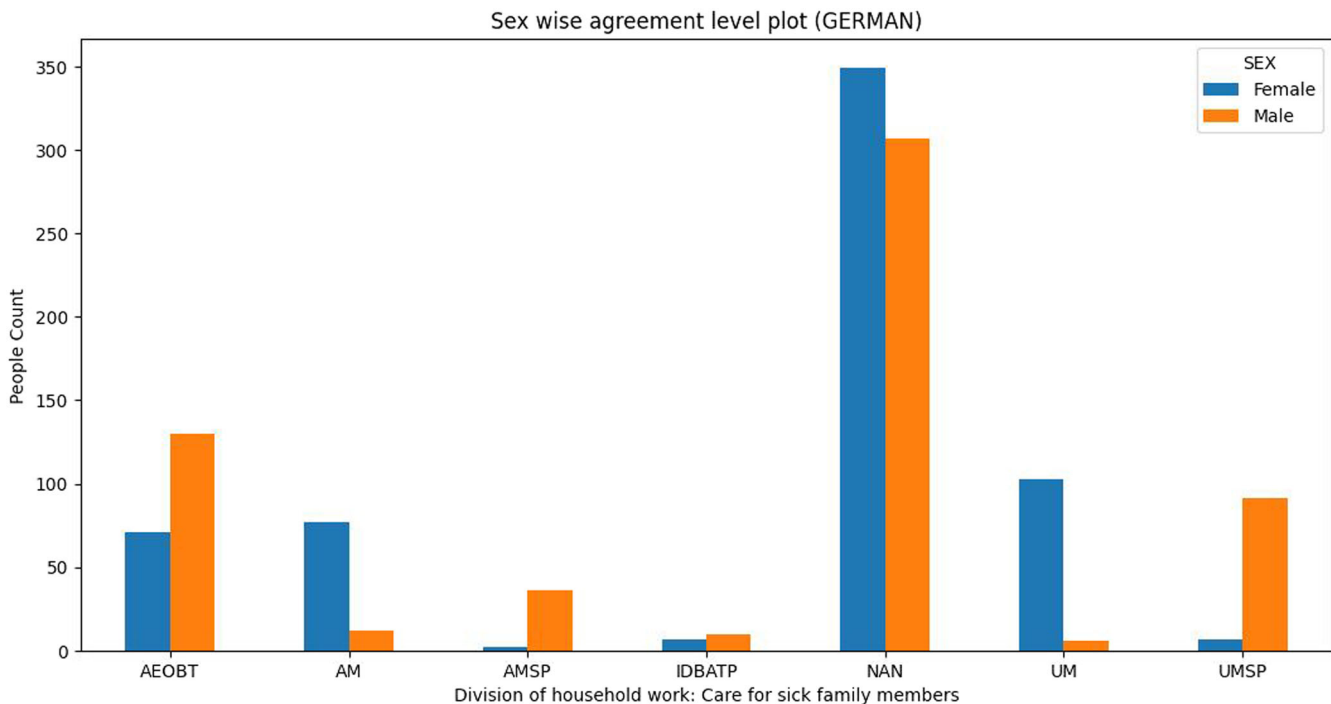


Fig. 10 Sex-wise agreement level plot (German data sample) of “Division of household work: Care for sick family members”.

Ethnographic (qualitative) data on family and changing gender roles in India

Based on grounded theory methodology developed by Strauss and Corbin in 1998, emphasizing simultaneous data collection and analysis, the ethnographic study was conducted in Bengaluru, Karnataka, and spanned three phases: pilot fieldwork (pre-pandemic), the first phase before the pandemic, and the second phase during the pandemic. A total of 56 semi-structured interviews with women I.T. professionals were conducted, lasting approximately 45 min each. Virtual interviews replaced in-person ones

during the pandemic due to travel restrictions. Theoretical saturation was reached after about the 43rd interview, leading to the conclusion of fieldwork. Adopting a grounded theory lens provided a nuanced understanding of intersectional experiences, with a focus on women’s employment and changing gender roles in marriage and family.

MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, facilitated concise analysis of thick data, focusing on women’s employment and changing gender roles in marriage and family. The software’s features provided flexibility in content analysis, generating

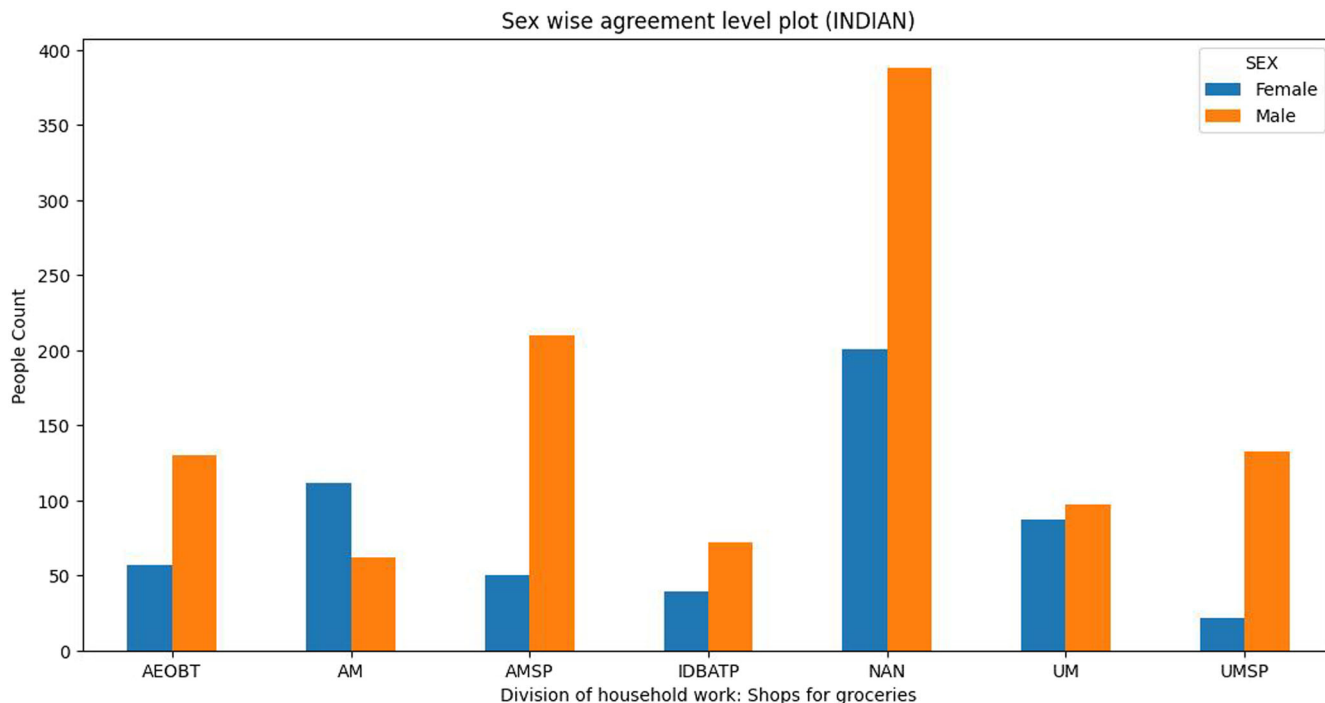


Fig. 11 Sex-wise agreement level plot (Indian data sample) of “Division of household work: Shops for groceries”.

