

**GAUGING THE IMPACT OF MODERNIZATION ON MARRIAGE INSTITUTION IN
SWAT, PAKISTAN: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

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Abstract

Like other societies of the world, Pakistan is also fronting influences of modernization in different walks of life. In most parts of the world, marriage is the central aspect of social structure. This article critically analyses the link between the impacts of modernization on marriage institution in Pakhtun society. The data was obtained from the sampled participants (n=35 In-Depth Interviews & n=07 Focus Group Discussions) of seven tehsils of district Swat. The unit of the study has been divided into different strata like lawyers, literary persons, intellectuals, politicians, and community leaders respectively. Further, different themes & sub-themes were identified followed by the codification of the data and successively analyzed and presented in the form of thematic analysis. The study results revealed that modernization due to its associated facets like education, media (especially social media), technological advancement, urbanization, etc. impacted different aspects of marriage institution e.g. exogamous/endogamous marriages, marriage patterns, marriage types, the practice of Swara marriage, the practice of dowry, Dower, matrimonial endorsement, the wedding halls culture, and the concept of divorce.

Keywords: *Impacts of Modernization, Marriage Institution, Thematic Analysis, Pakhtun Society.*

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a socio-religious obligation, and moral protection for a spouse (Akhter and Munir, 2018). The concept of modernization is the continuity of modernity whereas modernity can be understood as the aftermath of the modernity moving from agrarian or feudal toward capitalism, industrialization followed by secularization, and ultimately rationalization (Barker, 2005).

The substantiation of enormous cultural change and the perseverance of distinguishing cultural traditions are associated with the notion of modernization. The change is linked with modifications, away from complete customs and traditions that are increasingly tolerant, rational, participatory, and trusting modernization (Ronald, 2000). Talking of modernization is the social change resulted from organizations and institutions like those found in different nations (Arnold and Hurn, 1966). Probing the past two centuries, a rising shift in the family values endorsing features like nuclear families, romantic love, self-choice marriage, equal spousal relationships, lower fertility, and late marriage (see, e.g., Inglehart, 1997; Gubernskaya, 2010; Lesthaeghe and Meekers, 1987).

In present-day modern societies, choices to stay married depend further on the contentment with the eminence of the combination and that resemblance of financial activities and interests may advance the understanding between partners (Schoen et al., 2002; Jalovaara, 2002; Sigle-Rushton, 2010). Besides, higher living standards and minor marital stress are strongly associated with supplementary income from the woman's side (Raz-Yurovich, 2012; Cherlin, 2000; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007). Moreover, arranged marriages wherein parents' consent is considered as obligatory for their children's marriage are commonly practiced in the Indo-Pak cultures (Mullatti, 1995). On the other hand, love marriages where males and females opt for marriages due to their mutual likeness are not welcoming in Pakistani society. In most cases, it creates an unwanted situation as well as justifies parental aggravation. Before the wedding; falling in love is mostly disowned in Pakistani society (Grover, 2009).

In today's world, urbanization has been increased due to modernization (Chaudhry, 2004). Massive changes occurred in the family system due to the advent of modernization and urbanization. This scenario put youngsters deviating from the joint family system. In contemporary societies, traditional families attributed with strict gender-based sex roles are moving to modern dual-career families based on equal sex roles, liberal, and to adults cohabiting without marriage (Mishra, Ansari, and Mishra, 2012). Nowadays, modernization if one of the effective but uncertain power in the context of human affairs which has severe implications on the social structure and environment of the societies. It is modernization that penetrated adverse changes in the century's old norms, values, and traditions of rural areas (Ibrahim et al., 2011). Socio-cultural values are usually regarded as the fundamental

meanings of life the people who are involved in various kinds of social activity or directed in their routine lives (Ustubici & Irdam, 2012; Štimac & Šimić, 2012; Abrahám et al., 2015; Strielkowski & Weyskrabova, 2014).

The tendency for opting love marriage is higher in urban areas as compared to rural areas. Falling in love with each other and subsequent mutual understanding based on satisfaction from both sides usually desires for connecting oneself in marriage. However, when they face parental and societal disagreement then they deviate from normative structure and opt for love marriage without involving their parents and relatives in their marriage ceremony (Akhter and Munir, 2018).

