



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Wedding Budgets in Dimapur's Naga Community: Exploring Social Factors' Impact

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ABSTRACT

Wedding budget sizes are expected to increase over time due to economic factors like inflation and GDP growth. However, because weddings are primarily social ceremonies, this study examines whether social factors also shape the urban Naga wedding budgets in Dimapur, Nagaland. We assess the relative strength of seven social factors in influencing the budget size and explore how expenditures are financed and allocated. Data were collected from 301 respondents in Dimapur using purposive sampling. Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient assessed the strength of association between each social factor and the wedding budget size, with t-tests evaluating statistical significance. Descriptive analyses using percentage calculations were applied to financing and allocation. Results revealed statistically significant positive correlations between the size of the wedding budget and six of the seven factors examined ($p < .05$). However, effect sizes were small, with factors individually explaining 2 per cent to 13 per cent of the variance in wedding budgets. The findings suggest that while social factors measurably influence urban Naga wedding expenditure, their practical impact appears limited as most respondents reported moderate budgets. Expenditures were concentrated on food and beverages (41.2 per cent) and personal savings (68.4 per cent) emerged as the most commonly reported method of financing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian wedding industry has experienced rapid expansion in the post-pandemic period. According to the Jefferies Report (2024), the industry was estimated at US\$130 billion in 2024, making it the second-largest consumption category after food and groceries. The same report found that the wedding expenses of an average Indian are around INR 12 lakh, (US\$15,000), which in some cases exceeds the cost of 18 years of a child's education. This growth is further evidenced by year-on-year increases. The average cost of hosting a wedding celebration in India surged to

INR 28 lakhs in 2023, representing a significant increase from INR 25 lakhs in 2022 (WeddingWire India, 2024). A 2024 report also identified the wedding sector as the fourth largest industry in India, noting significant growth between 2021 and 2024 (The Economist, 2024).

While macroeconomic factors such as rising GDP levels, inflation rates, reduction of import duties on luxury items such as gold etc., have contributed to the expanding budgets, social factors are also salient. (Bajaj, 2024) observed "Weddings in India have

always held a social reverence that defies economics and pragmatism” (para 2).

Veblen’s theory (1899) of conspicuous consumption provides the foundational frame: goods are consumed not for utility but to signal wealth and rank. Applying this to weddings (Bloch, Rao, & Desai, 2004) use Indian National Family Health Survey data to show that dowry and wedding expenditures function as signals of family status, with higher spending among households seeking upward mobility. In rural India, wedding outlay and ceremony sizes are positively associated with caste status and landholding, indicating that wedding ceremonies serve as investments in social capital. This aligns with Boden’s (2003) analysis of British weddings where the “perfect wedding” has been commodified and couples perform class identity through vendor choices and aesthetic detail, turning the event into a project of distinction. Similarly, (Otnes & Pleck, 2003) in *Cinderella Dreams* documented how American brides navigate expectations co-produced by families and bridal industries, escalating costs. The failure to meet normative benchmarks risks kin disapproval or loss of face.

Empirical studies confirm the role of social competition in wedding spending. (Banerjee, Duflo, Ghatak, & Lafortune, 2013) analyzed the “marriage squeeze” in India and found that families spend beyond their means to secure grooms, indicating status competition under demographic constraint. (Srinivasan & Lee, 2004) showed that in South India, social pressure from kin networks explains variance in dowry amounts better than economic factors alone. More recently, (Anukriti, Kwon, & Prakash, 2022) further established that wedding spending in India correlates with local inequality: higher inequality increases competitive spending as families differentiate themselves. (Kumbhar, 2024) identified factors such as maintaining prestige, funding dowries and “what will people think” syndrome as drivers of sizeable wedding debts among Indian families.

The influence of social media has intensified wedding-related consumption. (Singh, 2024) noted that “The trend towards wedding loans is fuelled by a desire for personalised experiences, unique settings, and destination or themed weddings often driven by social media influence and the pursuit of likes on social media” (para 2). Exposure to social media

contents on extravagant and lavish weddings fuels a culture of comparison, pushing families to overspend. In societies where collectivism is strong and traditional hierarchies are weakening, the expanding middle class often turns to lavish wedding spending as a substitute for limited economic mobility (Sadigov, 2020). (Singh & Motwani, 2022) found that social networking sites have changed wedding arrangements in India, influencing vendor selection and creating pressure on middle-class families to follow peer trends regardless of economic conditions.

