



FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

**The Female Student Conceptualization, Experience of the Attitude Towards
Contemporary Muslim Matrimonial Practices in Urban Pakistan.**

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Abstract

The study aims to explore young women's attitudes towards matrimonial practice in Pakistan and what factors affect choosing the right partner. Several articles were explored that were relevant to the topic. The articles focused on two groups of women; married women and their experiences with their partners such as their emotional availability, compromises that they have had to make and their success in marriage while the other group was of unmarried women who were educated and independent. Their expectations towards marriage were gauged such as sharing of household chores, permission for jobs culture of joint family, etc. The paper examines the changes in views and practices related to marriage. The interview was done with female undergraduate students at FCCU. Then data analysis was done using Braun and Clarke (2006) under the 6-step framework becoming familiar with data, generating initial codes, and searching for themes which I did while interviewing defining the themes, and lastly writing up those analytical viewpoints of female students regarding marriage.

Introduction

Marriage is considered as an important aspect of our life. In Pakistan matrimonial practice is more important than any other job. We all used to get married for the sake of happiness and societal pressure. Where 80-90% of marriages remain intact because of children or society. Oftentimes when I bring up the topic of divorce, people tell me that they have already divorced each other in their mind, they are just living together because of societal and family pressure. There are even some places in Pakistan, especially villages where people murder each other on the account of engagement being broken off. People in Pakistan usually get married in their 20s or 30s. This means that they are supposed to spend at least half of their life with their spouse. The central problem is that most people do not know how to choose the right one or the most suitable one for them. The main reason for marriage is the attraction of the opposite sex rather than the full planning of how one's responsibilities and duties might change. Matrimonial practice results in a completely new change in one's life that requires careful planning and change. People today do not think about the type of person they want or what qualities they possess, rather they focus on what they might receive.

The women of today have entirely different ways of thinking from the previous generations. Keeping this in light, it is feasible to say that attitudes towards marriage and the role of women in society would have changed with people becoming more accustomed to women's empowerment. However, this is not the case and over time people have become more narrow-minded than before. For example, if there are two sisters and the younger one can find a good match before the older one, their parents will not marry the younger daughter because of the stigma surrounding the elder one. People will consider there to be a hidden flaw in the elder one hence she could not find a suitable partner before the younger sister.

Today's woman is drawn more to the Islamic aspect of women's rights instead of the culture adopted from India such as wanting to work outside and demanding good treatment from in-laws and even wanting to move out from in-laws' houses. All these rights are provided by Islam to women but taken away by culture. According to culture, the woman cannot eat before the man of the house however this is not a rule in Islam and thus becomes obsolete in the eyes of the modern woman. (Quaddus, 1995, family and Pakistani society).

Similarly, the woman demands the man to perform household chores as well which is a Sunnah in Islam. Since Pakistan and India were both once part of the sub-continent, a lot of ideas and norms have been adopted under the guise of culture and have then been mixed or confused with religion leading to a lot of misconceptions on the rank of a woman in Islam. Due to this, most of the women are hesitant to marry and would rather focus on their careers as holding down a job makes them less dependent upon their husbands who may treat them less than themselves because of their dependence. The women are aware that their respect is linked to their career as someone who works and earns is considered more respectable than someone who just does household work. (Javed & Ikram, 2022; Iqbal, 1968, Pakistani society, Noor Sons)

Research Objectives

Aims to provide new insights into young, educated females' views on current marital practices in Pakistan. The study has the following research objectives:

1. To examine the conceptions and attitudes of young, educated women towards prevailing matrimonial practices in Pakistan.
2. To explore young women's experiences of prevailing matrimonial practices in Pakistan.

3. To investigate the young women's preferences related to marriage and changing notions and practices of "choice" in marriage for young women in Pakistan.

Research Questions

These are the research questions of the proposed study:

1. What is the perception of undergraduate students about matrimonial practices in Pakistan?
2. What is the perceived relationship between education, financial independence, and marriage?
3. What are the choices, attitudes, and experiences of young, educated women related to marriage in Pakistan?
4. How do traditional contemporary Muslim matrimonial practices influence female students and young educated women?
5. How is marriage related to the educational choices of women in Pakistan?

Significance of study

The study will be significant because it aims to create a link between young, educated females and their concepts about matrimony in Pakistan. The study explains how a woman transformed themselves as a wife and what their expectations of this status are. Women without a man have been deprived of a large measure of social life. (Margent, p12, motherhood female identity). The goal of this research is to define women's education, attitudes, and expectations about marriage so people might understand what they want out of marriage. This study aims to show the extent of the compromises the women are willing to make in today's age. The current generation is different from the previous generation in the number of sacrifices they are willing to

make to make marriage work. There is a lot of confusion due to the overlap of the thoughts of the previous generation about the number of sacrifices they are willing to make to make marriage work. There is a lot of confusion due to the overlap of the thoughts of the current and previous generation and this study will differentiate between both and show what the current women want; whether they want to be working women or become housewives.

