



## **Late Marriages and Moral Conduct: Ethnography of Males of District Khanewal**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Delayed marriage is particularly an ingrained socio-cultural trend among the masses, which is widely prevalent in the Middle East, West Asia, United States and North Africa. The escalating concern about the prevention of health issues, challenged physical condition and psychological disorders among the offspring have led majority of the couples to seek counselling, considering it an imperative aspect of their marital relationship. Despite its advantage, such an approach has caused social confusion and disorder in the society too resulting in delayed marriages. In this regard, the delayed marriage is an interesting anthro-biological problem widespread among the people of Khanewal city. In the face of such challenged physiological functioning of the individuals and the unreliable existing multi-layered treatment mechanism; masses customarily observe and practice this phenomenon.*

**Keywords:** *Late Marriage, Late Cousin Marriage, Treatment mechanism, Genetic diseases, Khanewal city.*

### **1 Introduction**

Marriage is one of the most intense unions illustrating the social contract between two people, traditionally based on an intimate relationship. The nature of this relationship is respectively characterized by spouses and potentially dominates the overall experiences they encounter during their marital life. The universality of marriage does not mean that every adult in every society gets married. It only reflects that a large number of people in various societies prefer to pursue matrimonial relationship at least once in their life time. Marriage and family, the two social institutions with biological foundation, are complementary to each other and retain an olden standing history of their own (Bhadra, 2000). Significantly, marriage is the most common and globally recognized social institution adhered to balance and regulate the physiological desires of human beings.

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Marriage merely means a socially approved sexual and economic union between a woman and a man. Other than the parents and their young offspring, the family often comprises of added members hence increasing the individual count. Although the purpose, meaning and the context, of this specific union varies across cultures yet it exists and is recognized as an all-embracing institution worldwide (Frank, 2007).

## **1.2 LATE MARRIAGE**

Late marriage could be described as conjugal relationship between different genders which is done belatedly. At this juncture, a philosophical question has to be raised as to whether a medical doctor can determine someone's marital age. In response to the raised concern, the medical doctor at the University stated that it is medically possible to predict the qualified marital age for both opposite sex in two ways: Physiological aspect and developmental milestones achieving aspect (Isen & Betsey, 2010).

As for the latter, this phase is considered as a crucial one for women, because a sequence of events occur, resulting in adult physical characteristics and the capacity to reproduce. Additionally, another perspective of physiological aspect is to determine age through the production process ability. The practice of inequality of age among the couples has been rubbing and prevailing in most of the existing norms in Islam. Nevertheless, experience that had been earned by some people about different matrimonial home calamities inspired them to say it boldly that equality is a very essential requirement people should also put into consideration in the course of joining two dissimilar genders together (Jose-Miller et al., 2007).

## **1.3 Worldwide Prevalence of Late Marriage**

In the United States, the decades from the 1970s to the 1990s have been an era of rising social and economic inequality, as well as the period when family patterns diverged across socio-economic strata (Kaur, 2000). Delayed marriage is an unmistakable trend in the United States. By the early 1990s, median marriage age had risen to its highest level in the 20th century, for both women and men. Hence, whatever consequences followed from delayed marriage are affecting increasing numbers of American couples. Second, the small amount of research on the trends in the timing of union formation produces results comparable to other studies on the timing of marriage formation (Nag & Praveen, 2013).

In context to several dimensions and outcomes of marriage that are associated with delayed union, the most popular theme extensively analyzed is the rate of marital dissolution. According to the study, a positive relationship between maturity and adulthood-marriage was uncovered. And it reflected that the mature couples experienced enhanced marital satisfaction along improved role performance and responsible behavior. It's the immaturity that couples may experience when they live more years of their adult lives before marrying, a positive relation between age at marriage, spouse's marital role performance, and marital satisfaction. More recent research indicates that men who marry later tend to do a more significant share of housework (Femmes, 2001).

Furthermore, contemplating over a critical notion in the historical demography demonstrate the age at which masses initially marry at least in Western Europe is a

fundamental determinant of population growth. While in Pakistan, the demographic theory depicts the central feature of delay in women's age at first marriage through the identification of progressive and advanced factors like women education and urban place of residence (Anwar et.al, 2015).