(Albers, Wren, Knotts, & Chupp, 2021, p. 409) Documented a two-tier pricing structure for wedding versus non-wedding items and argued that “Media, social networks, and the wedding industry portray weddings as an obtainable consumer fantasy”. Many families finance high budgets by draining savings, maxing out credit cards, or taking loans (Sanjana, 2024). IndiaLends data indicate that approximately 20 per cent of loan applications from Indians aged 20-30 during the 2018-2019 period were aimed at financing weddings (The Print, 2024).

While the literature on social factors contributing to wedding budgets is robust for caste-based and metropolitan contexts, a gap remains. Most Indian studies focus on Hindu dowry belts; Northeast India’s tribal societies are understudied. Dowry is absent in Naga culture and though bride price existed in some tribes, it is not generally seen as a major factor influencing the wedding budget. Other social factors like social media-driven trends, societal expectations, etc. have also influence Naga wedding expenditures. Contemporary commentary suggests similar pressures. The *Morung Express* editorialized that present-day Naga weddings have become displays of wealth and status rather than unions. It quoted (para 2) the opening line of Methaneilie Jutakhrie’s music video *Wedding Party*: “To throw a small wedding party is shameful, but then, should one sell their paddy fields?” (Krocha, 2024). (Gogoi, 2023) observed that “A Naga wedding might wrap up in a day but that doesn’t mean the occasion comes cheap. An entire industry hustles to make the big day count and it all comes with its own hefty price tag with decoration taking up the biggest chunk” (para 9).

There are no official estimates of the average budget of a Naga wedding. (Chishi, 2012) wrote in an article in Telegraph India that “the minimum

expenditure for a wedding in Nagaland is around INR 2 lakh" (para 6). Given inflation and the passage of over a decade, the average wedding budget is now likely to be around INR 5 lakhs or more. Available literature or records on Naga wedding budgets are limited. With growing concern from churches in Nagaland over the growing wedding expenses and advocacy for mass weddings to minimize the costs, there is a need to analyse if social factors are responsible for this trend. Additionally, understanding the budget allocation across expenditure heads and financing mechanisms among Naga couples remains unexplored.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (i) To examine whether social factors influence the size of the wedding budget of urban Nagas in Dimapur.
- (ii) To assess the strength and significance of the association between selected social factors and the wedding budget size.
- (iii) To examine the allocation of the wedding budget across different areas of wedding expenditure and to identify the primary means of wedding financing.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Nature of the Study: This empirical study is mainly based on primary data collected through an online survey.

Area under Study: Dimapur district, Nagaland, India. It is the largest city in Nagaland with an estimated urban population of 172000 in 2024.

Method of Sampling and Data Collection: Purposive sampling method was used to collect the data. A structured survey questionnaire was sent online to married Naga residents of Dimapur.

Sample Size: 301 respondents formed the sample for this study.

Time Frame: Data were collected from February 2024 to March 2024.

4. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT AND METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS:

This study examines seven social factors hypothesized to affect urban Naga wedding budget size: tribal traditions and customs, the economic status of the family, social status of the family,

personal preferences, societal expectations, social media and celebrity-weddings trends, and current wedding trends in Dimapur. The analysis tests whether these factors show a significant correlation with the wedding budget size and compares their relative strength of association. Null hypotheses for each factor were tested using Pearson's correlation and t-tests were used to evaluate statistical significance.

H₀₁: Tribal traditions and customs have no significant correlation with the urban Naga wedding budget size.

H₀₂: Family economic status has no significant correlation with the urban Naga wedding budget size.

H₀₃: Family social status has no significant correlation with the urban Naga wedding budget size.

H₀₄: Personal preferences have no significant correlation with the urban Naga wedding budget size.

H₀₅: Societal expectations have no significant correlation with the urban Naga wedding budget size.

H₀₆: Social media and celebrity-wedding trends have no significant correlation with the urban Naga wedding budget size.