Literature Review

A single standard definition of marriage is difficult to formulate as noted by (Coontz 1992, 2000, 2005). Marriage is a path full of ups and downs that are socially approved, where 2 people come together and establish a family.

Marriage not only involves conceiving children, but it's also a lot more about obligations and entitlement. Many people overlook the facts of marriage because they are doing exactly what society trains them. Looking into deeper meanings of femininity and masculinity, both genders have entirely different personalities. (Spence and Helmerich 1978). Society wants men to be aggressive, and competitive, act as leaders, and make decisions whereas women are supposed to be passive, cooperative, and expressive with a gentle and soft nature towards others. (Robinson, V.D (2001). Women study)

The status of women in our society is changing over time. Many women are entering into the careers suited to them. In today's generation, females are more career oriented.

However, back in the day when women played the roles of slaves and silent spectators in the family but now, they are working as partners or friends of a male. (Iqbal, p.81, socio culture 1967).

Changing women's status introduces new concepts of family, marital adjustments, and materialistic values in society. Generally, different forms of marriage take place in society. Such as arranged, love, cousin, or forced marriage. How the path of marriage is lined with a variety of responsibilities. (The family, p 193). Looking into endogenous marriage they are arranged by family so the couple needs to adjust themselves even if the marriage conditions are not favorable in terms of groom or bride. But as they are situated in this relationship now, they must do this halfway house. Where in the context of love marriage, the bride and groom have a chance to

change or modify their decisions. Both have more time to understand each other. (Peters 1971). There is no compulsion to be in a relationship that is against their choice. Mostly in Pakistani society people consider marriage as a life and death issue where you just must focus on saving the marital relationship whatever the terms and conditions are. (Margit, Imtiaz, Helmut, 2004).

young women have different concepts related to different aspects of a marriage. They truly believe in the stoppage of early marriage. As they consider if a boy and girl are under 20, they are way too young to understand the concept of marriage and understand each other's sociological and psychological factors. Matrimonial practices are not only based on age, looks, and Money it's a lot more about physical and mental health. A selection of partners should be made based on health, education, and emotional availability instead of making financial status a complete package. (Hunt, 1980; Oakley, 1984; Westwood, 1984).

Females believe in giving chances to each other before building a life together where they both understand each other doesn't matter if it's an arranged or love setup. The concept of extramarital affairs is considered a sin. Females believe that husband-wife relationships should be based on sacrifices and affection which play a leading role in cementing a relationship. (Siltanen,1994).

In our country, we see different forms of marriage. In which partners belong to different classes or different ethnicities. Where few of them are from the same backgrounds but still it becomes easy to adjust to a compromising nature and understanding each other's ethnicities under the context of religion.

However, changing trends are vastly improving society's beliefs. Back in the 90s, women were seen as a house maker not more than that. Home is a place of work for her but in today's time, men are also trying to help her in household chaos. Research also claims that in a newlywed couple,

women face a lot of burden in their initial years as they work as housewives along with a full-time employer. (Malos, 1980). This is not because men are afraid to share household duties, it's because females are more associated with their homes instead of jobs. House should be a compulsion for a woman and a job should be a choice. Their norms are set by society and people have followed them since birth. (Chambers, 1986), (Seymour,1992).

Females also complained about their self-dissatisfaction with the condition of domestic labor. they feel demotivated by the low status of housework within society. Men in society do not consider housework to be a worthwhile task that requires effort. Most of the time, household chores are treated as a given and a woman is not appreciated for doing them it is her duty. (CSO, 1995). This lack of acknowledgment is also done by the women themselves as in any social gathering the stark difference between the way a housewife and a working woman is treated is quite noticeable. (Hunt, 1980; Oakley, 1984; Westwood, 1984). The goals met by working women receive more praise than a housewife stating her accomplishments. Some women who work and do housework at the same time start considering themselves superior to the ones who are "just" involved in housework. However, the feeling of home is completely associated with care by women and to feel a sense of pride. (Delphi and Leonard, 1992).

Today's females have more realistic approaches. They clearly state that marriage or romantic love does not deliver what it promises or what we see in books or reading idealistic novels. And do not make yourself a fool to live out your life in a state of romantic passion. (Mansfield and Collard, 1988).