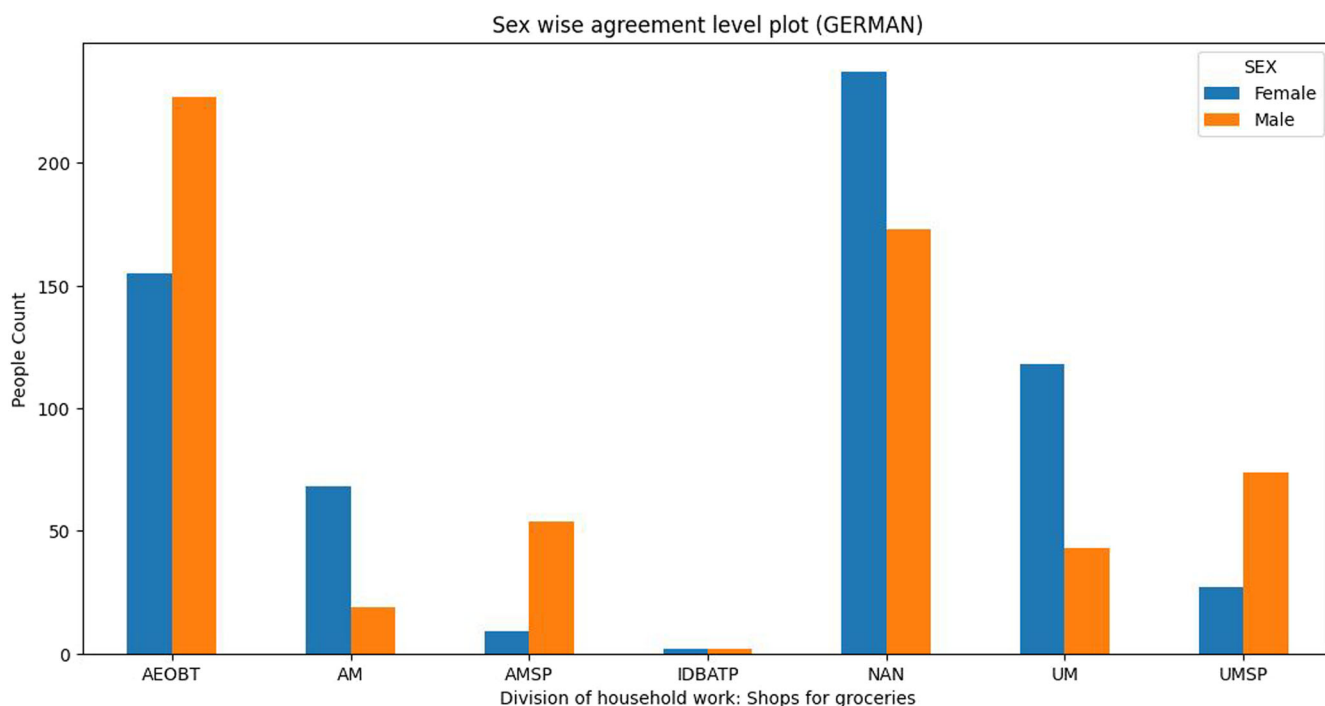


Fig. 12 Sex-wise agreement level plot (German data sample) of “Division of household work: Shops for groceries”.

visualizations and semantic networks for insightful interpretations. The research design’s inclusion of diverse social attributes contributes to the richness of findings.

For a more refined comprehension of this research, we have used data visuals such as code relation browser: intersections and proximity, document portrait, and semantic network relations: intersections and proximity. All visuals were generated using MAXQDA. In Figs. 21 and 22, a Code Relation Browser visualizes the connections and co-occurrences of codes in the data.

In Fig. 21 Code relation browser: proximity, squares represent the proximity of the codes, and the larger the square, the more concurrences of the codes. The larger squares in the codes— FAMILY, COMMUNITY, and MARRIAGE, with respective to EDUCATION and EMPLOYMENT— show that women professionals continue to be interdependent on societal standards operating in the family for educational and professional decisions while constantly negotiating gender roles. The prominent relationship between EMPLOYMENT and MARRIAGE results from