H₀₇: Current wedding trends in Dimapur have no significant correlation with the urban Naga wedding budget size.

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between the seven social factors and the wedding budget size. Following Cohen (1988) coefficients of 0.01 were interpreted as small, 0.30 as medium and 0.5 and above were interpreted as large.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of the Respondents:

The following tables provide the data on the demographic profile of the sample. The sample bias toward female respondents and 2020 - 24 as the wedding year was unintended.

Table 1: Sex composition of the respondents

Sex	No. of respondents	%
Male	95	31.6
Female	206	68.4
Total	301	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2: Year of Wedding

Year	No. of respondents	%
Before 1990	20	6.6
1990-1999	29	9.6
2000-2009	53	17.6
2010-2019	59	19.6
2020-2024	140	46.5
Total	301	100

Source: Primary Data

Budgetary Information:

The following tables contain the information related to the total size of the wedding budget of the respondents

Table 3: Total Expenditure/Budget of the Wedding

Budget (in INR)	No. of respondents	%
Below 1 lakh	22	7.3
1 lakh to 3 lakhs	77	25.6
3 lakhs to 6 lakhs	101	33.6
6 lakhs to 9 lakhs	55	18.3
Above 9 lakhs	46	15.3
Total	301	100

Source: Primary Data

As can be seen from table 3 the majority of the respondents had a wedding budget between INR 3 lakhs to 6 lakhs. However, a small percentage of respondents had budgets higher than INR 9 lakhs.

Table 4: The Most Important Factor in Determining Wedding Budget

Factors	No. of respondents	%
Traditions and customs	65	21.6
Family economic status	80	26.6
Family social status	11	3.7
Personal preferences	103	34.2
Pressure of society's expectations	6	2
Social media, celebrity-wedding trends	6	2
Current wedding trends in Dimapur	22	7.3
Others	8	2.6
Total	301	100

Source: Primary Data

Personal preference was reported as the most significant factor in deciding the wedding budget of the urban Nagas, while societal expectation and social media and celebrity-wedding trends are found to be the least impactful factors.

Table 5: Area of Allocation of the Highest Percentage of Wedding Fund

Areas	No of responses	%
Venues and decorations	106	35.2
Food and beverages	154	51.2
Wedding attire and jewellery	31	10.3
Photography and videography	6	2
Wedding cards and entertainment	4	1.3
Total	301	100

Source: Primary Data.

As shown in table 5, food and beverages are allocated the largest share of the total wedding budget. Venue and decoration expenditures ranked second.

Table 6: Means of Financing the Wedding Budget

Arrangements	No. of respondents	%
Personal savings	173	57.5
Financed by parents	71	23.6
Borrowing from family and friends	20	6.6
Bank loans	14	4.7
Jointly funded by relatives	23	7.6
Total	301	100

Source: Primary Data.

Overall, savings is found to be the largest source for financing the wedding budget among the urban Nagas of Dimapur. Personal savings by the bride/groom is the largest financing source followed by parental savings. Only a small percentage of respondents took loans to finance their wedding.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF THE DATA: A correlation analysis was conducted between the budget size of urban Naga weddings and seven social factors that are hypothesized to be associated with it,

which are tribal traditions and customs, family economic status, family social status, personal preferences, societal expectations, social media and celebrity-weddings trends, and current wedding trends in Dimapur. Respondents were asked to rate these factors based on perceived influence on their wedding budget, on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating very low influence of the factor in deciding their wedding budget and 5 indicating very high influence of the factor on their wedding budget.

To conduct the correlation analysis the options offered in question regarding the respondents' total wedding budget was converted into a 5-point ordinal scale: a budget below INR 1 lakh was coded as 1, while a budget between INR 1 lakh to 3 lakhs was coded as 2, a budget between INR 3 lakhs to 6 lakhs was coded as 3, a budget between INR 6 lakhs to 9 lakhs was coded as 4, and a budget above INR 9 lakhs was coded as 5. The results of the correlation analysis and their interpretations are presented in table 7.