Males and females, both genders are having different concepts about each other. Males used to believe the wife as a secure physical and emotional base something to which they come home. While wives wanted to feel more affection and value as a person. They want men to be

more emotionally available or expressive but due to society's stereotypes, men do not provide more than society's requirements. (Ibe. P 179- 192, women marriage and relationship.) Research also proves that women put more into a marital relationship than a man. They put a greater deal of emotional and domestic labor into their marriage, but in the end, they are powerless in marriage but structurally and culturally marriage favors the man. (D. uncoabe & Marsden 1993,1995, Langford 1995.)

Theoretical Framework

The current research on female concepts about marriage builds a relationship between choice, willingness, expectations, and experiences. I choose the theory of patriarchy (alda fida 2013), (Hunnicut, 2009). Where the concept of patriarchy is not about feminist theories there is a much more complex issue that contributes to this patriarchy. Patriarchy can be seen on the basic house level and political level. Patriarchy can be done in any field. It's a social organization in which authority is exercised by a male head of the family, extending this power even to distant relatives of the same lineage.

Patriarchy could explain male violence against women. (Brown Miller, 1975; Caputi, 1989; Firestone, 1972; Griffin, 1971; Millet, 1970; Russell, 1975). Patriarchy can be seen in the form of institutions, which shows male dominance over women. Relating this concept with today's women's thoughts depicts the image, that in Pakistan, the decision of marriage is mostly taken by the elders specifically males. Women's choices are not as important. Few people do not ask about their will regarding specific proposals. Men in Pakistan believe that the opinion of women is not important mostly men believe women are less intelligent than men. So, the important decision is taken by the male. Patriarchy is not natural and not identical in all cultures. (Engels, Frederic, 1884). Men are considered important in all institutions another concept is well explained by Kate Millet where sexual relations between men and women are recognized as

patriarchy through which men dominate women. We have seen that family but in all structures that allow for control over women, their work, and the production force. There is a radical wave of Islamization prevalent in Pakistan. Every mention of feminism is countered by the teachings of Islam. Women are dominated using these teachings. Pakistan is a patriarchal society, with women being treated as second-class citizens. Therefore, it is not a surprise that they are often not granted the liberty to choose their partner for marriage or even decide when to get married. Their likes and dislikes are not considered. If they mention liking someone, they can't mention it as women are considered as "honor" of the household, and doing so would bring dishonor to the family. A common concept of patriarchy is the protection of women. They only prefer the protection of a few women because they are typically central to antifeminist ideologies. (Chevets and Dworkin, 1987). Most people prefer marrying off women to men who are in no way compatible with them physically, mentally, emotionally, and sometimes even financially rather than someone the woman desires.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a descriptive research design. as a new way of looking at, debating, and discovering ideas. It was a neutral Perspective. A semi-structured interview was designed to collect the data from the respondents. semi-structured interviews were selected because the nature of the study is about theory, analysis, and methodology. basically, to explore and to observe. analyzing the respondent's ideas and experience with our own set of questions and framework.

To gain a deeper understanding of matrimonial practice in Pakistan, a descriptive approach and method of analysis to draw upon and utilize those materials to discover something more enhanced and unique.

The method helps to understand the concepts of young females through the help of different researched articles and semi-structured interviews. Moreover, the research collected some factual observed material that followed these terms such as class, gender, and culture according to community perspective. The framework is deeply linked with the theory of patriarchy. Therefore, the study is linked to society's perspective, their beliefs, and norms.

Concepts

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is defined as the “social arrangements that privilege males, where men as a group dominate women as a group, both structurally and ideologically hierarchical arrangements that manifest in varieties across history and social space” (Hunnicut, 2009).

Marriage: Union between men and women going to live a common life to establish a family and fulfill societal norms related to family and settling down. (Encyclopedia of Social Science).

Marriage Companionship/love marriage: Marriage for the sake of attraction. no social, political, or economic factors influence the decision. (Encyclopedia of Social Science).

Concepts: A sociological point of view refers to thoughts views and individual beliefs. or we can say abstract ideas. (sociology/study-smarter/definition).

Men and Women: in sociology terms, men and women are considered as individuals. gender, describing the sex of a person. These two are social constructs.

Urban: city life. or a large densely populated area.

Access and Sampling

Qualitative research is all about gathering information and then analyzing and using the research data to figure out the main issue. The study population selected for this small-scale study was undergraduate students at Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), situated on the main, with most populated and diversified area of Lahore, Pakistan. FCCU consisted of a variety of students from different ethnicities and urban, and rural backgrounds.