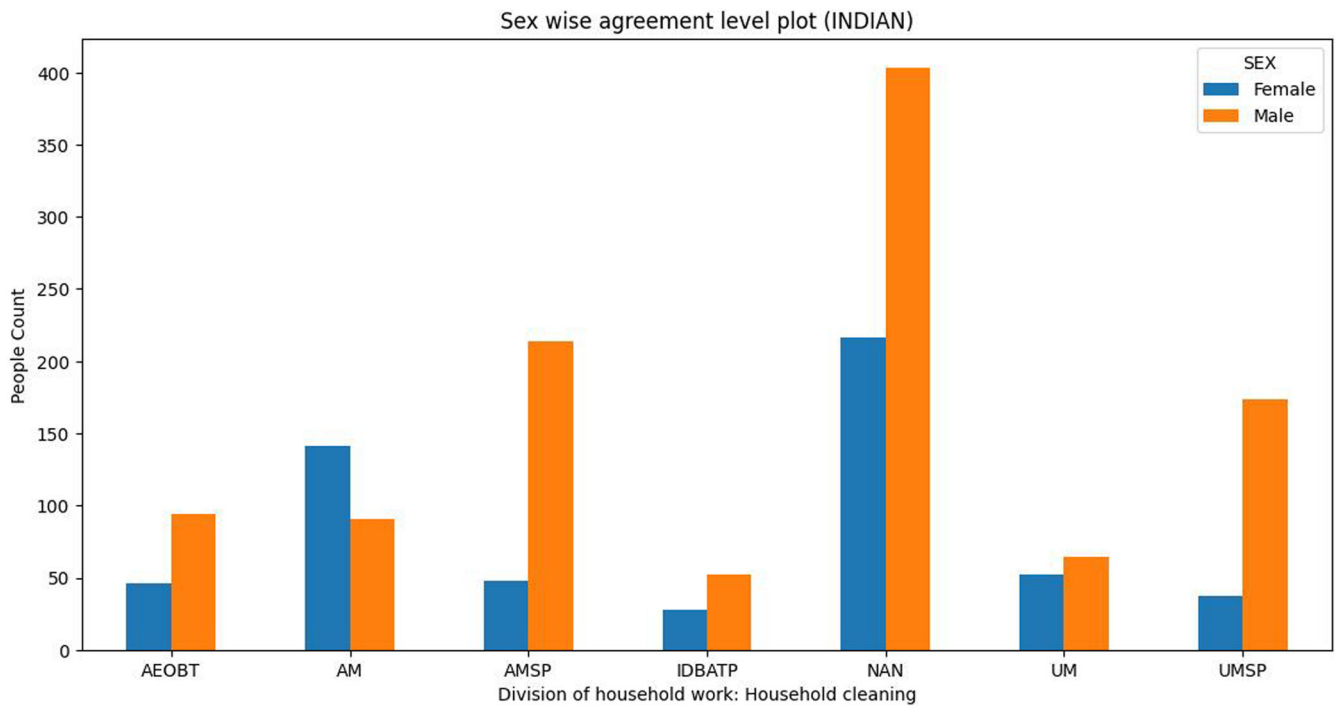


Fig. 13 Sex-wise agreement level plot (Indian data sample) of “Division of household work: Household cleaning”.

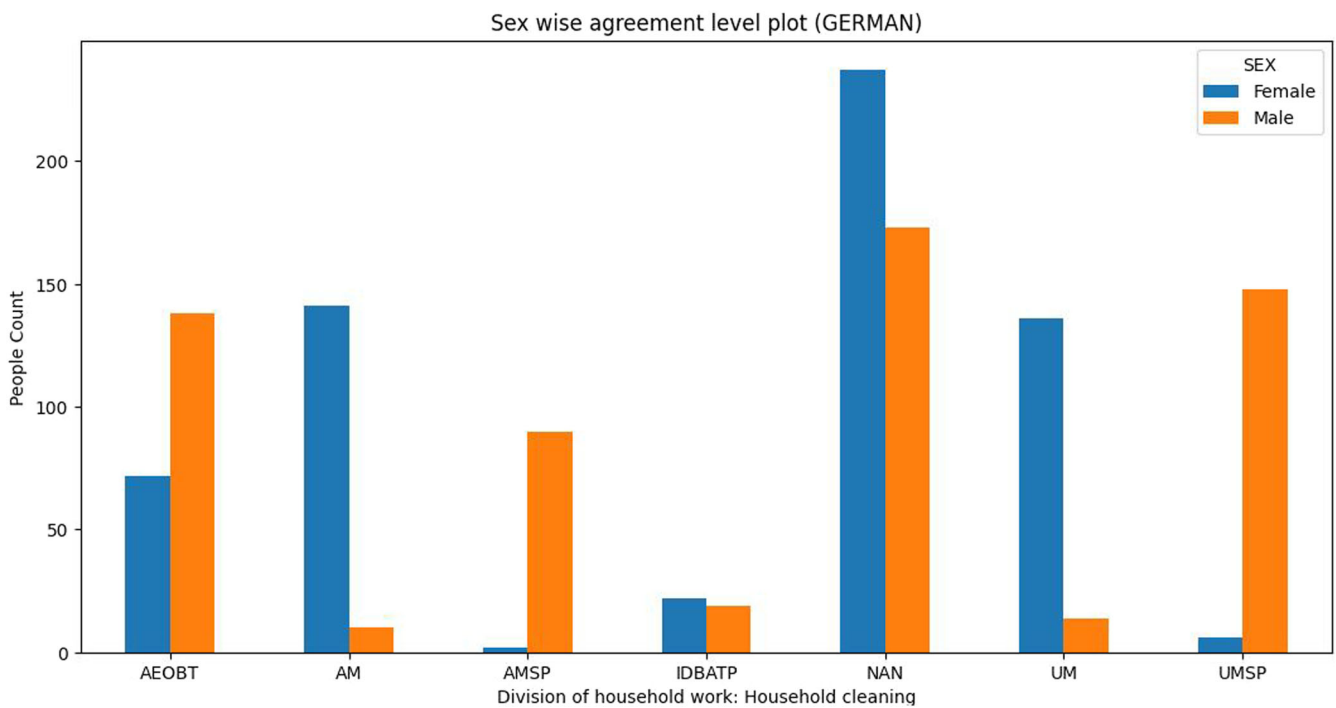


Fig. 14 Sex-wise agreement level plot (German data sample) of “Division of household work: Household cleaning”.

how women maintain the status quo created with the continuous burden of family and marital (social) duties along with professional responsibilities, neglecting any labeled terms such as ‘Un-ladylike’ and ‘Non-ambitious.’

A Code Relation Browser: Intersections, as shown in Fig. 22, visualizes the linkages and co-existences of codes in the documents. The squares show the codes’ intersections, and the size of the square denotes higher or lower coinciding in the

coded segments. The larger squares of the codes—FAMILY, MARRIAGE, and EMPLOYMENT—plainly illustrate that women seeking employment or actively employed continue to rely on their families and nuptial relations for critical decisions such as trajectories of education and pursuing certain kinds of career orientation while persistently augmenting gender roles prescribed and prevail in the society for an ideal woman.