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

Practice of late marriages in Khanewal is basically due to caste, land securing social stigma, education and economic outlook. Caste refers to an ethnic group, one group considers itself superior to the other group. Many people are marrying in relatives who have a particular caste. Since they have an ethnic affiliation they enjoy good relationship with each other. They help each other financially and morally in challenging times like marriages, deaths and birth of newborn and the traditions that are associated with it. They have to take loan from bank in difficult times especially for the marriages of the girls. So the feeling of depression concerning the children's marriages is a dominant thinking process. In an agriculture society dowry necessarily exists in a culture. While the deference is a social obligation, it is not easy to find partners in depression. The continuing stressful situation leads to emergence of various diseases and ultimate death in the family.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To identify the perception and causes behind late marriages among men and women
2. To determine how late marriage affects the individual's social life.
3. To analyze the problems faced by the individual family and the community.
4. To learn about the fertility rate of the families.

#### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

There were multiple researches conducted in various cities of Pakistan, including Southern Punjab, to evaluate the impact and the advantages of delayed marriage. Yet, Khanewal was excluded from the related research, despite of suffering from the dilemma of late marriages where individuals experienced delayed marriage in greed of their ecstatic youth and nonchalant attitude.

It was over-arching for researcher to understand the phenomena of why people preferred late marriage when it triggered more personal and social harm. Hence, the present research provides relevant and pertinent information about the entire discourse and also unveils the diagnosis and the treatment process of genetic problems practiced by the indigenous healers.

## **2 Review of literature**

### **2.1 DELAYED MARRIAGE AND RISK OF INFERTILITY**

Saleem et al. (N.D) conducted an exploratory study in Rawalpindi and identified that Pakistan is one of the South Asian countries where the trend of late marriages significantly influences the fertility phenomenon. Late marriage and infertility, perceived as a bio-cultural issue and an important fragment of the society implies a deep relationship and value inclusively. Following such socio-cultural development, the reasons revealed

behind the delayed marriage are often the education of women, caste system, notion of idealistic life and economic empowerment.

As claimed by the researchers, (Saleem, Chaudhry & Riza 2015), the findings of the study unveiled the inclination towards delayed marriage and highlighted that it is practiced to preserve alliance.

Although the strong social ties and biological issue of infertility runs simultaneously the spectrum of this relationship is ambiguously established. The men and women who remain involuntarily childless often do not suffer as devastating an impact as one might suppose. Menken and Larsen (1986) provide a useful estimate of the proportion of women who postpone a birth and will remain involuntarily childless due to biological sub fecundity. Women who wait until they step into their thirties to conceive clearly experience an increased probability of remaining childless; yet retain a high probability of securing parenthood once. (Haldane 1936, Nazarabadi, Rezaeetalab & Dastfan 2006; Bittleet *al.*, 1991).

To evaluate the probable fear of childlessness associated with delayed childbearing, one needs to reckon not only the likelihood, which delays childlessness, but also the anxiety and apprehension of the women who become involuntarily childless. Numerous studies have attempted to measure the net costs of childlessness directly, and have yielded mixed findings with diverse outcomes.(Bittle& Black 2010).

The Psychological Distress on the consequences of childlessness show consistent negative associations between childlessness and health, life satisfaction and marital satisfaction, but these studies have been criticized for non-random sampling, inappropriate statistical procedures, over-reliance on self-reports, and failure to account for the procession and socially conditioned nature of the infertility experience.

Lastly, childlessness may have few long-term damaging consequences for many individuals and particularly for women, but intense and detailed research on the life course effects of involuntary childlessness is undeniably required (Modell & Darr, 2002).

### **3 Materials and Method**

The inhabitants of Khanewal were the target population of the study who were considered as the sufferers also. It was acknowledged that late marriage was also majorly practiced amongst the relatives and cousins. Reference to the sample size which includes the number of the respondents from the locale, the current research incorporated 5 case studies regarding late marriages and 190 in-depth interviews. Researcher opted for the snowball sampling technique to acquire authentic information in limited time period and minimum resources since it was unfeasible and impractical to conduct interviews of the entire population.