- enrolled in the current undergraduate program - student at Forman Christian College

Purposive sampling was used in this study to conduct as many interviews as possible. Female undergraduate students currently enrolled in FCCU were contacted via personal contacts, student groups, and social network sites. A consent form was provided to all the respondents to ensure their consent for participation in the study.

Ethics

The larger portion is focused on data collecting and analysis. According to the American Sociology Association (ASA) code of ethics, disclosure of the background of research, as mentioned above, mainly components are considered through semi-structured interviews and sociological books/ research related to culture and Pakistani society. under the ASA code of ethics

avoidance of harmful activities to research objectives. For this reason, I chose only those students who are currently studying at FCCU for their safety and easy access. Under the ASA code of ethics assurance of confidentiality to research objectives and participants' personal information. So, a clear and precise consent form was attached in which I made sure about the research purpose and that their data was confidential. According to ASA, I also used soft and comforting language for an easy understanding of concepts and harsh realities of society.

Data Collection

Data collection was done on undergraduate students at Forman Christian College (A Chartered University) in Lahore, Pakistan. I conducted semi-structured interviews because the study is exploratory. where I made 2 groups. One group contained married female students and the other one for unmarried female students of married and unmarried female students. A total of 10 respondents were selected. I used personal contacts, references, and society groups to find out about the girls. My focus was to consider both married and unmarried young female students. I recorded and took notes during the interview, my questions were open-ended so a detailed picture could be observed through the respondents' eyes including their personal experiences and society's eye. I asked topic-related questions so that I could stick to the point. I am providing them with an account of what they have said in the interview.

Data Analysis

After doing the interview and gathering qualitative data was analyzed through Thematic analysis. I followed Braun & Clarke's (2006) 6-step framework.

1. Become familiar with the data.
2. Generate initial codes.
3. Search for themes.

4. Review themes
5. Define themes.
6. Write-up.

So, after adapting this method the coding of my data analysis can easily be done. Relevant parts were selected and then fit into themes accordingly, so the research creates a clearer picture of the topic.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this research is that there is no male respondent in the research to share a male perspective. Secondly, Participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

Timeline

After approval of the proposal by the Institutional Review Board of FCCU, data collection through Interviews was conducted in the summer semester in July, August, and September 2023. In the summer semester, we had less burden of courses so could easily conduct interviews. Then the first draft of the thesis paper including the data analysis section was submitted in December 2023. After doing the formatting and structuring of the whole thesis paper the final thesis paper was submitted at the end of the fall 2023 semester.

Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

Sociodemographic Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
20-21	3	37.5
22-23	3	37.5
24-25	1	12.5
26-27	1	12.5

Gender		
Female	8	100.0
Male	0	0
Year of Study		
Freshman	2	25.0
Sophomore	1	12.5
Junior	1	12.5
Senior	4	50.0
Relationship status		
Single	4	50.0
Committed	1	12.5
Married	2	25.0
Divorced	1	12.5
Religion		
Islam	8	100.0
Christianity	0	0
Hinduism	0	0
Other	0	0

Findings

The findings of this research are based on responses collected from university female students concerning their opinion over the experience, and attitude towards contemporary matrimonial practices in urban Pakistan. The study respondents include 8 female undergraduate students from Forman Christian College. The results were gathered through a semi-structured interview format. By keeping their opinion respected this research interview led to 6 major findings.

1. contemporary marriage practice
2. educate the parties regarding their marital right
3. marriage practice that shall be abandoned.
4. respondent's experiences
5. meaning of choice

6. obstacles in practicing choice

Discovering matrimonial practices.

Most of the respondents Recognized “marriage” as an important theoretical role in their lives. Most university students define marriage as an "assorted experience". Few of them found variations in this relationship. 3 out of 8 participants reported that marriage is the name of companionship for your entire life. This relationship provides subservience for females. According to society's perspective, it's a pillar of support to become stronger and a safeguard for the union of families. However, the generational gap and changing perspectives of young female students make this relationship look more pessimistic.

“It's quite restrictive & scary for women instead of partnership it feels like adoption as men are now looking for working women who are expecting to handle the household & children” (Hafsah, 23, Female)

"Although conditions have improved by a lot over the years, there is still a long way to go as bad practices like not giving basic marital rights to females still exist" (Mawra, 25, Female)

Respondents approached marriage from different points of view, considering a positive and negative relationship. Positive angles show Marriage gives you a socially acceptable status and creates your image more strongly in society, it helps in building a female more emotionally available, mature, and handling conflicts side by side. However, the negative side of this relationship is exposure to struggling marital relationships where mental and physical damage both exist whether it's about abusing your partner or not providing her marital rights. On the other side, a societal reputation is always at stake, especially "log kaya kaheinge” and. a lot of

compromises are expected from the women's side. All these things lead to poor mental health and a source of pressure on women.