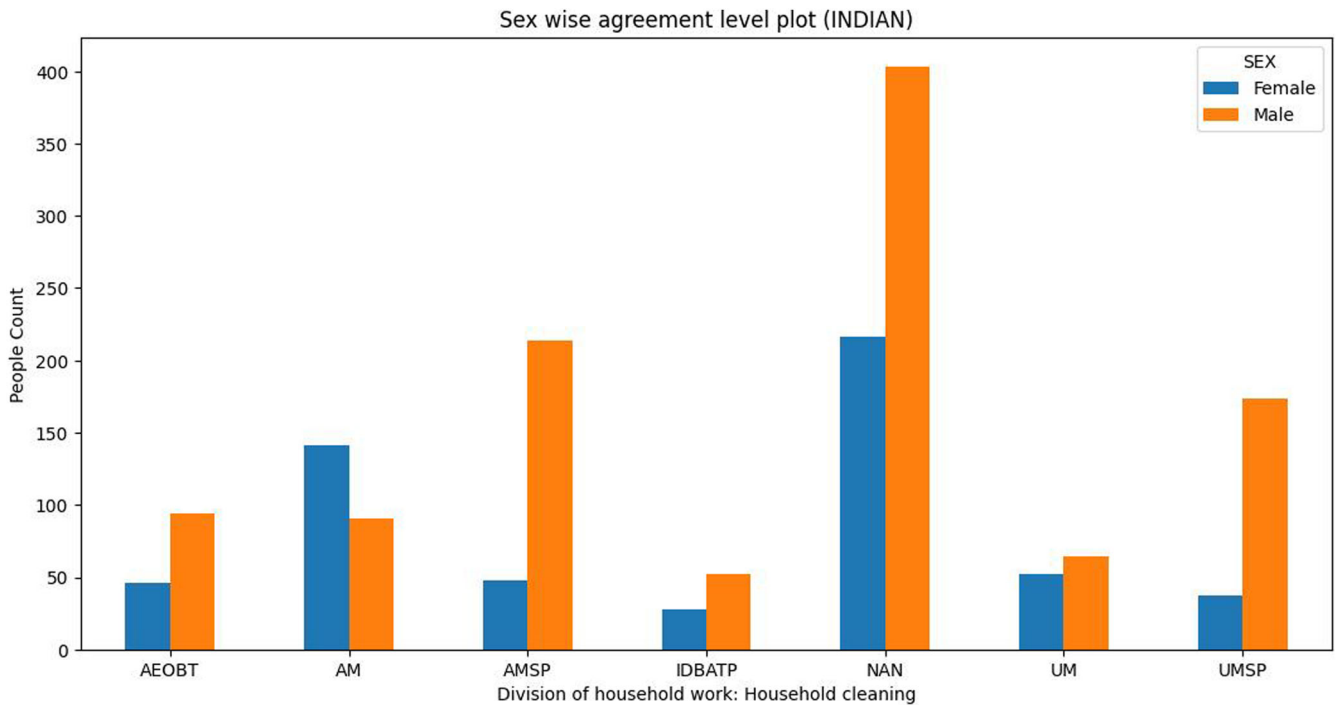


Fig. 15 Sex-wise agreement level plot (Indian data sample) of “Division of household work: Preparing meals”.

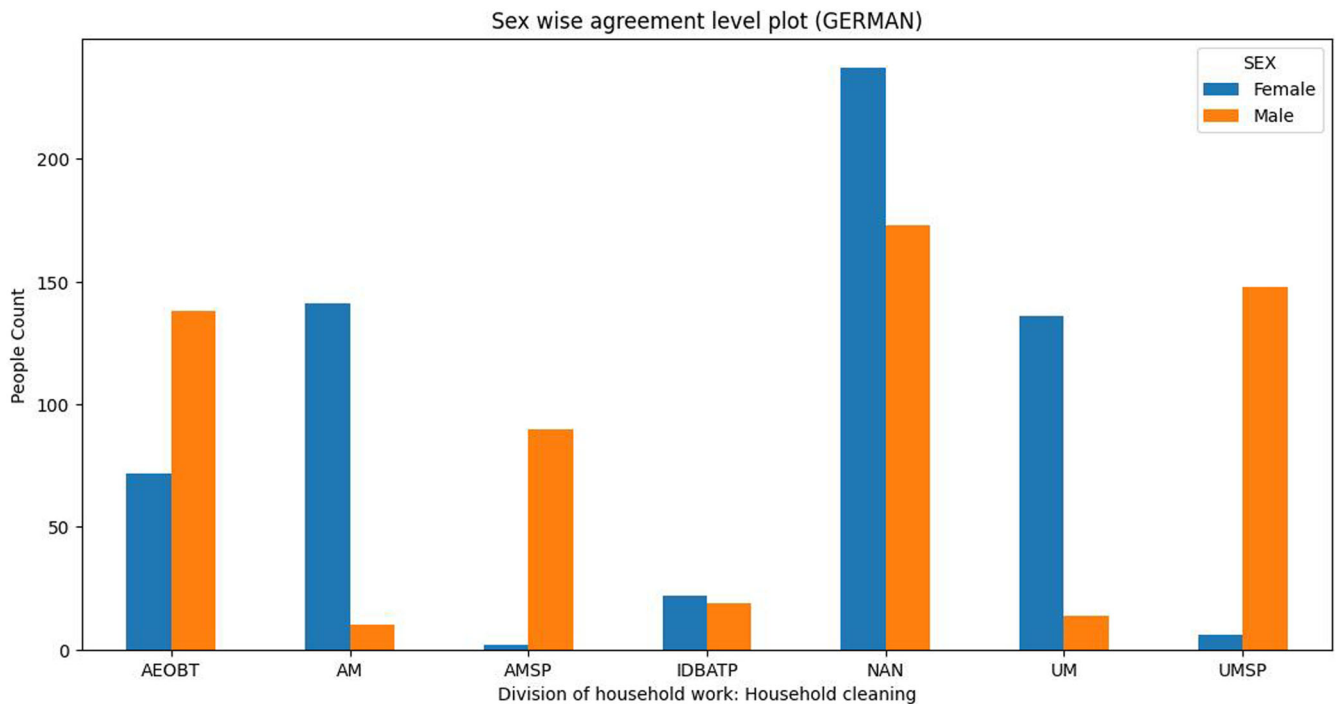


Fig. 16 Sex-wise agreement level plot (German data sample) of “Division of household work: Preparing meals”.

Furthermore, the MAXQDA visual tool has a case-oriented function called Document Portraits (Fig. 23). This allows us to visualize the document as a dotted picture based on the defined code order and code colors. This tool exhibits coded segments as a portrait of either all or specific selected codes assigned throughout the document. For example, this analysis uses a particular color for EMPLOYMENT (green) or FAMILY (red). With a brief look, we can reveal which factors (codes) are predominantly contested throughout the documentation.

The graphic representations of women’s employment and changing gender roles respective to family and marriage data in Document Portrait Fig. 23 are dominated by FAMILY, MARRIAGE, and COMMUNITY themes. Document Portrait (Fig. 23) is a visualization of data collected with women professionals constantly dealing with gender norms impacting their social and professional lives; that is why prominent themes such as EMPLOYMENT, FAMILY, and MARRIAGE indicate that despite being financially independent, women had to abide the assigned gender norms.

