

Dowry Cultural Aspect: Community Response In District Malakand

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Abstract

This paper shed light on community response over a cultural aspect of dowry system in District Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A total of 230 respondents were selected through simple random sampling procedure to portray information. Chi-square χ^2 and Gamma statistics were used to determine the level of association and strength and direction of the relationship. 85.2% of the respondents believed that dowry is arranged to remind forefather status. 83.0% of the respondents emphasized that dowry demand is part of culture. 94.3% of the respondents opined that huge dowry is arranged to show family supremacy. Moreover, at bivariate level Gamma ($\chi^2 = 1.000$) showed a highly positive and a significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship between respondents perception that dowry is arranged to remind forefather status. Also, Gamma ($\chi^2 = 1.000$), showed a highly positive and significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship while analyzing that dowry demand is part of culture. While projecting the relationship of phenomena that dowry is an integral part of Pakhtun culture. A highly positive ($\chi^2 = 1.000$) and significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship was noticed. The public awareness campaign is the very essential, special seminars, symposium and talk shows by the participation of Religious leaders/scholars need be arranged both on print and electric media to highlight the gruesome picture of dowry system. Special courts should take up the death cases and outcome of the dowry related issues where exemplary punishment be accorded through highlighting it with the help of social media.

Key Words: Community, Cultural Aspect, Dowry, Measurement, KPK Malakand Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

In most of the South Asian countries the practice of dowry system is considered a major social problem. The South Asian Governments realized the bad consequences of dowry but unable to eradicate the problem of dowry as in most of the cultures it is warmly accepted (Davis, 2007; and Davis, 2010). Another contributing factor is that woman has given the right to heritage and rights of material goods by the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat), where as daughter is the owner of half of the property as compared with sons, inherent from parents. Usually, the dowry arranged for the woman at her marriage is considered as her inheritance which is commonly less than the inheritance rights under the law (Donnan, 1988; and Patel, 1979). There are various sources to raise dowry like money on loan from relatives and nongovernmental organizations and loans paid back by selling land or livestock like buffalo, cow, goat etc. One of the research studies found that 27% interest-bearing from nongovernmental organizations. But the actual value is much higher than the findings of research. It has been observed that for most poor

families it is very difficult to arrange dowries for the marriage of their daughters (Davis, 2007; and Davis, 2010).

MEANING AND DEFINITIONS OF DOWRY

The word dowry has a different meaning as it is considered a gift to make a bond between two families. These gifts are like jewelry clothes, or some domestic utensils. Dowry is also considered as "groom price" which the bride family gives to groom family as a gift to show agreement on the marriage (Indira, 1983). Dowry can be defined as that money, property and other material objects which a woman carries herself to the husband home in the marriage (Human rights Commission of Pakistan, 2006). Dowry means the things which the Dowry Bride's family gives to groom's family e.g. some amount of money, jewelry and the property like land, vehicles, flats etc (Prasanthi, 2002). Dowry can also be defined as goods and money which the bride's family gives to the husband family; it is considered to help the husband family to some extent in the marriage expenses (Julie Mullins, 1998).

DOWRY AND ISLAM

In Islam the idea of dowry was to set a precedent to give gifts to the daughter when she gets married and leaves the house. These are the gifts which parents could easily give on their will without being forced by anyone. But now the groom's family often demands a large dowry and don't get embarrassed that they are openly showing their material intentions. As Pakistan is an Islamic country peoples obey the orders of Islam strictly, it is in the religion Islam that man must pay Maher to the woman at the time of marriage In Islamic societies the dower money or mahr is paid or fixed before the marriage. It is completely up a right of the bride to decide about her mahr. This mahr is given by parents as a sign of love and daughter right in family property not for any return the husband can enjoy it only if the wife permits it, otherwise not (Engineer, 1992). A religious scholar highlighted that a person who wants to leave his wife and got married to another woman. It is obligatory on him to give all things i.e. (Mahar), though it may be a huge amount of wealth. The "Mahr" is given in exchange for the right to enjoy marital relations (The News, 2009).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To find out community response towards dowry system in the study area.
- 2) To examine Community Response on Cultural Aspect of Dowry
- 3) To produce suggestions to eliminate the problem of dowry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The area selected for this study was Union Council Thana Khas of Town Thana, District Malakand. This union council was selected purposively as the people of this area demands dowry and women are more violated by dowry. As a number of families in union council Thana Khas constitutes 449 (population census report, 1998).A sample size of 230 was randomly selected as per criteria devised by Uma and Sekaran (2003). Data was collected through well structured/scale interview schedule. The collected data was analyzed by using uni-variate and bi-variate analysis respectively. At uni-variate level percentages and frequencies were used to know about the phenomena of Dowry in the study area. At bivariate

level chi-square (χ^2) test was applied to the determined relationship between (Cultural Aspect) on the phenomena of Dowry. The Chi-square χ^2 was using while adopting the procedure outlined by Mac Call, (1975). Gamma was used by applying the procedures applied by Nachmias and Nachmias (1981) to determine the strength and direction between independent and dependent variable.

