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DOWRY SYSTEM IN PAKISTAN

Shazia Gulzar[1]
Muhammad Nauman[2]
Farzan Yahya[3]
Shagafat Ali[4]
Mariam Yaqoob[5]

ABSTRACT

This research paper argues on the evil of dowry system and its impact on Pakistani civilization. The objectives of this research were to substantiate the effect, favoritism and involvement of people in Dowry system. This research notified that dowry creates imbalance in the status of women and it affect women mentally and physically. Dowry is also a cause of endorsing greed and conflicts in the society. Majority of people are involved in dowry system whether they are educated or illiterate. However, most of the respondents are against this system. Simple random sampling technique and questionnaire as a data collection instrument has used to accomplish this research. Furthermore, reliability analysis has applied to verify the reliability of scale and chi-square has used to check the association of demographics with research questions. Results have been discussed in the light of Pakistani cultural context.

Key Words: Dowry, Cronbach's Alpha, Chi-Square, NGOs

INTRODUCTION

Marriage plays an important role in human life. As it is a turning point of life. It leads to many problems in life after marriage but before marriage there is a big deal that can affect life after marriage in Pakistan that is dowry system. Among the societal tribulations that triumph and infecting Pakistani society, the dowry system plays the most significant role. It is sprawling its tentacles far and ample in the society distressing almost every segment of the society and it is especially prevalent in Pakistani culture.

Dowry is no longer a set of gift items intended for contributing towards a suitable beginning of the practical life of a newly married couple. Copious and loud marriages, designers' items studded bride, bridegroom and other family members, many course meals etc. all put up with the dowry system .In a country where an immense majority of populace lives beneath poverty line and is devoid of basic human requirements like water, sanitation, and electricity, health and education the increasing leaning of such exhibiting marriages is adding miseries in society.

[1] Lecturer, Lahore Business School, The University of Lahore
[2] Lahore Business School, The University of Lahore
[3] Lahore Business School, The University of Lahore
[4] Lahore Business School, The University of Lahore
[5] Lahore Business School, The University of Lahore

The dowry system is a great evil that still exists in Pakistan. It is an act of discrimination against unmarried girls, whose values are defined based on the prices of their respective dowries. It is an example of greed and selfishness and is a great curse, especially for the parents who belong to the lower middle class. This is the reason why people get depressed and feel cursed at the birth of a daughter. The dowry system should be banned in Pakistan, just like the serving of more than one dish at a marriage ceremony was banned and people should refuse to marry when dowry is demanded or given. Banning this tradition leads to happier life because it is big source of stress among parents of girls. Also it's not an Islamic act.

The dowry system is so intensely entrenched in Pakistani civilization that sometimes one believes that there is no way out - at least not for one more century. Even contemporary, well-educated families begin saving up wealth for their daughter's dowry when she is born so what can one anticipate from the amateurish masses, whose only form of learning is custom?

When hassles for dowry are not congregated, the bride is subject to torment, and often even murdered. The cause many parents don't wish to have daughters is because of the dowry they will have to reimburse at her marriage, and the strain they go through due to never ending loads from her in-laws.

DISADVANTAGES OF DOWRY SYSTEM

Main disadvantages of dowry system:

1. People from very poor family when demanded dowry for their girls at marriage, they involve themselves in pleading. Even though they lose their self-esteem, they are begging mosque to mosque, store to store.
2. Women become mentally affected as they could not meet the amount of dowry and they continually tortured by her in-laws.
3. Due to dowry system, neither the poor people get married their daughters nor they cease them at their home. In addition their age is passing bit by bit. To avoid the misfortune and grief, they suicide themselves.
4. To meet the demand of dowry some lower class family girls try to earn money from evil and unethical ways.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dowry system is one of the most prevalent sins in Pakistan. This is not today's problem that people are facing but in actual this problem has affected people from centuries. Women's rights have been exploited on the name of dowry system. So many girls in Pakistan stay unmarried because their parents cannot meet the demands. The existence of (gross) dowry has been interpreted as evidence that women pay for marriage (Tertilt, 2005). The idea that a woman should receive a marriage settlement from her family is long-established in India. Classical Hindu texts have identified such property as Stridhanam, and it may be regarded, according to Khare, as 'part of the sacred cultural concept of kanyadan' (lit. 'Gift of a maiden' in marriage).

