

# CHANGING PATTERNS OF MARRIAGES AND ITS IMPACT ON NUPTIALITY: SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF KARACHI, PAKISTAN

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## ABSTRACT

*Marriages are one of the most authentic and worldwide accepted methods of forming families with different methodologies depending upon social norms, religions and cultures. No one can deny the importance of marriages in a society. Studying society from different dimensions like urban and rural angles, religious and secular aspects or social stratifications and class distribution; human behavior can be measured through social theories and perspectives. Current study is based on in-depth interviews of 15 managers of different marriage bureaus from urban and rural region of Karachi, Pakistan during 2016, this study analyses the changing pattern of marriages and its impact on nuptiality. The results reveals that from last two decades the marriage pattern is changing gradually. As compared to previous marriage system, now the number of marriages is declining due to paradigm shift in education from boys to girls. Now girls are more educated as compared to their male counterparts. Now-a-days, the parents of grooms are trying to find out better matches for their daughters/girls due to large population of girls and declining interest of boys in education. Currently cultural difference is not a big issue in cross-cultural marriages.*

**Keywords:** *Nuptiality, Marriage Patterns, Match Making, Ethnicity, Ideals and Divorce.*

## INTRODUCTION

Marriages tend to be the most authentic and worldwide accepted method to form families with different methodologies depending upon social norms, religions and cultures. No one can deny from importance of marriages in any society. Studying society from different dimensions like urban and rural societies, religious and secular societies or according to social

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stratifications and class distribution human behavior can be measured through social theories and perspectives.

Underline changes, patterns and living arrangements are ultimately are the bases of demographic transition. Delay in marriage for females, has particular direct impact on their lives. Sathar, Z. A., M. F. Kiani, et al. (1998).

In Pakistan, especially in urban areas, marriage patterns are changing rapidly, role of parents in marriages and selection of spouse has changed drastically, expectation in life partners is large barrier for selection of spouse, especially social media, electronic media and education changed the behavior towards marriages and even society altered its major dimensions. Marriage patterns have also been changing for the last decades in Asia majority of girls get married before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. G.W. Jones, (2010). Marriages are known as institution in social sciences. Marriages cannot be considered only as event or celebrations, apparently marriages starts with selection of pair but practically follows various societal and cultural aspects, standards, norms and values. Especially in Asian countries Pakistan, India and other states, age, cast, social status, religion, sect, sub-sect color, education, rural, urban, ethnicity serve as basic and important determinant for selection pairs and arrangements of marriages. In Pakistan marriages are placed at high level honor impacts positively or negatively on families, offspring's and kinship.

Karachi is not only the largest metropolis of Pakistan and its commercial hub, it is also known

As a 'mini-Pakistan' Ali Budhani, A., H. Gazdar, et al. (2010) it is one of the largest urban settlement of the world and most populated and largest city of Pakistan. Demographically this is the heterogeneous city with different types of ethnic groups, sub ethnic group, religious groups, sectarian groups, even mix ethnic and sectarian groups with verity of characteristics, if we will get example of one ethnic group "Muhajar" who are Migrated from India during independence of Pakistan, this group is again divided into different groups based on origin of their relationships from Indian cities, areas or even languages. Moreover these sub groups again divided into ethnic group based on relationship with different religious sects.

In current situation the population of Karachi is under depression, and uncertainty. The city is developing ethnic pockets that live in various areas.

Most of the peoples prefer to live in area where population of their ethnicity is living or dominant. Karachi is the capital city of Sindh province and Sindh was not a homogenous area before partition but there were no presence of ethnic grouping or conflicts. Marriages are considered the beginning of socially allowed exposure to be pregnant of a female and later childbearing in traditional societies (Palamuleni, 2010). From last 20 years the dramatic changes were being observed in pattern of marriage in Pakistan. Chimere (1999) argues that now-a-days marriages are losing values. The aim of ongoing research is to examine the changing pattern of marriages in Karachi, Pakistan and its impact on nuptiality.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The family system of East and South Asia is considered to be different from the one in western countries due to its exemplary features like strong family ties, co-residence and extended families (Goode, 1963; Reher, 1998; Raymo et al., 2015).