Frequency Distribution of Cultural Aspect and Dowry

Different societies have cultural variations as social attachments to the dowry system. The results showed that out of 100%, 85.2% of the respondents believed that dowry is arranged to remind forefather status. 77.8% of the respondents opined that culture foresees sound hand of marriage due to dowry. Similarly, 83.0% of the respondents emphasized that dowry demand is part of culture. 94.3% of the respondents opined that huge dowry is arranged to show family supremacy. Also 89.6% negated that cash payment to groom family is a prevailing custom. Similarly, 66.5% respondents negated that dowry is an integral part of Pakhtun culture,

Bivariate Analysis of Community Response on Cultural Aspect of Dowry

On probing the relationship between respondents perception that dowry is arranged to remind forefather status and impacts of dowry. Gamma ($\gamma = 1.000$) showed a highly positive and a significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship. The positive sign indicates that people understood that dowry payment has a strong association with maintaining forefather status. It could further spread of the historic roots of dowry in the existing social system. Similarly, Ram (1993) stated that due to social customs and traditions dowry is becoming a necessary part of marriage. Furthermore, people give and take dowry because it is practiced in the families from generation to generation. The study further explored respondent's perception that dowry demand is part of the culture with its impacts. Gamma ($\gamma = 1.000$), showed a highly positive and significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship between respondents emphasized that dowry demand is part of culture. It is evident from these findings that culture existing support system for dowry. Similarly, according to Patlagaen (1996) in Taiwan, medieval Western Europe dowry practice is very common in arranged marriages. Furthermore, the traditional Chinese practice of exchanging marriage payments in both directions i.e. from groom and bride families (Parish and Willis, 1993). The study also examined respondent's perception that huge dowry is arranged to show family economic strength and impacts of dowry. ($\gamma = 1.000$), discovered a highly positive and significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship. It could be meant that dowry is now a status symbol and has a deep rooted social impacts. Mostly, people arrange huge dowries only to show their high social and economic status to the groom family. Expenditure on dowry arrangement in the marriage of "Janis and Rajputs" daughters is a good example just to show their higher family status and prestige in the society (Ram, 1993). Furthermore, the study showed highly positive ($\gamma = 1.000$) and significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship detected between cash payment to groom family is a prevailing custom and its impacts. It shows that such practices are prevalent in the study area. Results of Birodkar (1994) pointed out that due to the prevailing norms of dowry arrangement educated families are not free from this practice, most of the families pay dowry in cash form or in other material form to the groom families. Also, Wimvincken (2007) argue that during arranged marriages in Europe and South Asia transfer of wealth in the form of property, jewelry or in cash form is very commonly practices. While projecting the relationship of phenomena that dowry is an integral part of Pakhtun culture and its impacts. A highly positive ($\gamma =$

1.000) and significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship was noticed, it indicates that Pakhtun culture also is an exception rather dowry is paid in culture and spirit with little norms for those who do not know as reported by National Crime Record Bureau(2010). Similarly, BBC News (1999) reported that in KPK thousands of women had become victims of dowry deaths. Similarly, Gamma ($\gamma = 1.000$), indicated a highly positive and a significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship between dowry is socially acceptable phenomena, and impacts of dowry acceptance. Similarly, according to Sarfaraz (2008) in both India and Pakistan dowry is a massive social ill as a lot of women has been violated by dowry. Bride burning and physical punishment are the most frequent for girls who brings insufficient dowry. The study further examined respondent's perception that culture foresees sound hand of marriage due to dowry and its impacts. A significant ($P < 0.05$) and highly positive Gamma ($\gamma = 1.000$) relationship identified between culture foresees sound hand of marriage due to dowry. These findings are supported by the results obtained that in Christian community in Pakistan at the time of daughter's marriage dowry is paid in the form of different goods including TV, Refrigerator, furniture, and utensils, etc. Also, dowry is paid in shape of money and mostly it ranges up to 300,000 (three hundred thousand) Rupees. On examining the respondent's perception that dowry is considered as evil in your culture, Gamma ($\gamma = 1.000$), showed a high positive and significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship. No dowry or low amount of dowry always leads the bride groom in turbulent condition as discovered by BBC News (1999) that thousands of women are becoming victims of dowry deaths in KP since long.