Sampling is one of the central and most beneficial methods through which researcher disciplines his schedule and sketches timeline, monitors the budget and designs a multi-dimensional strategy for thorough analysis. Principally, this technique helps to create fragments of the massive population according to the defined strata and target groups. For this study, researcher applied the qualitative method to collect information

through case studies and conducted in-depth interviews for comprehensive investigation. Moreover a semi-structured interview-guide was essentially prepared for probing and retrieving information from the participants. It assisted to configure the situation and assemble the record properly.

#### **4 Results and discussion**

Thematic analysis is recognized as a technique in which various themes extracted from the case studies are compiled according to the defined objectives. In the context of scanned dry data as well as the case studies these themes are explained. The upper case studies having following themes are given below as:-

##### **4.1 Family Pressures is the Reason of the delayed Marriage**

Family pressures cause the delay in marriage which is laden with myriad problems such as stigmatization, financial crisis, psychological issues, reproduction dilemma and brittle social ties.

*When I turned 15, I married, Fakhir, my spouse, out of desperation. His mother pitched proposal for me because there was no one to cook at their home. I married for their convenience and I am Fakhir's second wife. He said he loved his first wife, Rukhsana, and has two children with her too. I think he uses my salary to support her as well. Fakhir is unreliable, he goes to work sometimes, and takes the rest of my salary for gambling. Fourteen years later, broken limbs and teeth along with miscarriages became a routine for me. I don't know why does he meet her? Maybe he sees me as an animal with no rights, or a punching bag for his frustrations. He surely does not see me as a living and breathing human being. Wherever I have worked, I have felt as though I have been treated like a person, not the way I am treated at my home. I realize that I deserve to be valued as a respected individual.. We fight over the money all the time. I want to educate my children and want to earn for my children and our home. My husband demands me to hand over the entire salary on the day I receive it from work otherwise he would beat me. However, I secretly keep the fees and rent because I don't trust what he would do with it as I am the primary breadwinner. When I had my last baby, she was only seven months old, when I returned to work.*

Facts and figures also reveal that poverty and social circumstances create hindrances for the individuals seeking marital relationship. Sometimes respondents consumed drugs for the sake of leisure and elation. This activity is often contemplated and confused with the socio-economic status of an individual which falls under the domain of false consciousness. Studies have confirmed that probability of addiction and advance mode of living is not directly related to each other.

“My brothers reside in different cities due to challenging socio-economic circumstances and employment purpose. This is the reason my mother and I had to stay together at our native home. She used to earn by working in different houses which provided me a chance to dwell in the company of my friends who were modern and involved in various unethical activities like late night parties and dancing.”

There are varied reasons for the drug dependence or the addiction which initiate usually due to conflicted family system, separation from the spouse or domestic violence. Consequently, isolation creates anxiety and depression that affects the psychological and

social behaviors of the individuals. Such circumstances lead them to observe and adopt coping strategies through the dependence on drugs.

#### **4.2 According to a case study**

“In my family, everyone knew that my husband forced me to take drugs. As my relation was complicated with him, I decided to seek separation. Eventually, he divorced me and I was supposed to manage my affairs alone. No one I knew what supported me and I found relief through drug addiction only. I found the company where drug usage was common among the group but it affected my health and moral conduct. I completely ignored my children and home because of lack of self-awareness.

#### **4.3 Separation with Spouse and Relationship Disruption**

Over the broad-spectrum it is observed that patriarchal society structure and practices, domestic problems, divorce and destructive relationship generate the tendency to rely on drugs. “My husband was wealthy yet his social conduct was inappropriate. He had extra-marital relationship with several women and used to invite and entertain them by offering drugs and alcohol. One day out of curiosity I also smoked, which added to my comfort and relaxation. Gradually, I turned into permanent drug addict. My husband and I had an abusive relationship which resulted in divorce. When I returned to my mother’s place, depression becomes the intense reason of my drug addiction.

