

Marriage as a bond or a burden: A study on married female college teachers of Karachi, Pakistan

By

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Abstract

This study was designed to access the problems faced by married female college teachers experiencing marriage as burden. A cross sectional survey conducted in three colleges of Karachi during Oct 2007 to Mar 2008. 200 Married/separated/divorced women teachers were conveniently selected and interviewed to fill the questionnaires (open and close ended questions). Data was analyzed using SPSS version 16 and frequencies with percentages and p value were calculated for all qualitative variables. Mean with standard deviation was calculated for age (in years) while frequency with percentages were calculated for qualitative scale variables such as type of marriage, sexual satisfaction, economic satisfaction, education level, and domestic quarrels. p values based on chi square and fisher exact test is calculated. Proportion with 95% confidence interval was calculated for women who considered marriage as burden. Proportion of women experiencing marriage as burden with 95% confidence interval was calculated. Ninety- two percent women were postgraduate. Most (76%) of them reported an arranged marriage while 80% had at least one child. Majority (72%) of the women said they were working because their husbands' income was insufficient to meet their needs. 28% (95% CI: 24-31) women considered marriage as a burden. The risk factors identified for considering marriage as a burden included the husband's unfriendly attitude (OR 9.40, 95% CI 4.56- 19.39), not supporting the wife during stressful situations (OR 6.66, 95% CI 3.55-13.25), frequent domestic quarrels (OR 3.23, 95% CI 1.6-6.46) and physical abuse (OR 10.66, 95% CI 5.08-22.33). Whereas the husband's insufficient income was not found to be a risk factor for considering marriage as a burden. The study shows that most of the married college teachers of Karachi believe that marriage is a bond but about one-third of them consider it a burden. With added roles of women in our society i.e. "caregiver" plus "breadwinner", the trend is slowly changing and more women now consider marriage as a burden. Husband's attitude towards the wife plays a major role in making a marriage a bond or a burden. Comparative studies are needed to ascertain the role of these factors.

Keywords: Marriage, Marriage bonding, married life, bond or burden

1. Introduction

One of the devotional and foremost relationships between a man and women is marriage. It involves emotional and legal commitment that is quite important in any adult life (Bernard J., 1984). Marital adjustment as 'the state in which there is an overall feeling in husband and wife of happiness and satisfaction with their marriage and with each other' (Thomas E.J., 1977). Traditionally, marriage has been an exclusive bond between a man and a woman. Yet in recent years this pattern has been changing. A working woman has to balance career, personal life, and raising a family. The women of Pakistan have always experienced disadvantage relative to men of the same class. The problems of married college teachers in Karachi, explains a different aspect and stresses endured by working women in cities (Hussain I., 2008).

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics' Employment Trends Report 2011, female participation in the workforce has increased from 16.3% to 24.4% in the last decade. Yet, while proving to be strong contributors to economic growth, working women still struggle with a number of issues (Hussain I., 2008).

Women in numerous different jobs and from different socio-economic backgrounds illuminate all the various challenges affecting their experiences of working life (Hussain I., 2008).

Marriage is a socially approved sexual and economic union between a man and a woman that is presumed to be more or less permanent and that subsumes reciprocal rights and obligations between the spouses and their children (Thomas, J., 1997). The attitudes towards marriage, family, and sexuality along with the increasing incidence of divorce, have led to some significant changes in the kinds of living arrangements that people find themselves in today (Coombs, R.H., 1991 & Aries.E., 1985).

The birth-rate in most societies around the world has been declining, and the divorce rate has been increasing. Industrial societies tend to encourage nuclear families and to be more permissive of divorce. In addition, greater gender equality and higher levels of education for women offer them more opportunities in terms of supporting their families.

All more developed countries have witnessed an increase in the age of marriage, a decrease in the marriage rate, and an increase in the divorce rate during the last 30 to 40 years, though the change in the rates appears to have stabilized (Cooney T., 1999).

Roles in the modern family have a *trend toward egalitarianism*. The new situation of social life has also brought about changes in the roles and status of husband and wife in the marriage system (Rezac, S., 1994, Lwanga, S.K. & Lameshow, S.).

Pakistan is located in South Asia. It is the sixth most populous country in the world, and the second most populous Muslim country (Lwanga, S.K. & Lameshow, S.). Karachi is a metropolitan and modern city compared to other cities of Pakistan. Its people love glamour and keep themselves up-to-date in terms of fashion, trade, and social activities. They are considered more westernized by the people of other cities of Pakistan, and in many aspects they are very different (Population Mid-2007).

In our country, females choose "Medicine" and "Education" as their profession. The female teachers represent a larger percentage as compared to lady doctors. So, the teachers have been chosen for this study. It is believed that working women have double burden to carry if they are married and have kids. The purpose of doing this study was to analyze that in our setup whether the working women were enjoying their relationship with husband or the trend was changing like western countries.