The notion of registered or courtship marriages has no model in Islam but astonishingly in Pakistani society, this trend is practicing and increasing day by day. Globally it is practiced as per the legal procedures and marriage regulations of that region or country. A study depicted that people choose for choosing court marriage has been noticed as a growing trend in Pakistan (Paratham, 2011). Opting for courtship marriage is the last option for those couples who consider parental resistance for discouraging the fulfillment of their dreams. The practice of non-traditional weddings may be due to the encouraging role of media; love; awareness regarding the uses of their rights; having high expectations from each other after falling in love; and the feeling of dispossession & failure in one's life (Akhter and Munir, 2018). Kashyap (2004) argued that in India, still parents prefer arranged marriages for their sons and daughters and considered it as an important obligation due to socio-religious reflections. The case is somehow different for youth as they want to have marriages of their own choices even in arrange marriages subject to the inclusion of their consent and views in it. But this doesn't mean that a young man or woman can ignore the family approval which is still considered as deemed necessary for fulfilling the actual essence of marriage. The urban educated youth sidelined the concept of marriage as a social obligation, and for the perpetuation of the lineage with the notion of love, companionship, and individual happiness. Akyıl (2012) pointed out that in India, the modern and educated youth is socialized and is interlinked with both traditional practices & values of India and technologically advances around the world wherein they maintaining practices of arranged marriages and care of elderly in the family.

Although, societies are confronting modernization whereas even in modern society some traditional practices still exist the families which have a potential impact on domestic matters of the family. There are numerous examples of the existence of traditional practices concerning marriage like financial exchange (*Jahez*) is practiced commonly (Lal, 2017).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study titled "Gauging the Impact of Modernization on Marriage Institution in Swat, Pakistan: A Qualitative Approach" was framed under the qualitative strategy while using thematic analysis. The research was carried out in one of the northern districts (Swat) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa having an agrarian mode of life in majority areas. The sampled participants (n=35 In-Depth Interviews & n=07 Focus Group Discussion) were chosen from seven tehsils of district Swat (a district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan). In-depth interviews are widely used in sociology (Patton, 2003; and Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011) for obtaining better-detailed results (Briggs, 2003). Whereas, the use of focus group discussions is also important in this regard (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The data was obtained through an interview guide keeping in view the simple random sampling technique. The potential participants were selected from different segments of *Pakhtun* society in Swat i.e. lawyers, literary persons, intellectuals, politicians, and community leaders respectively. Further, different themes and sub-themes were identified followed by the codification of the collected data. The results of qualitative data were analyzed and presented in the form of thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The collected data revealed different dimensions of modernization which impacted our social structure. These results are primarily related to the modernizing impacts on marriage institution in Pakhtun society. Further, due to modernization, changes in different aspects of marriage institution are illustrated in the following lines.

1. EXOGAMOUS / ENDOGAMOUS MARRIAGES

Modernization has significant impacts on family institutions whereas marriage patterns witnessed multifarious changes in one way or another. Further, it was observed that a shift occurred in the minds of people to a significant proportion as they are inclined towards exogamous marriages along with endogamous marriages. Besides, due to the increasing ratio of literacy people are now becoming aware of the social dynamics. Media is also one of the contributing factors in altering the perception of common masses towards their routine customary practices. The study participants further opined that means of communication and growth of cities provide ample opportunities to the people for changing their mental horizon regarding social life. Due to modernization, youngsters participate in matters like mate selection however this tendency is lesser in rural areas as compared to the urban areas. In the past, expenses on the marriage were lesser. In contrary to the present-day practices of dowry where the bride's family is responsible for arranging dowry; this was the responsibility of the groom's side.

"In comparison to the present-day society, exogamous marriages were considered bad in Pakhtun society, and in a majority of the cases, marriages were endogamous. At present, due to media, education, and means of communication people, life patterns shift from simple to the complex one wherein the contact and easy access to places and frequent travelling paved ways to exogamous marriages. Also, although to date, people tend to endogamous marriages but due to shifting in the mindset of people, they are also not reluctant to go for exogamous marriages" (Ahmad Khan, study participant).

Due to education, media, and easy means of communication and transportation; people are now better aware of the biological issues that occurred in those cases where endogamous marriages were experienced. Now, most people keep this point into consideration, and before the marriage finalization, they go for the required medical tests to avoid any biological complications in the upcoming prospective marital life.

2. MARRIAGE PATTERNS (MONOGAMY/POLYGAMY)

Around the world, while studying culture it has been found that one spouse is not the only form of marriage. Having married to more than one person at a time is also acceptable (Murdock, 1967); this form of marriage exists in East Asia and South Africa (Altman and Ginat, 1996).

"Due to modernization; the marriage institution is on the brink of continuous change where changes are multifaceted like previously polygyny (a type of polygamy) was the dominant trait of Pukhtun's life. During the occasion of marriage, people were more concerned with the character of individuals, family background (Hasab Nasab), etc. Now, apart from the aforementioned, they also concerned with the education, income/business, property, car, etc. especially in case of the groom" (Bahre Karam).

"In past, the practice of marrying many wives by a man was highly encouraged for so many reasons like to get heir for the family property, lack of male child or even no children (in Pashto the person who is unable to produce children is known as Meeraat), in Shariat (Islamic injunctions) it is legal for a man to marry four wives, etc. However, in today's fast-moving era where people are gripped by the economic hardships, it is difficult for a person to sustain a single wife rather than marry more than one" (Kifayat Ullah, participant of this study).