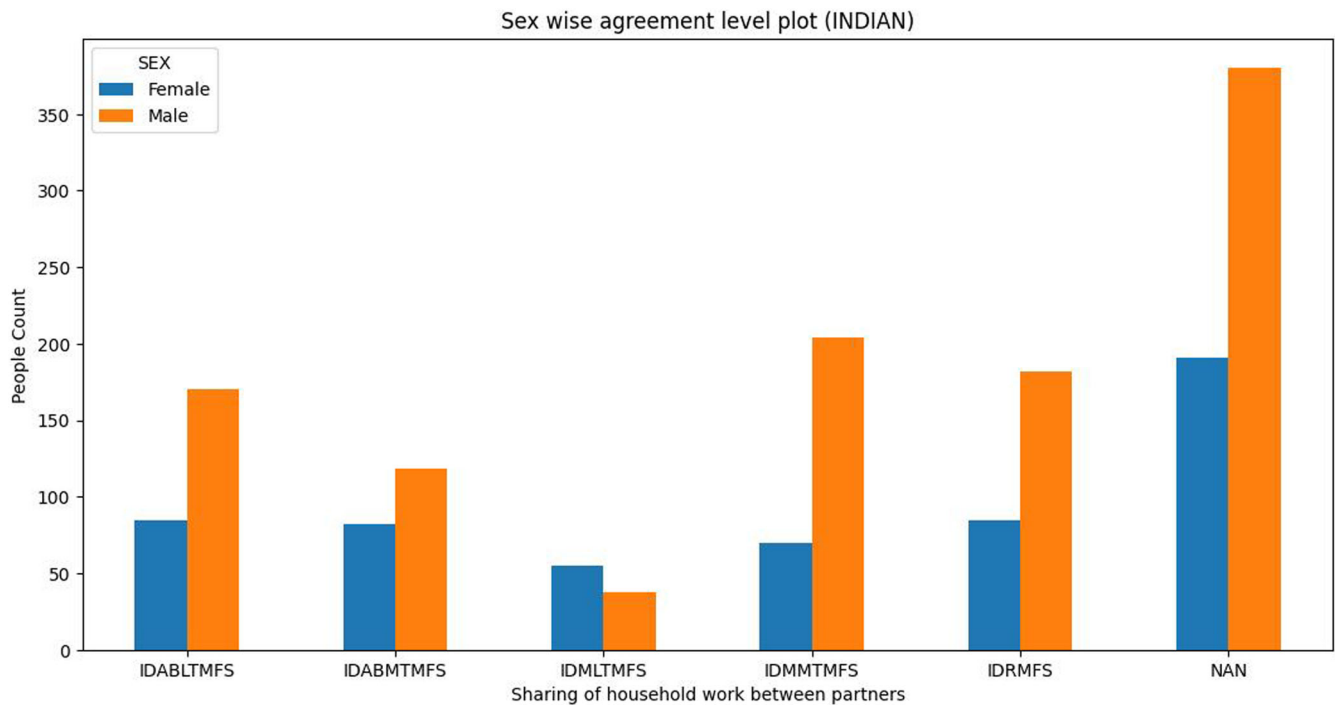


Fig. 17 Sex-wise agreement level plot (Indian data sample) of “Sharing of household work between partners”.

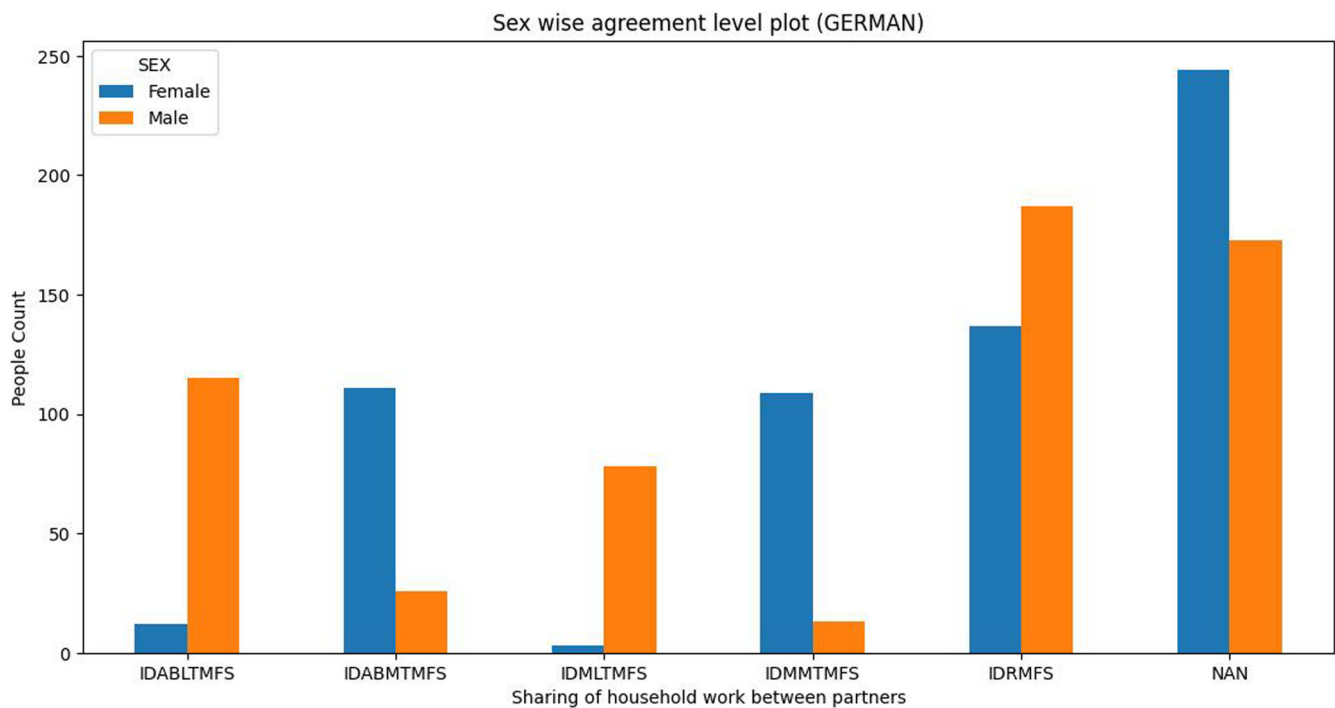


Fig. 18 Sex-wise agreement level plot (German data sample) of “Sharing of household work between partners”.

The gender arbitrations with professional aspirations and family/marital dynamics are addressed in Document Portrait. The gendering of roles is rooted in society’s standardized criterion for being ‘good’ or ‘ideal’ women (Shukla and Chaudhuri, 2021; Shukla, 2022). Therefore, women remain constantly navigating under rigid gender structures, as indicated by the document portrait. However, women professionals expressed hope for balanced transformation in the gender roles to have smooth navigation in personal and professional life.