2. Subjects and methods

A cross sectional survey was conducted in three colleges of Baqai Medical university, Karachi university and Karachi college for women located in cosmopolitan, multiethnic city of Karachi Pakistan during six months period starting October 2007. A WHO sample size calculation software (Population Mid-2007) was used to calculate the required sample size. A minimum sample size of 278 was required while taking 5% bound on error of estimation, 95% confidence level, and assuming 50% proportion of educated married women considering marriage as burden among the population. Study participants working as teacher in any of the above colleges, married/divorced/separated, married life experience of at least 5 years and, consented to participate were selected conveniently and interviewed. Out of 278, only 200 participants consented to participate in the study, making the response rate of 73%. Principal Investigator herself conducted head-on interviews and data was recorded on a pre-coded questionnaire. All of the questionnaires were field edited after each interview to check for legibility, missing fields and any illogical responses. SPSS version 16 was used to enter and analyze the data. In order to identify any typo errors during data entry, 5% of the fields were randomly checked against the physical questionnaires. Mean with standard deviation was calculated for age (in years) while frequency with percentages were calculated for qualitative scale variables such as type of marriage, sexual satisfaction, economic satisfaction, education level, and domestic quarrels. p values based on chi square and fisher exact test is

calculated. Proportion with 95% confidence interval was calculated for women who considered marriage as burden.

3. Results:

200 women were interviewed in the study. Their ages varied from 26 to 58 years. Out of 200, 16(8%) were divorced, 16(8%) were separated and the rest were living with their husbands. 152 (76%) women had arranged marriage, 8 (4%) love and 40 (20%) had both [arranged love marriage]. Almost 76% of the women were not satisfied with the income of their husbands. 20% were not bearing any child while 96% were bearing 4 or less than 4 children. Only 25% women reported that their husband frequently help them in household chores. Similarly, 17% women reported frequent domestic quarrels while 24% reported physical abuse. There was a statistically significant difference between women who considered marriage as bond and those who considered marriage as burden in terms of academic qualification ($p=0.045$), nature of their husbands ($p<0.001$), sexual satisfaction ($p<0.001$), husband helpful during stressful situation or problems faced by wives ($p<0.001$) and any physical abuse by the husbands ($p<0.001$) (Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive characteristics of married women college teachers in Karachi, Pakistan

Characteristics	Marriage as Burden n=56 N (%)	Marriage as Bond n=144 N (%)	Total N=200 N (%)	P value
Satisfaction with husband income:				
- Satisfied	8 (14)	40 (28)	48 (24)	0.045
- Not satisfied	48 (86)	104 (72)	152(76)	
Academic Qualification:				
Intermediate	-	-	-	*
Bachelor Degree	-	16 (11)	16 (8)	
Masters degree	56 (100)	119 (83)	175(87.5)	
M.phil/PhD	-	9 (6%)	9(4.5)	
Bearing children:				
Yes	56 (100)	41 (28)	160 (80)	*
No	-	103(72)	40(20)	
Nature of husband:				
Friendly	24(43)	127(88)	151(75.5)	<0.001
Traditional dominant	24(43)	9(6)	33(16.5)	
Difficult to live with	8(14)	9(6)	17(8)	
Sexual satisfaction from husband:				
Yes	28(50)	135(94)	163(81.5)	<0.001
No	28(50)	9(6)	37(28.5)	
Husband help in case of any problem or stress:				
Yes	24(43)	120(83)	144(72)	<0.001
No	32(57)	24(17)	56(82)	
Physical abuse by husband:				
Yes	32(57)	16(11)	48(24)	<0.001
No	24(43)	128(89)	152(76)	
Domestic quarrels with husband:				
No	-	32(22)	32(16)	-
Occasional	34(60)	88(61)	48(60)	
Frequent	22(40)	24(17)	120(24)	

*p value cannot be calculated due to 0 counts in cell

P value is based on chi square test and fisher exact test where the expected cell count is less than 5%

72% (95% CI: 69%, 75%) women considered that marriage is a bond while 28% (95% CI: 24%, 31%) of them considered marriage as a burden (Table 2). Among them who reported marriage is a bond, 83% were highly educated with a master degree while 50% of their husbands were holding master degree. In contrast who considered marriage as a burden, almost all were holding at least master degree while 55% of their husbands were holding masters and 45% bachelor degree. Monthly income of 104(72%) of husbands was insufficient to fulfill the needs of their family. 41(28%) had no children. According to these women 127(88%) husbands were friendly with their wives. 20(83%) of women believed their husbands helped them out to get rid of their problems or decreased their stress. 16(11%) women faced physical/emotional abuse from their husbands.

