

Role of Dowry in Causing Despair in Unmarried Girls

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Abstract

The present study was conducted with objective to determine the causes of despair in unmarried girls. A sample size 159 respondents out of 264 was selected through random sampling procedure from three Mohallahs of Union Council Jahngirha. The conceptual framework of the study comprised of Dowry as independent variable and causes of despair in unmarried girls as dependent variable. *Chi-square* test was used to find out association among study variables. The study found that a significant relationship was found between despair and girl who brought dowry to her in laws will demand dowry from her daughter in laws ($p=0.003$), hopelessness of poor and middle class parents due to dowry is awfully on rise ($p=0.003$), dowry function as an insurance against divorce ($p=0.000$), women are considered as a capital transfer ($p=0.000$) and dowry as a pre-mortem inheritance ($p=0.002$). Awareness rising among masses through use of mass media, local political and religious leadership regarding religious and legal rights and status of women so that view of marriage and dowry as a capital transfer is publically negated, devising policies that can make it easy for poor and middle class females to access judiciary, minimize domestic violence through implementation of law, enhancing female learning and strengthening moral base of marriage and family to measure morality instead of economic benefits in mate selection were recommendations in light of study findings.

Keywords: Despair; Dowry; Income; Tradition; Marriage

Introduction

Despair is a condition like happiness, love or hate but has some kind of practical element. Defining despair is not an easy task, a person can better know what despair is when he or she felt it. It can occur in mental, physical and spiritual forms which sometimes hold the good aspects of the life. It takes hopes, comfort and pleasures of life. It refers to a state of hopelessness and mood of depression. Depression effects one's behavior, attitude and sense of wellbeing [1]. Despaired person has loss of interest in common detections, thoughts of hopelessness, feelings of worthlessness, annoyance, memory loss, and uncontrollable disturbances or ideas of suicide [2]. The role of women and the norms attached to those roles also unstable and unsupportive relationship of women and man, made women more prone to despair [3].

Dowry plays an important role in promotion of despair among unmarried girls as we hear and see the worst result of this evil. Dowry has been found as the main reason in delayed marriages and remaining unmarried. Dowry means the money, goods or estate that a woman brings to her husband in marriage that may be in form of payment or exchange of goods. Wife's natal family is mainly responsible for such payments. This customary practice is wide spread and has deep cultural roots [4,5]. In ability to provide such an amount of dowry to satisfy parents in law can instigate violence against daughter in law. The extreme form simple ill treatment at home to death and burning in extreme cases [6]. The daughter in law supposed to bear all these treatment to remain in the family of husband that increases their vulnerability especially in economically dependent women. Such operations create great psychological strain as do physical and mental abuse for the young girls and reduced the chances of mirages of girls from lower class.

Many cases of bride burning have been reported in Pakistan. Where wife is typically doused with kerosene, gasoline, or other flammable liquid, and set alight, leading to death by fire [7]. These cases mostly are engineered to be claimed as an accident or suicide. This is the reason that most cases of bride burning either are prosecuted or convicted [8].

Dowry tradition is the unwanted and important custom at the same time in our society, though it is not allowed by national and religious

laws but is practiced in the country. In some regions, daughters have nothing in the property of parents, so parents give their daughters compensation in the form of dowry.

Kannan and Wilson found that sometimes girls who are poor do not marry just because of dowry as their parents fail to arrange it. Malik and Khan [9] also stated that girls stay unmarried due to poverty and low income parents who cannot arrange dowry. They quoted Ismail who reported that dowry tradition has made a very panic situation for the lower and middle class members of the society which is the factor of hopelessness and despair.

Bophal [10] found that religious traditions are replaced by education which effected women's response to arrange marriages and dowry. Those with higher education are always marketable and they do not follow such traditions. Women who have less resources and power are given dowries. He assumed that a girl who bring dowry will demand much higher dowry in future from her son in laws. Furthermore, dowry tradition is the indication of patriarchy. In Pakistan laws do limit dowry payment but do not make it a prohibited action like India and Bangladesh.

Amnesty International [11] reported that south Asian women are treated as second class citizens; they are seen as inferior to men. Bettencourt [12] reason behind violence against women is dowry, those who were not capable of bringing dowry is doused with acid, or other flammable matter. BBC [13] reported 300 brides who were burnt in Pakistan due to dowry.

Mohanty et al. [14] called dowry only for the purpose to appease

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son in law and his family both by transferring gifts before and after marriage and when they aren't appeased they practice severe mental and physical violence or even kill young brides.

