

Trends and Prevalence of Consanguineous Marriages in Mudaliars of Palakkad District of the State of Kerala

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ABSTRACT The prevalence, pattern, socio-economic correlates and temporal trends in consanguinity among Mudaliar, a Hindu Backward Community of Palakkad District of Kerala were studied by conducting survey and structured interview on 412 randomly selected families. Consanguineous marriages are found to be 31.6% of all the marriages contracted with a mean coefficient of inbreeding, $F = 0.0235$. First cousin marriages are found to be the predominant type (15.8%), followed by uncle-niece type (6.6%) and second cousin marriages (5.8%). Relationship between consanguinity and region of residence of the couples was found conspicuously higher in rural areas relative to urban areas. The relationship between consanguinity and educational status of women showed a negative association. A consistently declining trend in consanguinity from older to younger generation is not evident among the Mudaliar, which contradicts the general trends prevailing in most populations of the world. It is suggested that propensity to marry a relative has not changed much over time among this immigrant community of Kerala. Their strong belief in following the Dravidian culture and traditions, together with socio-economic and educational backwardness acting hand in hand may be the reason for the high prevalence of consanguinity among them.