Table 2: Proportion of married college teachers considering marriage as bond or burden in Karachi, Pakistan

Proportion(Prevalence) (95% CI*)	
Marriage as Bond	72 % (69% - 75%)
Marriage as burden	28 % (24%-31%)

*95% Confidence Interval

Out of all Ladies who thought marriage is a burden, 6(12%) were married, 4(8%) separated and 4(8%) were divorced. All of them had had qualification of MA/MSc and 31(55%) of them were married with persons having masters qualification. Monthly income of 48(86%) husbands was insufficient to fulfill their and their children requirement. All of them had children. 24(43%) considered their husband as their friends. 32(57%) of women experienced that their husband did not help them out from their mental conflicts/problems or increased their stress. 32(57%) ladies were occasionally physically/emotionally abused by their husband (Table 1).

4. Discussion

Marriage is considered to be a bond by all females of all societies and religions but a slow change is observed in trend which is moving from bond to burden, especially in educated working ladies. There is a long list of factors responsible for it, mainly unsatisfied economic and psychological needs associated with a true companionship. Other less important reasons may be un-fulfillment of sexual and reproductive needs.

Everything around us is in the process of continuous change; same is the case with marriage. Pakistan is a third world country but the speed of changing trends is same as anywhere in the world.

It is evident from the data that arranged marriages are still very common here, even in highly educated women where parents of the bride and groom arrange it for their children. The fact is quite consistent with other studies (Smock, P., 2004).

There is no link of husband's education with the successful marriage; it is derived from the fact that the percentage of higher husband education of women who were enjoying a happy satisfied married life was

less than those who were not satisfied. The finding is inconsistent with a study done by HM Van Den Brink that women appear to be more satisfied with their life if there is an education gap with the partner (both positive and negative) (HM Van Den Brink, 2002).

Finances are the number one reason of divorce. It is important to discuss money issues in this relationship. Most of the unsatisfied married women were found disappointed with the economic status of their husbands and do jobs to fulfill their and their children's needs (Jeanne, K. 2000 & Haq, M. 2000). The finding is in disagreement with a study done by Parron E Min which he reported that income, which is often thought to be associated with levels of satisfaction, have no relationship with it (Parron E. M., 1982).

It is evident from our study that quarter of the working women who think their marriage is a bond, had no children, indicating that even if they don't have children they are happy with that relationship. On the other side all of the working women who thought their marriage is a burden for them have children. It shows that even if the reproduction component of marriage is not satisfied the woman can lead a happy life if other requirements of the marriage are fulfilled (Baqai. M.S., 1998; Zihlman.A., 1981 & Gelles.R. Conte. J., 1990).

Data shows that the main reason of divorce among working ladies was incompatibility of mind with their husbands while they all had children and were economically and sexually satisfied from their husband. Working women may be prone to depression because they bear the double burden of housework and a job outside the home. Because they have to work in two environments, one is the office environment and the other is home environment. Both are vastly different from one to another (Barrera M., Garrison Jones CV. 1988). The study by Bradbury TN states that higher the levels of depression and more the stress lower would be the marital adjustment. It indicates that depressed married woman have to face marital adjustment problems in her married life. She also cannot perform better her married life responsibilities because she is under stress and if a married woman feels stress in her life, it affects her household work, her relationship with spouse and other members of her family. Researchers studied that women feel more depression and stress after marriage and these two factors affect their married life. Because of depression and stress they cannot tolerate their spouses' behavior and immediately get irritated. This makes their life miserable and leads towards breakup (Bradbury T.N. & Fincham F.D., 1990).

More women experience emotional abuse than physical violence. 35% of all women who are or have been in married have experienced emotional abuse. In comparison, 29% of women have been physically assaulted by their male partners (Statistics Canada, 1998). Our data shows 57% ladies were physically/emotionally abused by their husband.

There is a list of six areas of marital adjustment, which is defined by the psychologist, such as, religion, social life, mutual friends, in laws, money and sex (Lazarus RS. & Delingis A., 1983). Another psychologist defines ten areas of marital adjustment, i.e. values, couple growth, communication, conflict resolution, affection, roles, cooperation, sex, money and parenthood (Margolin G., 1980). A study on marriage and marital adjustment in USA presents social activities and recreation, training and disciplining of children, religion, in law relationship, financial matters, sexual relationship, communication, mutual trust and companionship as the areas of marital adjustment (Smith, 1961). It is evident from the results of our survey that there are four factors on which the success of marriage depends, they are:

1. Mental compatibility or psychological satisfaction.
2. Sexual intimacy in marriage.
3. Reproduction.
4. Finances in marriage.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that Marriage cannot be a burden for married working women if at least two of purposes of marriage out of four (Mental compatibility or psychological satisfaction, Sexual intimacy, Reproduction, Financial matters), are served but the mental compatibility is the compulsory component to be fulfilled with any of the three other factors identified by the study.

One quarter of the working college teachers of Karachi believe marriage as a bond but trend is moving slowly towards the belief of marriage as a burden with added roles of women in our society i.e. “caregiver” plus “breadwinner”.

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Marriage as a bond or a burden: A study on married female college teachers of Karachi, Pakistan

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