Table 7: Correlation Coefficients between Wedding Budget Size and Selected Social Factors

Correlation Between	Correlation Coefficient (r) Value	Interpretation
Wedding budget size and tribal traditions and customs	0.25	Small degree of positive correlation
Wedding budget size and family economic status	0.31	Medium degree of positive correlation
Wedding budget size and family social status	0.34	Medium degree of positive correlation
Wedding budget size and personal preferences	0.36	Medium degree of positive correlation
Wedding budget size and societal expectations	0.09	Negligible degree of positive correlation
Wedding budget size and social media, celebrity-wedding trends	0.17	Small degree of positive correlation

Wedding budget size and current wedding trends in Dimapur	0.14	Small degree of positive correlation
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Source: Primary Data

Comparison of the Different Correlation Coefficient Values Associated with the Different Factors Affecting the Wedding Budget

From table 7 we can see that there is small to medium degree of positive correlation between the wedding budget size and all seven social factors hypothesized to influence it. Societal expectations had the lowest correlation value with the budget size. This indicates minimal impact of societal pressures on the budget size. In contrast, personal preferences had the strongest correlation to the wedding budget size. This suggests that the urban Nagas prioritize their own desires and choices when determining their wedding expenditures, allocating budget based on what they personally value and want for their special day. An interesting discrepancy emerged between descriptive and inferential results. As shown in Table 4, a higher percentage of respondents identified family economic status (26.6 per cent) as the most important factor affecting the wedding budget as compared to the family social status (3.7 per cent). However, the correlation analysis revealed that family's social status had a marginally stronger association with the budget size ($r = .34$) than the family economic status ($r = .31$). This apparent discrepancy can be explained by the distinction between prevalence and intensity of effect. While family economic status was more frequently cited as the primary determinant, the influence of family social status on budget size appears more intense among the subset of respondents for whom it was salient. In other words, fewer respondents may prioritize social status, but when they did, its impact on wedding expenditure was substantial enough to produce a slightly stronger overall correlation than the more commonly cited economic status.

TESTING THE HYPOTHESES:

To test the statistical significance of the strength of the correlation between the size of the wedding budget and the selected seven social factors, the following hypotheses were tested:

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant correlation between tribal traditions and customs and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H_{A1}: There is a statistically significant correlation between tribal traditions and customs and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H₀₂: There is no statistically significant correlation between the family economic status and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H_{A2}: There is a statistically significant correlation between the family economic status and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H₀₃: There is no statistically significant correlation between the family social status and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H_{A3}: There is a statistically significant correlation between the family social status and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H₀₄: There is no statistically significant correlation between personal preferences and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H_{A4}: There is a statistically significant correlation between personal preferences and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H₀₅: There is no statistically significant correlation between societal expectations and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H_{A5}: There is a statistically significant correlation between societal expectations and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H₀₆: There is no statistically significant correlation between social media and celebrity-weddings trends and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H_{A6}: There is a statistically significant correlation between social media and celebrity-weddings trends and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H₀₇: There is no statistically significant correlation between current wedding trends in Dimapur and the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

H_{A7}: There is a statistically significant correlation between current wedding trends in Dimapur and

the wedding budget size among urban Nagas in Dimapur.

Table 8: Correlation Coefficients, t-values and p-values for Seven Selected Factors

Correlation Between	Correlation Coefficient (r) Value	t-value	p-value
Wedding budget size and tribal traditions and customs	0.25	4.39	<0.001
Wedding budget size and family economic status	0.31	5.69	<0.001
Wedding budget size and family social status	0.34	6.26	<0.001
Wedding budget size and personal preferences	0.36	6.73	<0.001
Wedding budget size and societal expectations	0.09	1.63	0.104
Wedding budget size and social media and celebrity-wedding trends	0.17	3.01	0.003
Wedding budget size and current wedding trends in Dimapur	0.14	2.53	0.012

Source: Primary Data

Note: N=301. All tests two-tailed

The following table shows the correlation coefficient (r) values and their corresponding t-values and p-values.