Tambiah argues that 'dowry connotes female property or female rights to property which is transferred at a woman's marriage as a sort of pre-mortem inheritance'. It refers to the traditional items, such as jewels, cooking vessels or other household goods, and clothes which accompany a bride to her conjugal home. (Tambiah, 1973).

On the other hand, and perhaps more significantly, 'dowry' refers equally, sometimes exclusively, to the 'gifts'-often conceived by the givers as demands for payment (Beck, I972)-which a bride's parents make over to the parents of the bridegroom, or to the bridegroom himself, to enjoy as they

or he please(s). These transfers may involve such modern consumer items as refrigerators, scooters, motor cars, and even houses, but most frequently the transactions are reported to be in cash.

The rise in dowry payments in India has been taken as evidence that women increasingly are at a disadvantage on the marriage market and must pay for marriage. Moreover, high dowries, it is argued, add to the plight of parents of daughters and have thus contributed to the scarcity of women (brides). (Edlund, 2006)

The notion of dowry as a pre-mortem inheritance which is also propounded by Goody is challenged by Madan, who prefers to regard it instead as a 'substitute for women's lack of rights of inheritance equivalent to those of men'. (Goody, 1973)

Social anthropologists have often talked about it in ethnographies focused primarily on other subjects, but their reasoning has usually been limited to explaining it away as a consequence of ' Sanskritization '.This is a term used by Srinivas to explain the adoption of upper-caste patterns of behavior by members of lower castes as a means of acquiring higher social status. Since dowries have traditionally been the common marriage transaction of the highest (Brahmin) caste, Sanskritization explains the observed shift in regime from bride price to dowry in all the other castes as upwardly mobile imitative behavior. Evidence suggests that the custom of giving dowry has traditionally been more prevalent in north than in south India, and in the latter region, more commonly found among Brahmans than others (Miller, I980).

Arranged marriages characterize the Indian marriage system; parents of a daughter are often willing to provide a good dowry to secure a suitable husband for her, partly to avoid the prospect of the daughter's long-term dependence on the parents (Krishnaswamy, 1995).
Muslims and members of lower status tribes, for example, are less likely than others to support the dowry. These differences do not portend social change unless the proportions of the population in these categories are increasing, which is not the case. (Srinivasan, 2004)

Quarrels over the dowry give rise to what newspapers portray as "dowry murders," where wives are flamed alive by their husband's ancestors. Thus, "dowry" aggression does not pass on directly to marriage-related expenditures made at the time of the nuptials, but to supplementary payments demanded after the marriage by the groom's family where the husband steadily abuses the wife in order to extort larger transfers. (Bloch, 2002).

Objectives

Our objectives of this research are:

1. To verify that to how much extent dowry system is affecting our society.
2. To examine points of view of society about dowry system?
3. To test how to control the evil of dowry system.
4. To find out how much people like this system and how much are against it.
5. To inspect why educated people still involve in this evil activity.

METHODOLOGY

Sample of the research was consisted of 102 respondents with the distribution of 49 males and 53 females. Sampling technique used in the research was simple random sampling to reduce the errors. Finally SPSS version 16 was used for analysis of results. Dowry system assessment inventory was used as data collecting instrument which contains close-ended questions and on Likert Scale for more dexterity. It was indigenously developed using scientific method. Its reliability was ensured using SPSS and α = .74 which is sound one. It also has sound criterion validity.

Procedure

After designing questionnaire a pilot testing had done to check its precision. It showed good reliability. Then to collect data simple random sampling technique had chosen. Data has collected from different areas of Lahore city. Respondents include both male and female and both married and single. Furthermore, respondents were also from different professions, education levels, ages and income statuses.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Now there are descriptive and inferential analyses of research questions. First of all, there is reliability analysis to assure the reliability of research scale.

Table-1. Reliability Analysis

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.742	25

To compute, present and conceive reliable answers after distribution of questionnaire of the research, Table 1 shows the overall Cronbach's alpha of the scale items that is 0.74; this value is above acceptable of recommended value of 0.50. Therefore, scale seems to be reliable. And it also has sound criterion validity.

At this instant, the following table showed the descriptive analysis of collected data. It started from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Frequency and their percentage are also shown in the below table.