Table-I: Showing the Relationship between Community Response on Cultural Aspect of Dowry

Attributes		Perception on cultural aspect of dowry			Total	Statistics
		Yes	No	Don't Know		
Dowry is arranged to remind forefathers status	Yes	107(46.5)	89(38.7)	0(0.0)	196 (85.2)	$X^2=99.565$ (0.000) $\gamma=.964$
	No	0(0.0)	30 (13.0)	3(1.3)	33(14.3)	
	Don't Know	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(0.4)	1(0.4)	
Dowry demand is part of culture.	Yes	107(46.5)	84(36.5)	0(0.0)	191(83.0)	$X^2=155.456$ (0.000) $\gamma=1.000$
	No	0(0.0)	35(15.2)	2(0.9)	37(16.1)	
	Don't Know	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(0.9)	2(0.9)	
Huge dowry is arranged to show family supremacy/strength.	Yes	107(46.5)	110 (47.8)	0(0.0)	947(36.3)	$X^2=73.974$ (0.000) $\gamma=-1.000$
	No	0(0.0)	9(3.9)	4(1.7)	13(5.7)	
	Don't Know	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	
Cash payment to groom family is a prevailing custom	Yes	7(3.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	7(3.0)	$X^2=68.145$ (0.000) $\gamma=-1.000$
	No	100(43.5)	106 (46.1)	0(0.0)	206(89.6)	
	Don't Know	0(0.0)	13(5.7)	4(1.7)	17(7.4)	
Dowry is an integral part	Yes	70(30.4)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	70(30.4)	$X^2=243.597$

of pakhtun culture	No	37(16.1)	118(50.4)	0(0.0)	153(66.5)	(0.000)
	Don't Know	0(0.0)	3(1.3)	4(1.7)	7(3.0)	=1.000
Dowry is socially acceptable phenomena	Yes	107(46.5)	13(5.7)	0(0.0)	120(52.2)	$X^2=261.396$
	No	0(0.0)	99(43.0)	0(0.0)	99(43.0)	(0.000)
	Don't Know	0(0.0)	7(3.0)	4(1.7)	11(4.8)	=1.000
Culture foresees sound hand of marriage due to dowry	Yes	107(46.5)	72(31.3)	0(0.0)	179(77.8)	$X^2=125.814$
	No	0(0.0)	39(17.0)	0(0.0)	39(17.0)	(0.000),
	Don't Know	0(0.0)	8(3.5)	4(1.7)	12(5.2)	=1.000
Dowry is considered as evil in your culture	Yes	107(46.5)	118 (51.3)	0(0.0)	225(97.8)	$X^2=183.373$
	No	0(0.0)	1(0.4)	4(1.7)	5(2.2)	(0.000)
	Don't know	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	=1.000

Number in table represent frequencies and number in parenthesis represent percentage proportion of respondents

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study focused on determining the relationship of community response on cultural aspects of dowry. It was depicted from this study that in the study area the practice of dowry is socially and culturally accepted. Though the study highlights dowry is considered as an evil that leads to so many problems like corruption, like nonmarrying of girls, deaths due to nonpayment of dowry were also surfaced as the clearest cultural and social reality in the study area. It was also found that Dowry demand is part of culture. Huge dowry is arranged to show family supremacy/ strength and to revive forefather's status. People also consider dowry gifts, the right of daughters as per religious injunctions.

From the study findings the following recommendations were strengthened to address the negative effects of dowry system.

- 1 It was needed that religious leaders/scholars aware people that demand of huge dowry are a bad practice as due to dowry demands most of the girls remains unmarried.
- 2 The public awareness campaign is the very essential, special seminars, symposium and talk shows need be arranged both on print and electric media to highlight the gruesome picture of dowry system.
- 3 Economic stress out of the practices should be highlighted, was social mechanism of check and control ought to be designed through the voluntary approach in society.
- 4 Special courts should take up the death cases and outcome of the dowry related issues where exemplary punishment be accorded through highlighting it with the help of social media.

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