"Marriage is still under the shadow of past practices considering that if you get married the only way you can come back from there is a shroud" (Zainab, 21, Female)

"Marriage should be traditional but should not have its base upon "hard end" of traditions including the will of society image, people pleasing rules and regulation and a lot of compromises just to avoid society taunts" (Dua, 23, Female)

Marriage exerted a critical role in females' lives and had a huge impact on participants' lives. Many of them believed in uprooting this system. Over time such practices are not required, and matrimony is not based on such a state of affairs these are the small things that contribute to a marriage but on a big scale these small factors contribute to day patriarchal approach, and also influence choice, freedom and Liberty. 5 out of 8 female respondents from university explicitly discussed the base of this practice, recognizing them as a growing trend and contemplating this as a "normal thing". Such factors are identified by the respondents' perceived practice of marriage also include higher expectations from females specifically and tend to believe that after marriage they will have a restricted lifestyle and clasp on social life.

"It all starts with the toxic nature of "Rishta culture", where a girl is presented in front of a few strangers with a tray of tea. The entire process is an indirect communication of the job that the daughter-in-law is expected to do" (Ayla, 23, Female)

"Women are expected to look after the entire family of her husband and must carry out all the house chores perfectly and must deal with the unnecessary drama that in-laws decided

to create for their entertainment to ensure that marital relationships are damaged to the best.

(Verisha, 21, Female)

Such factors were identified by the respondents' pervasive practice of marriage also included higher expectations from females specifically and tended to believe that after marriage they will have a restricted lifestyle and clasp on social life. Socially marriage is to be preserved at any cost. It should be the prime concern, even if it's a proper toxic marriage.

"A woman isn't allowed to have an opinion especially in a marriage context, supposed to agree on her husband's demands even if they are unfair. The girl's family continuously pressured her to save the marriage by forcing her to the topmost compromises. In short, every single right of hers is taken away just to save that toxic relationship. (Mahnoor, 25, Female).

Marital rights/practices need to be educated.

There are plenty of rights that women need to understand and apply in their day-to-day lives. In Pakistan, 90% of women are not educated about their rights. Pakistan ranks 145/146 countries on the Gender gap index.

"Women shall be made aware of their divorce rights and true responsibilities. That they have towards their in-laws but more importantly that boys are educated on this matter. They should know what rights religion and law have bestowed on women, so they think before exploiting them. (Mawra, 25, Female)

Most girls believed that boys' education regarding marriage should be a necessity otherwise they would not be ready for this relationship.

“There is a need for men to be educated and held accountable for their unnecessary aggressive attitudes or tantrums. (If the misbehaves it shouldn't be ignored instead, they should be scolded for doing this. (Ayla, 23, Female)

Respondents also highlighted women's perspective that there are many other things that girls need to understand and practice.

“Women should be taught that their mother-in-law is not their enemy and to maintain cordial relationships unless the mother-in-law does something wrong. Women should also be taught that their sons also have responsibilities towards their wives and should learn to share their sons like they share their daughters” (Hafsah, 23, Female)

The majority of respondents think patriarchy and neglecting gender roles to be key in toxic marriage. Where expectations are only from women, Males are unable to perform equality in their relationship. Maintaining a house, supposition of in-laws, keeping alive family honor and pressure of displaying every relationship in perfect terms also cause women to suffer the topmost.

"There is a set of hierarchy when it comes to marriages. The male lies on the upper part of the hierarchy and the woman is seen as an object with no right to voice an opinion" (Hamda, 26, Female)

Marital practices are not preferred.

When asked about those practices that are least liked by women, respondents discussed several traditions being made in the name of marriage which hurt her to the deepest, even one of them criticizing these practices as a 'mental abuse' to women.

"There is still a long way to go as bad practices like demanding dowry, domestic abuse and especially cheating still happen on a large scale" (Hamda, 26, Female)

"Discard the Rishta culture to reject presenting girls to families, tables shall be turned since the girl must live with a boy family, it should be the girl's family who examines the family lifestyle of the boy. (Ayla, 23, Female)

Individuals also believe that discussion needs to be held especially what other people think about gender roles and divisions, but society traditions always consider financial status. However, it is pivotal to acknowledge that in the 21st century still there are unwritten laws that are followed blindly, and no one asks the other party.

"The importance of consent needs to be educated, help in empowering women so the number of forced marriages will be reduced. Education also helps in breaking stereotypes and promoting gender equality. (Verisha, 21, Female)

Explore young women's experience of marriage.

Defining my own experience.