3. MARRIAGE TYPES (ARRANGE, LOVE, ARRANGE CUM LOVE MARRIAGE)

The practice of marriage was arranged in nature where family members from both sides of the bride and groom after mutual consent and satisfaction agreed upon

connecting two families into one bond through an arranged marriage. They further advanced the argument in favour of arranged marriage that it is advantageous from different aspects like such types of marriages are long-lasting and family members are held responsible in case of any misshape or ups and downs in the marital life of husband and wife. In such type of marriage, they keep family background (*Hasab Nasab*) and character of the individuals as the topmost priority.

“Both types of marriages existed in Pakhtun society and this can be traced back from the evident examples of Adam Khan and Durkhanai, Yousaf Khan and Sher Bano, Sherin Farhad, etc. The concept of love is deeply rooted in Pakhtuns society which can be reflected in Olasi Tapay, Charbaitay, Sandaray (songs), etc. and Tapa is attributed to women that women are the proponents of Tapa in Pashto literature. The nature of the interaction of women at Gudar was very interesting where different aspects of life came under discussion (Abdu-r-Rahim).

Some of the participants argued that due to modernization where the impact of education, media, and urbanization cannot be denied; the youth is inclined toward love marriage whereas they seek the partner of their own choice. On other hand, some participants pinpointed that although modernization impact is overwhelming, however, the marriages are not purely arranged or love the rather blended form of arranged cum love marriage wherein parents seeks the consent of the newly married couple or those who love each other informed parents for their approval for the marriage. Alexander (2017) pointed out that it was generally accepted in the extended family system to select a wife for his son. Similarly, with the advent of modernization, these sons are now allowed to select a wife for them keeping in view their own choices.

4. SWARA MARRIAGE

Upon inquiring regarding the practice of Swara marriage in the study locale, the majority of the participants thought that *Swara* marriage is no more a dominant feature in Swat Pakhtun's culture. This may only be remained intact in the remote and hilly areas of Swat as it has been declared as a crime in a decision made by the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

“The concept of Swara has almost vanished nowadays. The Government of Pakistan took initiatives against Swara and now it is declared a crime. People discourage Swara considers it evil. However, my point of view is different in this regard; Swara was one of the values of Pakhtun culture. It was much appropriate at that time because rivalries remained intact for a long time which would then resulted in the continuous bloodshed. In this situation, elders from the community (not the rival parties) were supposed to ensure patch-up between the two antagonistic families in the form of arranging Swara marriage. This was not considered as Badal (revenge) from the

opposite party rather this was a goodwill gesture toward the victim's family. The female in Swara was treated with dignity and honour in the victim's family and even they didn't let her for domestic chores. In the past, this was the customary practice that female relatives from near and far-flung areas shall visit the victim's family to see the bride. The Swara bride was treated distinctively pointed out by Shalmani that 'Swara matlab da wa che da ba ye pa Aus banday ratla piada ba na ratla [Swara means that the bride was travelled on a horse not by her feet due to the honour given by the other (victim) family]' (Kreem Shalmani).

"Swara was less practised in the past and even today. Swara was practiced in good faith for regulating the life affairs in the tribal belt. There is a propagation that in Swara female has been kept deprived of her say but same is the case in rest of the marriages wherein majority cases parents decide the marriage by their own. The practice of Swara can be found only in poor and Gujjar families of mountainous areas. This is the propaganda of the NGO and different other interest groups which portray a negative picture of Swara" (Dr. Sultan-i-Room).

5. THE PRACTICE OF DOWRY

Rahim Dad Khan shared his views with the researcher about the dowry as below:

"Previously, marriage practices were simple. Nowadays, dowry (Jahez) has become a status symbol. In the past, dowry was in the shape of giving simple daily routine utensils. However, this is not the case today where people are competing with each other for showoff and nothing else. And this in return brought a negative financial impact on the common masses".

"The ratio of dowry was much lesser or even not existed in the past. On the other hand due to modernization and Siali (competition) numerous changes in one's life pattern. In past time dowry if existed so that was offered from the groom side, not from the bride one. However, today, the scenario is changed and the burden is on the shoulders of the bride's family. Sometimes if a person is giving dowry on a large scale so it is assumed that that bride has been adjusted in other families based on that huge dowry which minimizes the worth and dignity of the bride in the groom's house. Dowry is not mandatory for a sustainable relationship rather on mutual understanding" (Saleem Khan).

The majority of the participants of the study believed that divorce was considered as an evil and was less practiced while due to modernization where people are under the trap of media, and urbanization which resulting in the increasing ration of divorce in contemporary time.