Table-2. Description of Research Questions

	S.D.		**D**		**N**		**A**		**S.A.**		**Total**	
Questions	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**
Know well about dowry system	9	8.8	7	6.9	19	18.6	24	23.5	43	42.2	102	100
In the favor of dowry system	43	42.2	23	22.5	28	27.5	7	6.9	1	1	102	100
Have concerned with dowry system	16	15.7	17	16.7	46	45.1	19	18.6	4	3.9	102	100
Support dowry system in the family	34	33.3	21	20.6	32	31.4	12	11.8	3	2.9	102	100
Prefer marriage in the condition or compulsion of dowry	58	56.9	14	13.7	15	14.7	10	9.8	5	4.9	102	100
Dowry system is more common in arranged marriage as compared to love marriage	7	6.9	10	9.8	30	29.2	27	26.5	28	27.5	102	100
Love marriage can overcome the dowry	16	15.7	17	16.5	37	36.3	21	20.6	11	10.8	102	100
Dowry system is more common among educated people as compared to illiterate	16	15.7	24	23.5	37	36.3	15	14.7	10	9.8	102	100

Dowry system leads the girls to earn from unethical ways	8	7.8	13	12.7	41	40.2	24	23.5	16	15.7	102	100
Dowry system leads to suicide	3	2.9	16	15.7	37	36.3	35	34.3	11	10.8	102	100
Girls become mentally affected due to dowry system	4	3.9	11	10.8	25	24.5	45	44.1	17	16.7	102	100
Parents lose their self-respect under the burden of dowry system	4	3.9	10	9.8	21	20.6	39	38.2	28	27.5	102	100
Muslims are distressing their religion due to dowry system	3	2.9	15	14.7	23	22.5	29	28.4	32	31.4	102	100
Dowry is a cause of increasing greed in society	4	3.9	9	8.8	18	17.6	35	34.3	36	35.3	102	100
Dowry is a cause of increasing conflicts in society	2	2	7	6.9	24	23.5	45	44.1	24	23.5	102	100
Educated people prefer dowry system due to custom in the society	5	4.9	14	13.7	29	28.4	36	35.3	18	17.6	102	100
Dowry system has injected in the blood of nation	5	4.9	8	7.8	24	23.5	36	35.3	29	28.4	102	100
Dowry system creates imbalance in the status of woman	4	3.9	6	5.9	23	22.5	43	42.2	26	25.5	102	100
Our youth should stand against the dowry system	4	3.9	6	5.9	20	19.6	20	19.6	52	51	102	100
Government should take steps to ban the dowry system	2	2	8	7.8	20	19.6	22	21.6	50	49	102	100
Dowry system can share the economic burdens in society	13	12.7	15	14.7	33	32.4	22	21.6	19	18.6	102	100

Note: S.D. = strongly disagree**,** D = disagree**,** N = neutral**,** A = agree, S.A. = strongly agree**.** F = frequency

Above table no. 2 shows research questions on Likert scale. First question is about awareness of dowry system in general public and its result showed that people are well aware of dowry system. Then there is a question about favoritism of dowry system in society and its outcome showed that the people are not in the favor of dowry system. Next question is about concern of dowry among people; its results showed the neutral point of view of respondents. Some results also showed that mostly people do not support dowry or prefer marriage in condition or compulsion of dowry.

Comparison on arrange and love marriage under dowry system showed neutral point of view. Moreover, both illiterate and educated people are involved in dowry as the shown in table. Respondents have the middle-of-the-road remarks about earning of girls from unethical ways and the suicide of girls under pressure of dowry. Mostly respondents agreed that girls become mentally affected due to stress of dowry. Mostly people also agreed that dowry leads parents to lose their self-respect; it may be due to collection of fund or borrowing loans from others to meet the needs of dowry.

Most of the people strongly agreed that Muslims are distressing their religion for the reason of dowry. The greater part of respondents also strongly agreed that dowry system promotes greed in the society and cause of endorsing conflicts in the society. Educated people are engaged in exploiting dowry due to custom in civilization. The majority of people agreed that the dowry system has injected in the blood of society, as it is an Indian Hindus custom and following in Pakistani Muslims.

Dowry system has created imbalance in the status of women in the society as respondents agreed about it. The large number of respondents strongly agreed that youth and government should take stand to ban it in Pakistani civilization. At last, respondents had the neutral remarks about sharing economic burden by dowry system in the society.

Table-3. Reason of exercising dowry

What is the main reason of exercising dowry									
need		**greed**		**custom**		**compulsion**		**Total**	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
9	8.8	50	49	32	31.4	11	10.78	102	100

Table no. 3, shows the reasons of exercising dowry in Pakistan. Results demonstrated that the core reason for putting the dowry into effect was greed. Custom can also be a reason. However, compulsion and need as a reason have lowest scores.