This is evidence that these transformations are in practice especially in urban areas where the change in dowry phenomenon could be a disadvantage of women, but the findings of Anderson support the campaigns of women against dowry in Pakistan. Results are less conclusive in rural areas, however the groom price model according to him seems to be rejected but rural dowries are still seen as pre mortem inheritance.

Banerjee et al. [15] noted that the factors like education, caste, occupation and also and besides that, he mentioned physical characteristics which play in important role in dowry practice.

Gulzar et al. [16] reported the effects of dowry demand on poor that dowry is demanded for their daughters and they do not have the capacity, it makes them start begging and they lose their self-esteem, their women are mentally affected and sometimes they start to earn money by illegal ways.

Furthermore, New York Times [17] also reported that women of poor background in subcontinent have a serious problem of dowry which made them stay unmarried because of their lack of capacity to arrange gifts and money for the groom's families. Findings of Parveen [18] also reveal that thousands of young girls are burnt and killed by husband and in-laws just because of dowry disputes.

Methodology

Universe of the study

The study area was comprised Jahngriha union council, city Havelian, District Abbottabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study area more specifically consisted of three Mohallahs, Zamin Shah, Qassab, and Syalli. Unmarried females representing marriage age bracket were the potential respondents for this research study.

Sampling procedure and sample size

A pilot study was conducted by researcher to determine the number of unmarried girls in the study area, according to which a total of 264 girls were on range of passing marriage age. A sample of 159 respondents sufficed for the population of 264 [19]. The random sample technique was used for data collection. The sample was proportionally allocated to each Mohallah by using proportional allocation formula [20]. Distribution of respondents is given in Table 1.

$$n_i = n/N_i \times N_i$$

n=Total sample size required for researcher.

N=Total unmarried girls in study area.

N_i=unmarried girls in each Mohallah.

n_i=Selected respondent size from each Mohallah.

Characteristics of the respondents: To fulfill the requirements of the study those respondents were investigated who had following characteristics.

1. They were in age group of 22 to 45.
2. They were unmarried.
3. Mentally sound to respond to questions.

Tools for data collection: Interview schedule was used as a tool for data collection with face to face interview method as a procedure. The interview schedule was pretested in the field and corrected for the shortfalls.

Analysis of data: SPSS software was used for the analysis of data. The uni-variate and bi variate approaches were applied.

Uni-variate analysis: Univariate analysis was used for percentage proportion of background, independent and dependent variables along with frequency distribution of respondents. Following equation was used for data class's percentage.

$$\text{Data class's percentage} = f/N \times 100$$

Where,

f=Data class's frequency

N=total observations.

Bi-variate analysis: Bi-variate analysis was applied to estimate the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Chi square test was used to test the strength and direction of association of variables at bi-variate level.

Chi-Square test

The *Chi-square* test was used to test the relationship between the two variables. Following statistical technique was adopted to find the value of *chi-square* test (chudhry and kamal 1977).

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{(O_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{e_{ij}} \quad (1)$$

Where,

χ^2 =Chi Square

O_{ij}=Observed frequencies in ith row and jth column

e_{ij}=Expected frequencies regarding ith row and jth column

r=Number of rows

c=Number of columns

Df=(r-1) (c-1)

There are some conditions for *Chi-Square* test which are given below,

1. The subjects for each group are randomly and independently selected.
2. Each observation must qualify for one and only one category.
3. Sample size must fairly be large such that no expected frequency is less than 5, for r and c > 2 or < 10 if r=c=2.

When third assumption was violated in data then the Fisher Exact Test was used instead of simple *Chi-Square* Test. The mathematical form of the Fisher Exact Test as,

S/No	Mohallah Name	Total number of unmarried girls	Sample size
1	Zamin Shah	114	68
2	Qassab	63	38
3	Syalli	87	53
Total		264	159

Table 1: The number of unmarried girls and sample distribution in various Mohallah's in the Study Area.

$$\text{Fisher Exact Test} = \frac{(a+b)!(c+d)!(a+c)!(b+d)!}{N!a!b!c!d!} \quad (2)$$

Where a, b, c, and d were the observed numbers in four cells of contingency table and “n” the total number of observations.

Results and Discussion

Despair in unmarried girls

Despair is a state of depressed mood and hopelessness. Depression is a state of low mood and aversion to activity that can affect a person's thoughts, behavior, feelings and sense of well-being. What is the state of despair and what are the main causes derived by the study are given in Table 2.