6. HAQ-E-MAHR (DOWER)

As per the Islamic injunctions; *Haq-e-Maher* means gift or dower which is obligatory on the groom to be given to the bride. Kashyap (2004) highlighted that in most of the families in India, the practices of financial exchange during the marriage is also exist.

"Haq-e-Mahar is one of the obligations in the marriage as directed to all Muslims by the religion Islam. The practice of Haq-e-Mahar was prevailing in Pakhtuns in the past as well as in present-day life. However, nature has somehow changed. The ratio of giving / allocating Haq-e-Mahar was meagre while nowadays people prefer to allocate more Haq-e-Mahar for the security of the bride in case of any untoward situation in marital life" (Kishwar Zada, participant of this study).

7. CULTURE OF WEDDING HALLS

In Pakhtun society, people organize their marriage ceremonies in their houses and *Hujras* (a common guest house located near to the house). With time, due to multiple factors including modernization people (especially in urban areas) are now switching their marriage ceremonies to wedding halls.

"Sarzamin Khan (study participant) expressed his views on the mushroom growth of wedding halls in Swat.

"Pukhtuns usually celebrate their marriage ceremonies in Hujra or in one's own houses or that of relatives. On another hand, urbanization is one of the dominating features of the emergence of wedding halls. Contrary to this trend, people were used to celebrating marriages in their Hujra and houses but due to overpopulation and congested houses and lack of Hujra people prefer to go to wedding halls for the said purpose. Although wedding halls are more costly due to the showoff and easy service availability in the wedding halls the inclined to practice it".

The impact of modernization through technological advancements and the influence of media creating avenues for promoting the practice of celebrating marital ceremonies in wedding halls in the study area.

8. GUL WRAL / KAIKHAWDAL (MATRIMONIAL ENDORSEMENT)

Another participant of this study Ghulam Akbar expressed his views about financial exchange during the marriage (*Gul*) in the following lines:

"Initially family of the groom was supposed to visit the bride family and after the complete inquiry and satisfaction from both sides when they reach to the agreement, then the groom family goes to the bride family for Gul Kaikhawdal (presenting an amount to the bride family for the fulfillment of expenditures of the upcoming guests). The amount of Gul was dependent on the economic status of the groom's family. The practice of presenting Gul is still intact but usually, the bride's family discourages accepting Gul. This was and still is one of the practices/rituals of marriage where some amount of money is presented from groom side to the bride family for making necessary arrangements of the upcoming ceremony of finalization of the marriage".

9. MODERNIZATION AND DIVORCE

Marriage is a social contract between two individuals of opposite sexes. However, if they feel uncomfortable with each other there is a way to dissolve their marriage contract through a divorce. The divorce is a separation between the two married persons whereas this separation is covered by the law, religion and customary practices as well. Although, it is considered an inappropriate act both at cultural and religious levels.

"This is a well-established fact in our Pakhtun society as stated herein Pashto: "Jenai da Kor da Ya da Gor Da." It means that a female is only for her husband's house or the grave. The concept of divorce was considered as a stigma in Pakhtun society and the person who becomes divorced was known as Talaqee (divorced) and his survival in the society would become much difficult. However, due to education, media, and urbanization, this interpretation of divorce has been changed to a greater extent and it's not that much stigmatized as compared to the past. Although people still considered divorce as a bad one however due to different marital issues and the impact of modernization the ratio of divorce is getting higher day by day which was negligible in the past"(Mahaabt Khan).

"Divorce becomes an evil of our society due to modernization. There are more than 60% of cases of dissolution of marriage in the courts which is an alarming ratio. Further, economic imbalances are also contributing factors in this regard, and women are also not feeling incompatible in marital relation that's the reason to opt for quitting from the marriage circle"(Shams Ur Rahman).

It has become evident that the ratio of divorce is alarmingly increasing due to the aforementioned reasons which are needed to be taken into consideration.

CONCLUSION

The inclusive assessment of the aforesaid aftermaths revealed that the impact of modernization has been beheld at copious dimensions of the marriage

institution in *Pakhtun* society. The study participants exposed that due to the advent of modernization through different means especially education, media, urbanization, etc. people both at rural and urban areas are now switching to opt new patterns of life while forswearing the traditional facets of their culture. It has been noticed that people are now giving more penchant to love marriage and arrange cum love marriage rather than being acquiescent to parental decisions. Further, the study participants exposed that the trend of endogamous marriages is now substituting with exogamous marriages. Moreover, the traditional practice of *Swara* marriage is also on a continuous decline. Besides, modernization also put a burden on the shoulders of the financially flimsy families in affording the *Haq-e-Mahr* (Dower), *Gul Wral / Kaikhawdal* (matrimonial endorsement), etc. This burden has been coupled in the shape of arranging more budgets for wedding halls. Apart from the above, modernization also boosts up the ratio of divorce in *Pakhtun* society which is alarming and a matter of grave concern for every individual.

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