Table-4. Control on dowry system

Preferably who can control the expansion of dowry system													
youth		**government**		**NGOs**		**parents**		**bride**		**all above**		**Total**	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
33	32.35	26	25.5	2	1.96	29	28.4	2	1.96	10	9.8	102	100

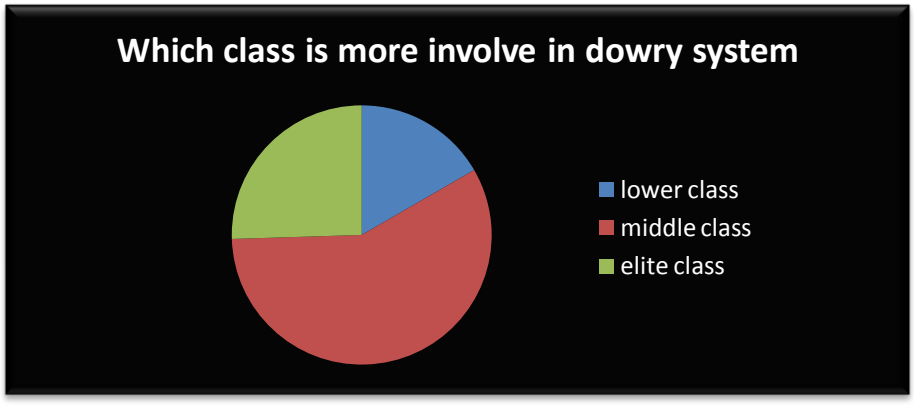
A question was asked about the control on dowry system and its extension. Table no. 4, showed that youth was the most dominant vigor to control the extension of dowry system. Additionally, government and parents of both bride and groom can control and stop the expansion of dowry system. Nevertheless, bride and NGOs have lowest votes.

Table-5. Classes involve in Dowry system

Which class is more involve in dowry system							
lower class		**middle class**		**elite class**		**Total**	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
17	16.7	59	57.8	26	25.5	102	100

In Pakistan there are mainly three classes according to financial distribution. Table no. 5, illustrated the most implicated class in dowry system. Result showed that the most dominant class who exercising Dowry system is middle class as compared to lower and elite class.

Graph: Classes involve in dowry system



Here it is graphical representation of classes involve in dowry system. Above pie chart showed that middle class has the greatest division who are exercising dowry. Lower and elite class has lesser fraction.

Table-6. Demographics Association with Research Questions

	Research questions	P-value
Age	Dowry is a cause of increasing conflicts in society	0.001
Gender	Government should take steps to ban the dowry system	0.04
Occupation	In the favor of dowry system	0.033
	Support dowry system in the family	0.004
	Dowry system is more common among educated people as compared to illiterate	0.039
	Dowry is a cause of increasing conflicts in society	0.003
	Dowry system can share the economic burdens in society	0.002
Monthly income	Love marriage can overcome the dowry	0.013
	Dowry is a cause of increasing greed in society	0.03
	Dowry is a cause of increasing conflicts in society	0.012
	Dowry system has injected in the blood of nation	0.01
Education level	Dowry is a cause of increasing greed in society	0.046
	Dowry is a cause of increasing conflicts in society	0.000
	Dowry system can share the economic burdens in society	0.021

Chi-square test has applied to verify the dependency and independency of research questions with demographics. Only significant values have chosen for concise results. Table no. 6 showed the association of age, gender, occupation, monthly income and education level. Increase of conflicts in the society by dowry is dependent on age, occupation, monthly income and education level as their values are less than 0.05.

Gender has association with banning of dowry system by government. Support and favoritism toward dowry system is dependent on occupation. Moreover, the variable, 'Dowry system is more common among educated people as compared to illiterate" is also showing dependency with occupation. Occupation and education level both have association with sharing of economic burden in society by dowry system. Furthermore, increasing greed in society by dowry is dependent on both education level and monthly income.

DISCUSSION

The study examined the effect of dowry system on Pakistani culture. It is apparent that dowry gives no benefit to society and proved as a social evil. The objectives of this research were to substantiate the effect, favoritism and involvement of people in Dowry system. This research examined imbalance that dowry creates in the status of women and its mental affect on women under the

burden of dowry. Dowry was also a cause of endorsing greed and conflicts in the society. Majority of people has been involved in dowry system whether they are educated or illiterate.