A high proportion of 81.8% of the respondents felt alienated because of being subordinate to men, 16.4% of them did not agree with the statement and 1.9% were uncertain. Moreover, 80.5% of the respondents saw their self-worthy of love care and support while 15.1% did not keep themselves in sentiments and 4.4% were uncertain. Similarly, 54.1% of the respondents believed that they were left alone by the family in their issues while 45.3% of them disagreed with the statement and 0.6% of the respondents remain uncertain. Bettencourt [12] pointed out the issue of subordination of female in South Asian societies that women are seen as second-class citizens; they are not respected and are regarded as being inferior to men who caused despair and alienation in them.

Majority (73.6%) of the respondents thought that they were powerless as they were not allowed to plan and get their desired goals of life, while 25.8% of them did not thought so and 0.6% of them were uncertain. Moreover, 53.5% of the respondents said that they were incapable of solving their issues as they had no support from family, while 44% of the respondents disagreed and 2.5% of the respondents were uncertain. In addition, 79.2% of the respondents thought that they were limited in the choice of mate selection, 15.7% of them disagreed with the statement and 5% of them were uncertain. Bhopal [10] found that South Asian women are treated as just women, they are seen as able to affect the izzat, and hence, their behavior is closely monitored. In order to be marriageable, they must behave in accordance with cultural rules without their personal choices and decisions. Almost half (50.3%) of the respondents believed that they would be in different state if they were living in city while 42.8% of the respondents disagreed and 6.9% of the respondents were uncertain. Moreover, 83.6% of the respondents were in the state where they become self-critical when they look forward towards their future and 16.4% of the respondents were not in this type of mental condition (Table 2).

Association between despair in unmarried girls and dowry

There is a complex relation between dowry and despair, to asses

this relationship the perception of dowry was limited to few statements carefully developed for the purpose. As given in Table 3.

A non-significant relation ($p=0.352$) was found between dowry as a barrier and despair in unmarried girls. However, a significant relationship ($p=0.003$) was found between despair and the demand of dowry. Demand for dowry from their daughter in law is a cause of depressive mood in unmarried female and despair in future. Results presented by Bhopal [10] are in line with these findings who reported high despair in unmarried girls due to demand for dowry from in laws. Similarly a significant relationship ($p=0.003$) was found between despair and the hopelessness of poor and middle class parents due to dowry. This is because they cannot afford to arrange such amount for dowry so they are hopeless and their daughter is in despair because she by herself cannot do anything and she has to stay single till a miracle happen. Again a highly significant ($p=0.000$) association was found between dowry function as an insurance against divorce and despair in unmarried girls. Reason behind their despair probably is their thinking that if their parents were able to arrange a huge amount of dowry for them, then their marital relation would be pleasant. Malik and Khan [9] findings are in line with these results that dowry trend has made the poor and middle class citizen hopeless and despaired. People see dowry is an ensuring against divorce, for the reason, sometimes poor girls do not get married simply because their parents fail to fulfill the requirements of dowry.

Conversely, a non-significant ($p=0.547$) relation was found between change in women response to dowry due to education and despair. Furthermore a non-significant ($p=0.678$) relation was found between dowry's role in the happiness of marital relations and despair. Conversely, a highly significant ($p=0.000$) relation was found between women are considered as a capital transfer and despair. Reason of this association might be that women see themselves as a capital transfer so they are in despair. Similarly a significant relation ($p=0.002$) was found between dowry as a pre-mortem inheritance and despair. This was also confirmed by Anderson [21] that in Pakistan, dowry is in practice because people think of it as a pre-mortem inheritance. This is like giving a gesture to women that you are now out of your family of procreation especially with respect to your property and economic rights; she has to manage with her in laws resources and struggle for her existence [22,23]. Lastly a non-significant relationship ($p=0.927$) again was found between despair and dowry tradition should be banned in Pakistan. Likewise education's roles in change in women response to dowry, here also the girls express an attitude that dowry is not the issue but the class and strength is. As Amesty International stated in a report of [11] that dowry is in practice in Pakistan because the response of the public is not changing for dowry (Table 3).