I have interviewed almost 7-8 girls, 2 of them are married and the rest of the girls were unmarried. The results I collect through Research are almost the same for married and unmarried women. As South Asian women we all know or experience such things. Muscularity and femininity are both combinations mixed up together and asserted results are completely relatable for each woman.

"My marriage was toxic because I was not allowed to do anything, this included contacting my family, and friends in any way. Was not taken care of during my pregnancy.

Household chaos was expected of me. And all the help was asked to leave. This is just one of many issues I do get to face in marriage” (Mahnoor, 26, Female)

On the contrary, another respondent observed that women were far more marginalized than men. Identify as an obedient object.

"Unfortunately, my in-laws' dynamics are toxic, and little or no equality in the marital relationship. Only husbands view us as breadwinners, we are not allowed to do jobs after completing our degree, all we are doing this for the sake of self-satisfaction and a sort of forceful choice. (Hamda, 26, Female)

The issues are like what I meant in my previous finding. Most of the respondents are not ready to get married unlike previously because they can earn enough to lead a comfortable life, not dependent on in-laws but due to societal stereotypes, most of them are not allowed to work after marriage.

"I am not married, but I believe in equality, as I have seen women are not involved in the matchmaking process and only come to know of it when they are presented in front of a boy's family to be judged by all. But some practices are done happily. Sons-in-law is treated with more respect than the daughter who must run around doing errands in her own home as well, dowry is still prevalent although it is not excessive" (Dua, 23, Female)

Changing notion and practice of choice

Cultural and traditional explanations were explained by respondents for the changing meaning of "choice". The family structure, social class, and social institutions, all these are recognized as important factors in shaping notions of "choice in marriage".

"Choice means being able to choose the person, the family, the age at which the woman wants to marry, whether she wants to get married, what type of functions, etc. she wants, who she wants to invite, whether she wants to live with the in-laws afterward, whether she wants dowry" (Mawra, 25, female)

In the context of choice, respondents mentioned the righteous demands and expectations. On the other hand, failure to meet these expectations is because of society's typical stereotypes related to girls and their marriage practices.

"Many women would be better off if they had married the person, they chose instead of the one parent chose for them. This is because since they must live with the person, they will be better at determining whether it is a good match or not. Of course, indeed, the woman might not be able to judge correctly, but if her parents talk to her calmly and still give her the option of choosing, she is most likely to listen to them instead of running away or them having to choose a 'bad option' to get her married quickly, so she doesn't run away" (Zainab, 21, Female)

Some respondents placed great emphasis on choice and further meanings they defined 2 very critical situations for a girl. Own choice and parents will, to choose happiness of others also pressure off family honor decides difficult and ultimately girls do suffer in the end.

"Girls should choose between marriage proposals. For this if she requests to communicate with the boy, it should" (Ayla, 23, female)

Barriers exist to choice

According to respondent context (especially girls' sentiments), the barrier I believe is society, it is very difficult for them to view women as someone capable of forming an opinion. respondents believe she is considered more as a property who shall obey orders only.

“Women are mostly seen as male property and not a human being who has similar needs and rights, so society's rigidity is the biggest barrier. Moreover, unfortunately, women have absorbed the inferiority complex, and they think they can't make important decisions and rely on their parents to choose for them” (Dua, 23, Female)

Importantly one student highlighted the importance of women in this system as women are immature to decide whom to spend their life with. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that women are seen as men's property, not a human being.

“The barriers which hinder considering the choice of young women in marriages mainly are based upon traditional rules such as firstly the caste rule which strictly directs to stick the marriage with same caste only further includes traditions such as newborn babies having their marriage fixed or the elders in the family deciding what they think is better without any other intervention” (Urooj, 23, Female)

“Mainly parents, caste system, financial barriers, beauty standards as women considered ugly by society have lesser options available to them. There is also taboo that if a woman chooses for herself, she is too confident or basically of a loose character” (Hafsah, 23, Female)

Discussion

The findings of this study show that undergraduate female students define matrimonial practices as social institutions. The definition of marriage varies from student to student, but most respondents interpret this relation as a lifelong partnership with certain rights and duties. Many respondents perceived this relationship according to their own experiences. The findings highlight that, in a marital relationship, females face significant problems compared to males. This disadvantage is attributed to the prevailing societal norms and circumstances that made women compromise at most while men are not even responsible for their careless behavior. The findings suggest that females sacrifice a lot in marital relationships if we investigate it from a Pakistani marriage perspective. The study aims to examine female students' conceptualization and experience of the attitude toward contemporary Muslim matrimonial practices.