The theoretical frame work of this research is based on work of McDonalds (2000) gender equity theory of fertility. This theory emphasizes that socio-economic change creates tension between out-side the family growing opportunities for women and less change in role of women within the family (Raymo et al., 2015). Furthermore, in Japan and East Asia, it has been identifies that to study the marriage system, it is essential to observe family expectations and obligations for both educated male and female (Rindfuss et al. 2004; Bumpass et al. 2009). Thus this framework provides us a powerful base to understand the changing pattern of marriage in context of socio-economic and educational background in South Asia and especially in Pakistan. The economy of Pakistan was rising gradually after 9/11 due to participation in “war against terrorism”. Therefore, the spread of western influence in sense of modernization and economic development was at the high rate along with establishment of new television channels that were established like mushrooms without any code of ethics, which created disharmony in our traditional family system. Said changes developed idealism in our traditional society which posits the modern form of family. This idealism is visible not only in traditional countries but also in European countries and it is destroying the fabric of traditional societies (Thornton et al. 2012). Thus the framework emphasize on development of idealism in families of Thornton, 2005.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of study was to find out the changing patterns of marriages and its impact on nuptiality in Karachi as well as Pakistan.

For broader understanding, the following research objectives were formulated:

1. To find out the changing patterns of marriage urban areas of Karachi, Pakistan.
2. To find out the difficulties in marriages or pair finding in Karachi Pakistan.
3. To analyze the effect of literacy rate on marriage as social institution in Karachi, Pakistan.
4. To recommend suitable measures to increase the marriage ratio in Pakistan.

## **Research Questions**

1. Why match-making has become difficult these days in Karachi?
2. What is the difference between current and previous marriage systems in Karachi, Pakistan?
3. What is the impact of female education on match-making and marriage?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

As the major focus of this research was to identify causes and consequences decreasing number of marriages in urban areas and patterns of marriage system, therefore sociological observations and analysis was major research technique. Research was commenced through personal and professional discussion with fifteen marriage bureaus in Karachi and five full days observation while sitting in marriage bureau offices. Exploratory research was conducted through qualitative research technique. Karachi is cosmopolitan and largest city of Pakistan due to its population. Delayed in marriages and changes in marriage pattern are not hidden from public eyes in this city. Thus, to find out changing pattern and its impact on Nuptiality, the research was carried out through, A self- administered open ended questionnaire for data collection after due procedure (validity).

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

### **Requirements for Marriages 20 years ago from Male Side**

One of important question with all managers of Marriage bureaus was about basic requirements of male side for marriages before 20 years according to their experience and observations. According to respondents, 20 years ago the requirements from male side were based on socio-cultural background of families. Almost all the respondents categorized that usually twenty years ago, the families of males considered, family background of girls, ethnicity, race, education, locality, dowry and education of girls.

### **Requirements for Marriages 20 years ago from Female Side:**

Another important observation and question with respondents related to requirements from families of girls Twenty years ago. According to respondents the families of female focused on financial level of male family, language, culture, family background, ethnicity, race, educational background and beauty. While some families consider the geographical areas where's male was living.

### **Now-a-days, Requirements for Marriages from Male side**

Meanwhile vice versa question was discussed with respondents about current dimensions of male side requirements for selection of bride. Results shows recent trend are changing and requirements from male side are entirely changed. Now day's families of male gives priority to dowry given by parents to girls and discussed before finalizing the marriage even beauty is considered on second. Age of girls is also considered on priority. According to respondents physical appearance is most common selection priority. Moreover majority of respondents discussed the role and impact of current social and electronic media on marriage system they were their view that young girls and boys and their families developed some ideals for marriages and selection of pairs. Marriages as social institution become a complicated system due to involvement of social media in everyday life.

### **Now-a-days, Requirements for Marriages from Female Side**

Based on the same pattern priorities of female side parents were also discussed with respondents according to them the top priority of families of female side is job security, business, income or social status of boys itself rather than social status of family or even family background. Respondents were their view that now days there is less emphasize on

ethnic as well linguistic background. The literacy rate among girls is slightly high in Karachi as compared to boys. It was also discussed that in urban areas of Pakistan girls are more interested in education than boys and girls spend more time and age in education resultantly girls developed ideal about their marriage partner, as educated, good professional, handsome etc. and become aged up thirty or above. Moreover it was also revealed that different television dramas and films may cause of day dreaming and girls create their own ideals in their mind. According to observations and discussion a large number of girls don't marry in search of their ideals.

### **Marriage Rate, Role of Ethnicity and Religion**

Number of marriages is decreasing in Karachi due to high expectations of both male and female families without realizing that resources are decreasing. Due large number of population of girls now parents do not bothers regarding ethnicity of boys or girls. During discussion with respondents it was revealed that religious ethnicity is also plying role in selection of marriage partner, sectarianism and even sub sectarian groups used to try find out boys or girls with their own or demanded sectarian relationship.