Data visualization in Figs. 24 and 25 represent the semantic network relations of crossings and overlapping among codes. Visualization of codes in the document occurs as if they are created in a food web in the ecosystem. The more similar two segments have been coded, or the more similar two codes have been applied, the closer they are to each other in the semantic network relations. Therefore, Fig. 24 represents network relations of intersections among codes indicating that specific codes continued to overlap each other throughout the discussion. Semantic

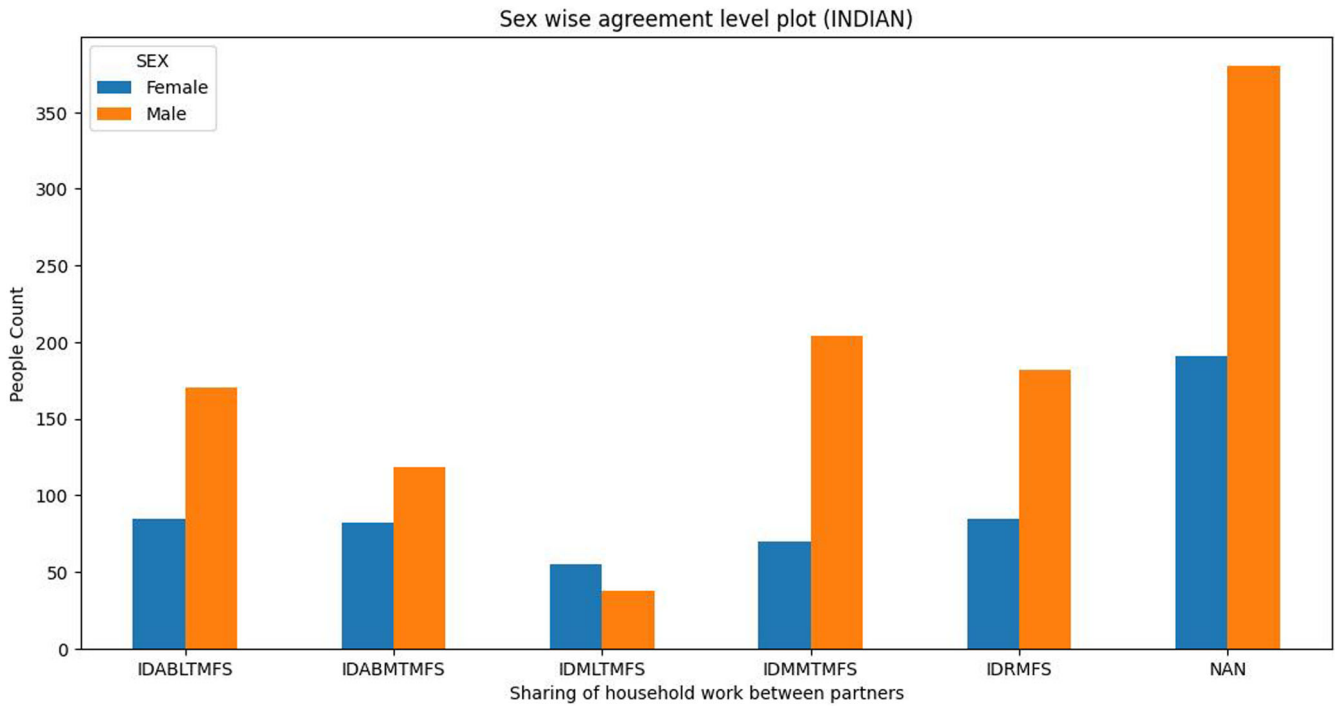


Fig. 19 Sex-wise agreement level plot (Indian data sample) of “Who makes decisions how to raise kids”.

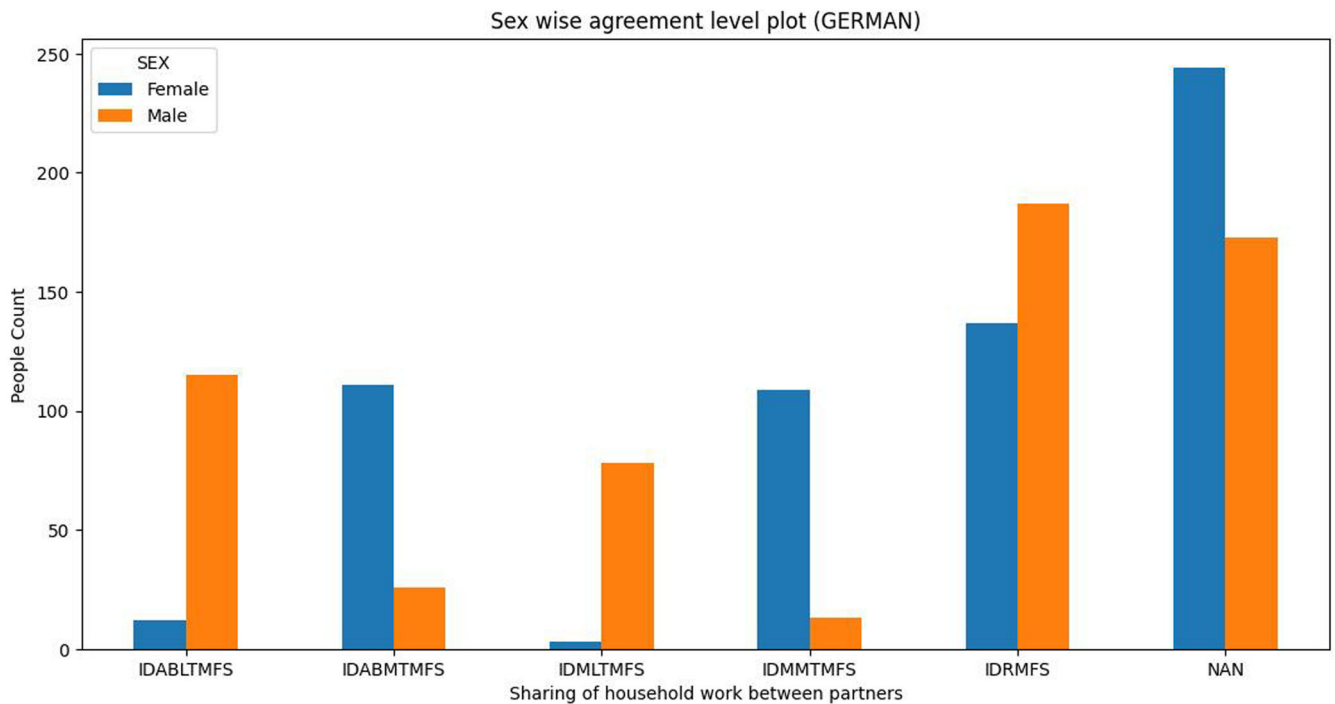


Fig. 20 Sex-wise agreement level plot (German data sample) of “Who makes decisions how to raise kids”.

network relations (Figs. 24 and 25) denote the interdependency and concurrence of themes, affirming diverse narratives binding on standard functionality.

Figure 25 represents the complex interconnectivity and proximity of codes that prominently occurred during data analysis. It is critical to note that the width expansion of connecting lines signifies the frequency of codes and their association with specific codes in Semantic Network Relations.