The findings of the present study identify several domestic factors that create a negative image of marriage for young, educated females. These factors include patriarchy and the dominance of male authority in society. females revealed that the decision of their marriage is taken by the males of their family whether it's a paternal uncle, but on the other side, men have the leverage to choose or make decisions on their own. respondents also highlighted the initial issue starts with a toxic Rishta culture, where a girl is presented before a few strangers with a tray of tea. They believe that it is very much like shopping. where you can go and explore different products according to your requirements. The females are judged based on their physical appearance or materialistic aspects, and it sort of becomes a tradition or something we go buy or something that we are comfortable with. it's very superficial that girls should be on specific standards. The Rishta process is way too difficult and strenuous. It's almost like an exam

that you are supposed to pass. The moment you cross a certain age societal questions are being aroused on you.

respondents call attention to their self-realization. all this process makes them feel like they are having an expiration date. In our society, females are associated with marriage. A career is an optional choice for women if a woman works as hard as any men probably out there, and her accomplishments are not considered important because she is not married.

An important finding of this study is that undergraduate students believe that they get married and learn conservative and traditional radicalized methods to practice in marriage. Marriage is a partnership. you are supposed to be together, and you are supposed to take care of each other, and you are supposed to put each other above everything and men don't realize that they believe women are for our service.

In the light of awareness and education, young females need a proper direction. they need to highlight internal and external affairs. Respondents believe that equality is key in every marriage. Gender roles should be divided based on equality. women's marital rights should be enlightened in the first place. such as Nikah nama should be made with the consent of women. Her right to divorce, right of inheritance, right to work, etc. all should be mentioned there. Along with this the findings also indicate that young, educated females believe in restricting some of the practices including dowry. Unfortunately, dowry became a significant part of marriage. One of the respondents mentioned that our society sends the girl away to another house by giving her 10% of the dowry and the remaining 90% of the property is ruled by the son. right to equality, right to freedom, right against exploitation, all these become worthless. university female students also think female goes through emotional torture for dowry. Side by side physical and mental abuse are also faced by women. The abuse can lead to injuries as well as serious physical

and mental health problems in some cases even death. findings also elaborate that society should realize that marriage doesn't mean they are buying a house help which can beat time or you can get a free cook. spouses' parents play a very important role in it, they should realize it's not okay to have a mentally and physically tortured relationship. Domestic violence is not just physical violence, it will include sexual violence, financial dominance, and other areas. and leaving is not so easy. There have been millions of cases where a man has killed a woman after she has left him due to domestic abuse.

Moreover, since the study opted for a socially constructive theoretical frame, the findings also show us the extensive meaning of "choice" from a female perspective. Islam has given the right to women whom they want to marry when they want to get married. Society believes in a specific age for women even though from an Islamic perspective there is no condition regarding women's age and choice. The dilemma of choice also highlights some barriers to exist such as the caste system; the old generation still believes in fulfilling caste rather than a suitable match. financial barriers exist in matters of choice, according to society boys are associated with financial security. Moreover, society's beauty standards and approval. all are looking for those matches that can be appreciated from a society perspective. and lastly the traditional barriers. For future research, a greater level of exploration can help understand a greater variety of problems and stigma manifestations as well as additional marriage-related problems.

Recommendations

The above findings suggest a pervasive fear of not getting what is promised in a relationship. In addition to being supported by literature, this concern is natural among young, educated girls as they believe in practicing their religious and social rights which were given to them under the circumstances of marriage. It is noted that most young female students consider truthful that women's behavior is based on a patriarchal system of beliefs. women find themselves in disputes between being independent and following family obligations, having hard pressure of cultural heritage also exist (Gill, 2021). It is necessary to improve, educate, and guide current youth especially the male gender about female rights.

Additionally, some respondents also talk about fixed gender roles and familial expectations to attract a suitable match for themselves. Along with this they also suggested eradicating this school of thought completely on an institutional level.

Few respondents discussed the concept of the "ideal woman", the one who sacrifices her happiness for the will of family, cultural heritage, and societal expectations. Daily we see women opening up about their struggles of rejection of marriage because of having different values and free will which are not up to the mark according to society's criteria. (Veena, 1973).

The findings of this study also suggest the importance of financial independence for a woman. It's just like releasing them from their dependence on men for daily needs so in return they become active participants in decision-making (Bhattacharya and Ghosh 2012). respondents believe financial independence released them from the chains of patriarchy and led to their liberation. women's financial independence did not influence the younger brides-seeking behavior of men as shown by different research and charts (Jain, Bhawna, 2023).

Looking into the comparison of data from 1990's to 2023 reveals that a broad range of change takes place including age expectancy to get married. In early times financial independence and self-knowing were not a thing to consider instead females got married whenever their household patriarchy felt that. but now females are more career-oriented and looking forward to making themselves more secure. previously the rise in age at marriage tends to be larger for women than men (Hollingsworth, 2001).