The factors that has attested as restriction to marriage, dowry is critical one. This research demonstrates the knowhow of this evil among Pakistani civilizations and their disagreement about favoring dowry. More or less every person in Pakistan is a victim of dowry. This research illustrates no assistance or gain to overall society but detriment and promotion of supplementary immorality to civilization. To evaluate the phenomenon under consideration dowry system assessment inventory was used. The questionnaire was developed using scientific method. Its reliability (α= 0.74) and validity was established.

The results showed that youth was the most dominant vigor to control the extension of dowry system in Pakistan. Additionally, government and parents of both bride and groom can control and stop the expansion of dowry system. Nevertheless, bride and NGOs have lowest votes in this regards. It was also revealed that the core reason for putting the dowry into effect was greed. Custom can also be a reason. However, compulsion and need as a reason have lowest scores. Awareness regarding dowry system in general public was also evaluated and its result showed that people are well aware of dowry system. And it was also revealed that the people are not in the favor of dowry system. And it was also shown that mostly people do not support dowry or prefer marriage in condition or compulsion of dowry.

Comparison on arrange and love marriage under dowry system showed neutral point of view. Moreover, both illiterate and educated people are involved in dowry. Respondents have the middle-of-the-road remarks about earning of girls from unethical ways and the suicide of girls under pressure of dowry. Mostly respondents agreed that girls become mentally affected due to stress of dowry. Mostly people also agreed that dowry leads parents to lose their self-respect; it may be due to collection of fund or borrowing loans from others to meet the needs of dowry.

Most of the people strongly agreed that Muslims are distressing their religion for the reason of dowry. The greater part of respondents also strongly agreed that dowry system promotes greed in the society and cause of endorsing conflicts in the society. Educated people are engaged in exploiting dowry due to custom in civilization and the majority of people agreed that the dowry system has injected in the blood of society, as it is an Indian Hindus custom and following in Pakistani Muslims. It seems to be difficult to change.

Results have also shown that dowry system has created imbalance in the status of women in the society. The large number of respondents strongly agreed that youth and government should take stand to ban it in Pakistani civilization. Moreover, In Pakistan there are mainly three classes

according to financial distribution. It showed that the most dominant class who exercising dowry system is middle class as compared to lower and elite class.

However, the results of chi- square showed the association of age, gender, occupation, monthly income and education level. Increase of conflicts in the society by dowry is dependent on age, occupation, monthly income and education level as their values are less than 0.05. Gender has association with banning of dowry system by government. Support and favoritism toward dowry system is dependent on occupation. Moreover, the variable, 'Dowry system is more common among educated people as compared to illiterate" is also showing dependency with occupation. Occupation and education level both have association with sharing of economic burden in society by dowry system. Furthermore, increasing greed in society by dowry is dependent on both education level and monthly income.

However, this research has verified that "Dowry is a cause of increasing conflicts in society" is the most crucial factor which has association with age, occupation, monthly income and educational level.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that dowry is an immorality in the society which must be banned in the country. It leads toward promoting many conflicts, quarrels and greed in the civilization. Consequences of this research show that people of Pakistan are well aware of dowry system and its evil abuses. Both love and arrange marriage and both educated and illiterate people are practicing dowry system in the society of Pakistan. Nevertheless, people are not in the favor of this system. Moreover, girls become mentally affected and parents lose their self-respect under the burden of dowry. The foremost reason for exercising dowry is greed. Middle class is one the most involved class in dowry system as compared to lower and middle class. In addition, to control this system youth and government both should take steps.

LIMITATIONS

The research has certain limitations in it and that are as under;

- Due to limited resources and finance only one city Lahore has been taken into account.
- Results of the study are not generalize-able as the data is limited only 102 respondents have been taken into account.
- Data was taken only from urban areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended:

- To expand this research over all the provinces of Pakistan to generalize the results of the study. At the same time sample should be large. It is also recommended to take data from both urban and rural areas.
- There should be NGOs that honestly make efforts to control this system.
- Government should ban this system for each and every class in Pakistan.
- Marriage is a right of every person but dowry is grasping this right. Therefore, youth should take stand against this structure to get their rights.
- Dowry is becoming a convention in the civilization gradually. Thus, parents have to stop demanding dowry.

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