The visibility of significance for EMPLOYMENT in both Figs. 24 and 25 display immaculate relations with prominent codes of FAMILY and MARRIAGE. The proximity of codes in the network represents how the dynamics of family bonds, matrimonial relations, and professional endeavors are in unison for women. The importance of EDUCATION is visible in both semantic network relations. It also signals how COMMUNITY has an impeccable relationship with the significant codes of EMPLOYMENT,

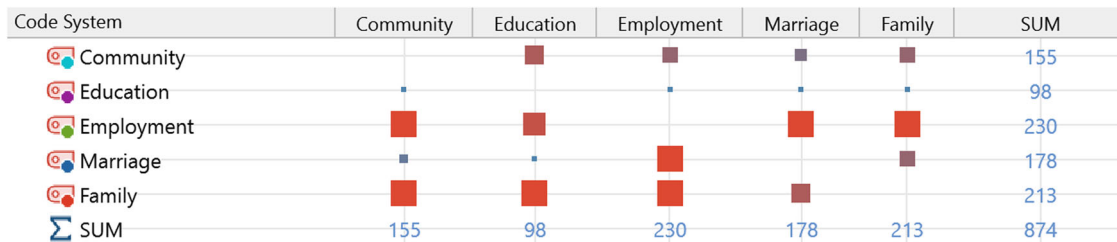


Fig. 21 Code relation browser: proximity.



Fig. 22 Code relation browser: intersections.

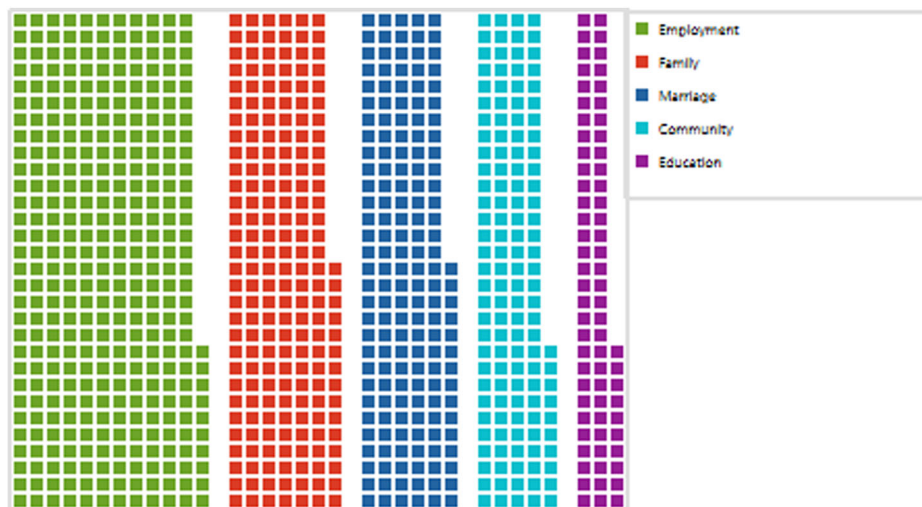


Fig. 23 Document portrait.

FAMILY, and MARRIAGE. This firm relationship link implies how the community’s (kith and kin) social regulations, such as pre-defined gender-assigned roles, continued to impact the dynamics of marriage, family, and profession. Therefore, the perpetual interactions of community, family, and marriage continued strong interplay for women’s employment and education.

Discussion

This article acknowledges the interconnectedness of gender roles, societal expectations, and mobility experiences in family and marriage in Germany and India, considering how multiple dimensions of identity and power intersect to shape people’s lives and opportunities as gender roles and mobility experiences are deeply intertwined in societies worldwide. This study explores the concept of Intersectional Im/Mobilities, focusing on people’s experiences in two distinct contexts: India and Germany. By combining qualitative and quantitative data analysis, we discuss five themes emerging from our data and analyses, as discussed below, that shed light on the similarities and differences in how gender roles and societal expectations

impact people’s lives and mobility experiences in these two countries.

Theme 1: Gender norms and societal expectations. In India and Germany, traditional gender norms and societal expectations continue to influence majority of women’s roles in family and marriage. The qualitative data (Figs. 24 and 25) reveal how women professionals navigate gender norms while making decisions about education and careers, often relying on family and societal standards. The quantitative data (see Figs. 5, 6; 17 and 18) reinforces these findings, with male respondents in both nations adhering more to conservative views on gender roles within households. Despite shared traditional gender norms, the extent of adherence and the pace of change differ between India and Germany (see, Figs. 3 and 4; 15 and 16). Data on the Indian sample exhibit a higher level of agreement with traditional gender roles among respondents. In India, intersectionalities of caste, class, and gender impose rigid norms, resulting in a higher level of agreement with traditional gender roles. By comparison, the German (quantitative) sample reflects a more nuanced

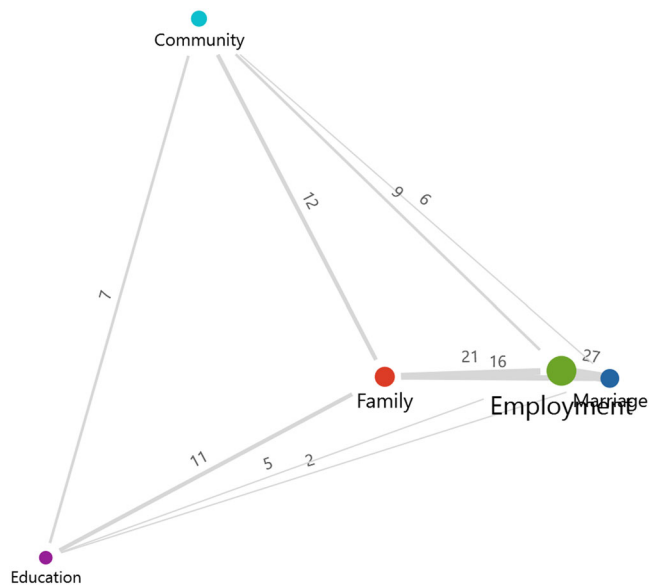


Fig. 24 Semantic Network Relation: intersections of codes in a segment.

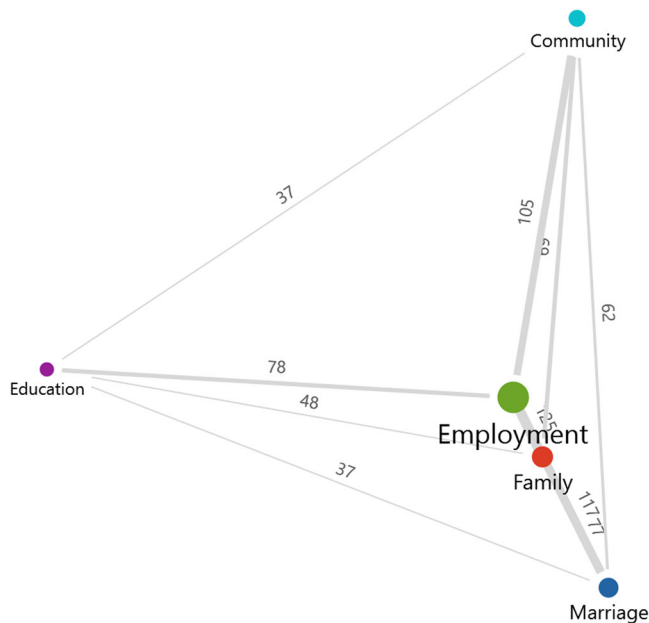


Fig. 25 Semantic Network Relation: proximity of codes in segments.

understanding of intersectionality, with supporting conventional views on gender roles and others challenging them. These differences highlight the ongoing debates and transformations of gender roles in both countries.