Furthermore, it is suggested that men have more leverage in marriage than women. men are expected to fulfill financial needs meanwhile women are expected to take care of their husbands, in-laws, and course own families and if she is doing the job side by side then no leverage will be there for them. As women's roles have suppressed just being at home or becoming someone's life partner this reflects their individuality and identity from a societal context.

since most respondents get awareness as a key dimension in addressing matrimonial expectations, attitudes, and beliefs of a young, educated woman. one of the following respondents also suggests organizing a women empowerment event to educate females about their basic rules and rights under the contract of marriage "nikah nama", which sections they want to exclude or include, what sort of responsibility they have and what is allowed under Islamic point of view so that many of them can take a stand for themselves before knotting into a toxic relationship.

Conclusion

The study expects to establish a comprehensive and detailed understanding of what women want, what they are looking for, and what they are expecting from a marriage. The study also highlighted the generational gap we are having, the different schools of thought that exist in between, and how traditional practices are still in trend by examining undergraduate students' perspectives. Female attitudes, experiences, and concepts are found to be discussed with the range of definitions that are gathered by respondents' beliefs and research study. actual marriage dilemma, choices, career, financial independence, domestic abuse, and patriarchal structure were explored through this qualitative research. it's small-scale research but hopes to contribute to higher education by giving results to some extent.

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Appendix A: Informed Cover Letter

Date: _____

Dear Participants,

You are invited to participate in a study titled: "The Relationship between social anxiety and academic performance in university students". The study aims to highlight the potential benefits of reducing social anxiety in students to support their academic learning and output.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to answer. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any kind of known risk. Your names are not required for participation and none of your data will be disclosed or shared. The data will remain with the researcher and be analyzed without compromising confidentiality or anonymity.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from answering the survey at any point.

By signing this form, you are agreeing that you have read the above information and are indicating your consent to participate in this research study.

Thank you!

Researcher: Fajar Zia

BSc. Hon Student, Department of Sociology, Forman Christian College

Signed consent of the participant: _____

Appendix B: Questionnaire for semi-structure interview

- 1, What do you think about current marriage practices in Pakistan?
- 2, How do you think that the current system of matrimonial practices can be changed?
- 3, How important is education for women in deciding what practices become redundant and what are followed?
- 4, What are the preferences of young educated urban women regarding marriage in Pakistan?
- 5, How would you define your marriage? Should women be given the choice to choose their partner?
- 6, What type of marital practices are done in your own circle/family?
- 7, What is the meaning of choice in marriage for women?
- 8, How do you think young women's choice matters in marriage?
- 9, What are some of the barriers to exercising choice in marriage for women?

Appendix C: Thematic analysis

1. Concept and attitude of young, educated women.	Contemporary practice of marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rishta culture. -Gender roles. -High expectations from females -Showcase girls. -Union of 2 families. -no right to voice on many sorts. -Mostly arrange cousin marriage. -restrictive lifestyle
	What Marital rights/ practices need to be Educated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Made aware of divorce rights. - Religious perspective. -Equality/gender roles. -forced marriage/honor killing. -women financially stable. -more agency for women. -boys education on marriage.
	Marital practices are not preferred.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -dowry -physical/mental abuse -toxic Rishta culture -Forced marriage
2. Explore young women's experience of marriage.	Defining own experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -toxic -Abusive -Equality/ to some extent -Only the Husband viewed as the breadwinner -not involved in the matchmaking process
3. Changing notions and practices of “choice” in marriage.	Meaning of choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -empowerment -Freedom -Have some say -sweet will
	Does choice matter?	-yes
	Barriers exist in choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -caste system -Financial barriers -beauty standards -Society rigidness -societal approval -personal fulfillment -traditional barriers

Appendix D: IRB Form



FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

IRB Ref: IRB-495/6-2023

Date: 22-06-2023

Project Title: The Female Student Conceptualization, Experience of the Attitude Towards Contemporary Muslim Matrimonial Practices in Urban Pakistan

Principal Investigator: Fajar Zia

Supervisor: Ms. Sharon Bano

The Institutional review board has examined your project in IRB meeting held on 22-06-2023 and has approved the proposed study. If during the conduct of your research any changes occur related to participant risk, study design, confidentiality or consent or any other change then IRB must be notified immediately.

Please be sure to include IRB reference number in all correspondence.

Dr. Sharon Hanook
Convener - IRB
Chairperson, Department of Statistics
Forman Christian College
(A Chartered University)
Lahore