### **Role of Economic and Educational Background**

Due to larger population and developing country, people are facing economic deprivation. Furthermore, the education rate among boys is decreasing. These issues are creating a horrible situation. Girls are more educated as compared to boys. While less educated boys have less access to high income generating activities and they cannot get their due share in job market due to illiteracy or lack of education. This situation is creating economic deprivation among families of male, which directly linked with pair matching and marriage because the educated girls create their own ideals in their mind.

### **Role of Physical Looks and Age**

Beauty definitely plays a big role in spouse selection. The family of boy demand beautiful, tall and slim girls with fair complexion, even some time they demand underweight girls, while families of girls demand handsome boy, tall and smart boy. This scenario developed due to media exposure. The effect of age cannot be denied now or even twenty years ago. But it must keep in mind that twenty years ago the people were simple and strictly following customary traditions. At that time girls were less educated or

parents tried to find match at the age of 16-18 years. But now due to higher rate of girls' education and participation of girls in economic activities parents of girls try to find match between 23 -25 years age in Karachi.

### **Ratio of Love Marriage**

During in-depth interviews Ratio as well as problems of love marriages was well discussed, majority of respondents said that clients having issues of love marriages do not come to marriages bureaus. But analyzing the dimensions urban life love marriage ratio is increased. Failure of love marriages were also discussed, according to respondents Karachi as multi-ethnic and multicultural city it is really difficult to analyses the issues and angles of love marriages, it needs a specific research. As per information number of marriages in Karachi happen based on love but it is very difficult to find either these marriages are based on pure love or they are based on other social aspects of urban life and materialistic society in Karachi.

### **Ratio of Divorce**

During study and data collection ratio of divorce was discussed with respondents, especially with relationship to urban society and match-making made through marriage bureaus. According to respondents majority of marriages made through marriage bureaus become successful, but divorce occurs in some cases. They said participation of women in income generating activities, increasing literacy ratio among women, development of different bills regarding women rights and laws, increased information through print, electronic and social media divorce ratio is increasing from last one decade.

### **Difficulties in Match-Making:**

Pair matching is very difficult and sensitive duty. Due to urbanization it is more difficult in context of Karachi to verify the information of both (male and female) families. The respondents shared that as compared to twenty years ago match-making through marriage bureaus services become so difficult, and number of marriages in varies as compared to increasing population of city, in the following reasons were discussed:

1. Population of girls is increasing.
2. Girls are becoming more educated than boys, therefore ideals, and hopes about life partner among girls is high and it is so difficult find out match according to requirements of girls.

3. Especially electronic media, drama, films and social media is creating difficulties in match-making due to showing different love stories, lavish life, false hopes, which is developing idealism among girls, boys and parents also.
4. Ages of girls in families are increased between 35 to 45 while finding expected are good match, and boys prefer to marry between 20 to 30 years of age girls therefore it is again difficult to find good match for marriages and in this way this is also cause of decreasing number of marriages in urban areas.

Watching Indian, Pakistani dramas, Films make boys and girls dreams for life partner with good job, car, fair, handsome, unmarried, that is difficult to find therefore number of second marriages is also increasing.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through in-depth interviews of managers of marriage centers, the difference between current marriage system and twenty years ago were well discussed and even procedure of dealing with client was observed in few marriage bureaus. The data reveal some drastic features regarding nuptiality pattern in Karachi. First, for Karachi the whole age at marriage time for girls has increased from 16 – 18 years twenty to 25 – 30 years. This may lead to delayed marriages of girls in future. Second, creation of idealism is a major threat to our traditional marriage system. Now the choices of families are changing due to exposure of media. Furthermore, the variation in girl's population is creating serious issues in society. It must keep in mind that this changing marriage pattern will have negative effects on fertility population rate in Karachi and Pakistan. Moreover due delayed marriages of girls huge socio-psychological issues are developing among girls, and their parents. Number of nuptiality is very low as compared to increased number of population in Karachi as urban area and this situation reflects its foot prints to urban angles of major cities in Pakistan.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Government may establish marriage centers.
2. There may be a regulatory authority for marriage bureaus.
3. Government as well as non-government organizations may initiate soft loans scheme for less educated males.



Religious leaders may regulate over high expectations and idealism through spreading of religious education.

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