Theme 2: Family and marriage as influential social factors.

Family and marriage significantly impact women’s education, career choices, and employment in India and Germany as they intersect with gender roles and professional mobility. The data reveal how women professionals in India and Germany navigate the expectations and constraints of their families and marital relations. Qualitative data (Figs. 21 and 22) illustrates how women professionals rely on family and marital ties when making critical life choices. The quantitative data (see Figs. 9 and 10; 11 and 12; 19 and 20) corroborate these findings, revealing the significant influence of family dynamics on the division of

household work and childcare responsibilities. However, the impact of family and marriage on women’s decisions may be more pronounced in India due to stronger cultural and familial ties (see Fig. 13). In contrast, Germany’s (see Fig. 14) emphasis on individual choices and autonomy may lead to a more balanced distribution of household work and family decision-making. Germany’s contemporary egalitarian approach to gender roles may foster greater flexibility in defining family and professional responsibilities compared to India, where traditional gender norms often persist.

Theme 3: Intersectionalities of family, marriage, and employment.

The intersectionalities of gender roles in family, marriage, and employment are evident through the data samples in both countries. In this research, qualitative data highlights how women professionals continuously negotiate gender roles within their careers and family dynamics. The interconnectedness of codes (Figs. 22 and 24) related to family, marriage, and employment indicates the inextricable link between these aspects in both countries. Cultural and historical contexts may lead to differences in the perception and experience of intersectionality in India and Germany. India’s prolonged and myriad versions of patriarchal structures may result in more rigid gender roles, leading to a stronger emphasis on women’s responsibilities within the family, limiting their mobility experiences compared to Germany (see Figs. 1 and 2). Where gender equality has progressed, the negotiation of gender roles may be less rigid, allowing for greater flexibility and individual agency in defining family and professional responsibilities.

Theme 4: Community influence on gender roles.

Both India and Germany demonstrate that community influence significantly reinforces traditional gender roles. The qualitative data (Figs. 24 and 25) suggest that societal norms and expectations, especially those defined by the community, play a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of marriage, family, and profession. The quantitative data (see, Figs. 7 and 8; 19 and 20) also indicates that community norms influence respondents’ views on sharing household income and decision-making in raising kids. However, the influence of community norms may be more pronounced in India, where traditional customs and social expectations profoundly impact individuals’ choices and behaviors. In Germany, where individualism and personal autonomy are more emphasized, community influence may still be present but may not be as dominant in shaping gender roles.

Theme 5: Gender role transformation: Future promises.

Despite the prevalence of traditional gender norms, women’s agency and resilience in challenging traditional norms in both India and Germany express hope for more balanced gender role transformations where Intersectional Im/mobilities recognize that women’s aspirations for change are shaped by their intersecting identities and for social-economic mobility experiences. The qualitative data (Fig. 23) highlights that women aspire to navigate personal and professional life more smoothly by challenging and redefining gender roles. Furthermore, the extent of hope and the pace of transformation may differ between India and Germany. In India, where traditional gender norms are deeply ingrained, women’s aspirations for change may face more significant societal resistance. In contrast, Germany’s more progressive attitudes towards gender equality may allow for a more favorable environment for achieving gender role transformation.

Conclusion: The road ahead

In the last forty years, following the gender theory approach, gender came to be understood as dynamic processes or what

West and Zimmerman (1987) termed as “doing gender.” This conceptualization defines gender as a process that is implicated not only in demarcating “males” and “females” within the broader structures of society but also in how these categories of people relate to each other. The next significant stage in gender theorization came in the 1990s when feminist scholars argued that gender is not a property of an individual but is an emergent feature of social situations. Scholars argued that gender theorizing until now had been obscuring how gender is about relations and processes involving power and intersectionalities (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Lorber, 1994; Ferree, 2010; Ferree et al., 1999). Additionally, gender is one of the most important axes of differentiation that people use not only to distinguish themselves but as the basis for negotiating social status and hierarchies beyond families, that is, multiple and simultaneous intersectionalities.

Our aim in this article, then, has been to continue advancing intersectionality as an analytical approach to understanding gender dynamics in family and marriage by documenting that there are multiple, varied perceptions of people’s intersectional constellations and bringing it closer to intersectionality’s subtle relationship with social and geographical mobilities in people’s everyday life and lifestyle choices. We have consciously included a mixed method approach in this article to highlight the ‘thickness’ of data (ethnographic voices) together with statistical analyses, and we believe that the study may be extended to capture multiple mobilities and intersectionalities such as those entwined with gender roles in family and marriage. Here, we make a theoretical and applied case for Intersectional Im/Mobilities (Shukla and Chaudhuri, 2021), applying the framework to our data by adding to our own intersectional analyses. Although our work certainly has its limitations (for example, scalability of the qualitative model), we nonetheless advocate for intersectional researchers to move beyond conventional understandings of intersectionality or mobility to a more complex network where the two overlap, interact, and inflect each other, particularly in varied geo-social contexts. We hope that our illustrations here will encourage future scholarship to investigate meaningful and complex relations between intersectionality and mobility studies to examine gender relations, particularly in intimate spheres such as family and marriage, and across cultural and geographical contexts. As scholars from multidisciplinary backgrounds, we believe that power geometries of intersectionality and mobility studies, as discussed and exemplified in a limited capacity in this article, shall continue to prove their versatility and adaptability across time and territories.

Data availability

The quantitative dataset used in this research can be accessed at: <https://www.gesis.org/en/issp/data-and-documentation/family-and-changing-gender-roles/2012>. The qualitative dataset is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Author contributions

Mayurakshi Chaudhuri contributed to the theoretical and methodological argumentation, data identification for quantitative analyses, evaluation of the interview protocol used in the qualitative analysis, and analysis for the empirical qualitative cases and led the writing of this manuscript. Saurav Karmakar contributed to data identification for quantitative analyses and the methodological enhancements and data interpretation for quantitative analysis. Sakshi Shukla contributed to the data collection, methodological enhancements and data interpretation used as part of the qualitative analysis.

Competing interests

Mayurakshi Chaudhuri was a Collection Guest Editor for this journal at the time of acceptance for publication. The manuscript was assessed in line with the journal’s standard editorial processes, including its policy on competing interests.

Ethical

Approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur. The procedures used in this study adhere to the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Informed consent


All subjects gave their informed consent for inclusion before they participated in the qualitative part of the study. All procedures used in this study adhere to the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Additional information

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