Results indicate that six of the seven social factors showed statistically significant positive correlations with urban Naga wedding budget with p-values less than .05. However, effect sizes were small

to moderate, with correlation coefficients ranging from $r = .14$ to $r = .36$. Personal preferences ($r = .36$, $p < .001$) and family social status ($r = .34$, $p < .001$) exhibited the strongest associations, while societal expectations was not statistically significant ($r = .09$, $p = .104$). Although most relationships reached statistical significance due to the large sample size, the low r values suggest these factors explain only 2 per cent to 13 per cent of variance in wedding budgets. Based on the correlation analysis, the following hypotheses decisions were made at $\alpha = .05$, two-tailed: H_{01} , H_{02} , H_{03} , H_{04} , H_{06} , and H_{07} were rejected. H_{05} was not rejected.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study tested whether seven social factors were significantly associated with the urban Naga wedding budget size. Contrary to the initial descriptive observation that most budgets remain moderate, the correlation analysis revealed that six social factors showed statistically significant positive associations with wedding expenditures, $p < .05$, two-tailed.

Descriptive data indicated that the majority of respondents reported moderate wedding budgets, with the most common range between INR 3 lakhs to 6 lakhs, followed by INR 1 lakh to 3 lakhs. Budgetary allocation was heavily weighted toward food and beverages (51.2 per cent), with relatively lower spending on venue and decoration (35.2 per cent), and wedding attire (10.3 per cent). This spending pattern indicates that many Nagas continue to prioritize customary hospitality over extravagant displays of wealth, suggesting less emphasis on impression management. The predominance of moderate budgets and heavier allocations to food and beverages, compared to venue or attire, suggests that Naga weddings in Dimapur diverge from the conspicuous consumption model described by Bloch et al. (2004) in rural India, where ceremony size signals caste and landholding.

However, the inferential results qualify this picture. Personal preferences, $r = .36$, and family social status, $r = .34$ emerged as the strongest correlates of budget size, alongside family economic status, tribal traditions and customs, social media and celebrity wedding trends and current wedding trends in

Dimapur. Although these relationships were statistically significant, effect sizes were small to moderate, with each factor explaining only 2 per cent to 13 percent of the variance in budgets. Societal expectations was the only factor that was not significantly associated with the budget size, $r = .09$, $p = .104$. This finding aligns more closely with Anukriti et al. (2022), who noted that status signalling intensifies under inequality. Dimapur's relatively small variance explained, 2 to 13 percent per factor, implies limited competitive spending. The greater salience of family status over societal expectations suggests signalling operates within kin networks rather than the wider public.

The "Big Fat Naga Weddings" were reported by only a small proportion of the respondents (15.3 per cent with budgets above INR 9 lakhs). Collectively, social factors explained very little variance in the wedding budget of the urban Nagas of Dimapur. Future research should include household income as a control variable to assess the relative influence of social and economic factors on wedding budgets. Even though large budgets are not yet normative, religious leaders in Nagaland have expressed concern about the social pressure created by such weddings and are advocating for mass weddings. While weddings are significant cultural events, the data suggest caution against expenditure beyond financial capacity. Incurring debts or exhausting savings to fund weddings for societal impressions is not supported by the data, particularly given that the strongest statistical correlates of budget size were personal and familial factors rather than societal pressure.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND WAY FORWARD

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, while correlations between six of the seven social factors and wedding budget size were statistically significant, effect sizes were small to moderate. The strongest correlate, personal preferences, explained only 13 per cent of the variance in budget size, $r = .36$. This suggests that unmeasured variables likely account for the majority of variation in urban Naga wedding budget. Notably, this study did not examine economic

factors such as household income, inflation, or local market prices. Consequently, it is not possible to determine the relative influence of social versus economic determinants on wedding budgets. Second, the study relied on cross-sectional, self-reported data from respondents in Dimapur. Given the cross-sectional design, causal inferences cannot be drawn from correlation results, and social desirability bias may have influenced responses regarding sensitive topics such as budget size and social status. The findings are also limited to urban Nagas and may not generalize to rural Naga population. Third, the measurement of social factors was restricted to seven pre-selected variables. Other potentially relevant social influences, such as peer pressure within specific tribal groups and influence of the church were not included.

Future research should adopt mixed-methods designs to triangulate quantitative findings with qualitative insights into wedding decision making. Inclusion of objective economic data, such as actual income records and local inflation indices, would clarify if wedding budget sizes are more strongly associated with economic pressures or social influences.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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