Conclusions

It is concluded that dowry as a tradition has deep roots in local

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
You feel alienated because of being subordinated to men.	130 (81.8%)	26 (16.4%)	3(1.9%)
You see yourselves worthy of love, care, or support.	128 (80.5%)	24 (15.1%)	7 (4.4%)
You have been left alone in your issues by family.	86 (54.1%)	72 (45.3%)	1 (0.6%)
You are powerless as you are not allowed to plan and get your desired goals of life.	117 (73.6%)	41 (25.8%)	1 (0.6%)
You are incapable of solving your issues as you have no support from family.	85 (53.5%)	70 (44.0%)	4 (2.5%)
You are limited in your choice of mate selection.	126 (79.2%)	25 (15.7%)	8 (5.0%)
You would be in a different state if u were living in a city.	80 (50.3%)	68 (42.8%)	11 (6.9%)
You become self-critical when you look forward to your future.	133 (83.6%)	26 (16.4%)	00

*value in the table present frequency while values in the parenthesis represent percentages proportion of the respondents.

Table 2: Perception of the respondents towards despair (dependent variable).

Statements	Attitude	Despair in unmarried girls		Total	Chi square (χ^2) P value
		Yes	No		
Dowry is a barrier in the way of marriage for girls.	Agree	101 (63.5%)	17 (10.7%)	118 (74.2%)	$\chi^2=2.089$ (P=0.352)
	Disagree	27 (17%)	7 (4.4%)	34 (21.4%)	
	Uncertain	7 (4.4%)	0 (0%)	7 (4.4%)	
A girl who brought dowry to her in laws will demand dowry in future too from her son's in laws.	Agree	114 (71.7%)	14 (8.8)	128 (80.5%)	$\chi^2=8.852$ (P=0.003)
	Disagree	21 (13.2%)	10 (6.3%)	31 (19.5%)	
	Uncertain	0	0	0	
The helplessness of poor and middle class parents is awfully on the rise due to dowry payments.	Agree	74 (46.5%)	21 (13.2%)	95 (59.7%)	$\chi^2=9.052$ (P=0.003)
	Disagree	61 (38.4%)	3 (1.9%)	64 (40.3%)	
	Uncertain	0	0	0	
Dowry function is an insurance against divorce	Agree	92 (57.9%)	5 (3.1%)	97 (61%)	$\chi^2=19.203$ (P=0.000)
	Disagree	38 (23.9%)	17 (10.7%)	55 (34.6%)	
	Uncertain	5 (3.1%)	2 (1.3%)	7 (4.4%)	
Education affects the women's response on dowry.	Agree	72 (45.3%)	15 (9.4%)	87 (54.7%)	$\chi^2=1.207$ (P=0.547)
	Disagree	60 (37.7%)	8 (5%)	68 (42.8%)	
	Uncertain	3 (1.9%)	1 (0.6%)	4 (2.5%)	
Dowry and the happiness of marital status are interrelated.	Agree	55 (64.6%)	10 (6.3%)	65 (40.9%)	$\chi^2=0.778$ (P=0.678)
	Disagree	67 (42.1%)	13 (8.2%)	80 (50.3%)	
	Uncertain	13 (8.2%)	1 (0.6%)	14 (8.8)	
Women are considering as a capital transfer.	Agree	95 (59.7%)	6 (3.8%)	101 (63.5%)	$\chi^2=18.971$ (P=0.000)
	Disagree	36 (22.6%)	15 (9.4%)	51 (32.1%)	
	Uncertain	4 (2.5%)	3 (1.9%)	7 (4.4%)	
Dowry serve as a pre-mortem inheritance	Agree	85 (53.5%)	21 (13.2%)	106 (66.7%)	$\chi^2=12.974$ (P=0.002)
	Disagree	45 (28.3%)	0	45 (28.3%)	
	Uncertain	5 (3.1%)	3 (1.9%)	8 (5%)	
Dowry tradition should be banned in Pakistan.	Agree	97 (61%)	18 (11.3%)	115 (72.3%)	$\chi^2=0.151$ (P=0.927)
	Disagree	33 (20.8%)	5 (3.1%)	38 (23.9%)	
	Uncertain	5 (3.1%)	1 (0.6%)	6 (3.8%)	

*Number in table represent frequencies and number in parenthesis represent percentage proportion of respondents and in the last columns number in the parenthesis represent P-Value.

Table 3: Association between despair in unmarried girls and dowry.

culture with historical evidences. It is transmitted from generation to generation and harvested as a fruit for sacrifice paid by in laws in form of dowry paid to keep the tradition alive. The changing economic circumstances however reduce the capacity of poor and middle class to provide lavish dowry to catch the eye of society. The rise in trend of paying dowry seems to have gotten a shape of pre-mortem inheritance to safeguard against failure of marital life. The trend therefore, poses a picture of marriage like a trade for getting goods along with wife. Those who fail to pay dowry in this trade transaction of marriage fail to have suitable spouse and subjected to despair.

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