#### **4.4 Decision to Recover and Restore Well-being**

According to the surveys and securitized data results, it is noticed that addiction has a substantial impact on the health and social wellbeing of the sufferers. Our normative patterns disapprove of women using drugs therefore they are inclined towards its elimination. However, women who consume drugs are more likely to be stigmatized by society than male drug addicts, because of the stereotypes associated with the roles and responsibilities of both genders. It is generally believed that drug dependency violates the social and cultural norms of behavior and particularly in context of women; masses comprehend it as an alienated concept of pleasure or relief which cannot be associated with the feminine. This activity basically deviates from the customary expectations of women as wives, mothers, daughters and nurturers of families. Therefore, women are more likely to camouflage their drug using behavior to secure their status and respect in the society.

#### **4.5 As Case Study uncovers**

“Everyone in my family perceived me as a strange creature as if I had done something wrong. My uncle and aunt, living in my neighborhood, felt that I was getting weaker day by day. They became aware of my involvement in the drugs. First, I tried to conceal it but was followed and traced. They informed my parents who hurriedly returned from abroad after realizing the gravity of the situation. They advised me to undertake the treatment as I had a serious responsibility of my children’s’ well-being. Finally, upon family insistence, I agreed. My mother and sister admitted me in treatment center where initially I was confused and worried.”

#### **4.6 Societal Stereotypes about Seeking the Treatment**

Factors such as cultural norms confine women to their houses, and vicinity. Their priority is supposed to be the upbringing of the children and completion of the house

chores. Such situation elaborates that women experience plenty of problems in accessing outpatient programs that are distantly organized from their residential communities.

Conclusively, it is challenging for the women to arrange conveyance, find appropriate mode of travel to seek treatment and accomplish other tasks efficiently.

Females faced opposition from the majority when they desired to seek drug addiction treatment. It could question their notion of prestige in the society. They remained apprehensive about the decision because it would result in vulnerability, sense of insecurity, and distortion of their image. As cited by the respondent:

*“It was the terrible phase of my life. My brother argued about my treatment procedure and the admission to the treatment center was the central concern of my uncle as well. He asserted to seek the treatment within the boundaries otherwise it would bring shame to the family. Furthermore, it was not possible to resume it at home either, under family care. That could be shattering. “My husband had already left me so whenever I returned to my mother’s house from treatment center, it would be a hassle. I faced immense pressure and problems due to my family members and neighbors who critically analyzed my situation by declaring that was not a good woman.”*

#### **4.7 Preferred Mode of Treatment**

There were four treatment choices utilized by the respondents of this study. The patients who were economically sound and could bear the expense, visited doctor for the treatment of consanguineous diseases. And this suggestion of consulting doctor was reaffirmed by the neighbors and literate relatives. The second choice of treatment was confiding in indigenous healers for examining the complexity of the entire issue. Respondents usually entrusted the indigenous healers because of their faith and conventional approach or practice. Similarly, usage of the amulets was another method to restore wellbeing of the sufferers. Respondents assumed that the genetic problems occur due to furiousness of God and wearing amulets would protect them from the evil and plight of humanity. These types of individual slack basic knowledge and skill to rationally present or comprehend a stance. Last but not the least, drug addicts visited religious figures and saints for the purpose of treatment. Most of the respondents mentioned that the written prescription will provide relief if soaked in water and consumed accordingly.

#### **4.8 Reason to Partially Rely on Doctor**

The majority of respondents who partially believed in the doctor were suffering from epilepsy. When the epilepsy symptom surfaced, the patient assumed it the devil’s strike. (BhootPareet). Moreover, the genetic diseases are chronic ones with prolonged healing. In this way, patient discovers an escape to avert doctor and count on the indigenous and spiritual healers. The research was conducted among the Muslim community which also explicit the Muslim belief on spiritual healing process. In this way, they relied solely on God for the entire episode and wasted minimum time focusing on the cause of the disease. Additionally, they favor the consanguinity on the basis of blood purity and ethnocentrism, for instance the Syed caste and their clan were the most affected ones, diagnosed with genetic issues of color blindness, epilepsy and hard diseases.

#### **4.9 Healers and Treatment of Various Diseases**

Indigenous healers have a pivotal role and position in our society in particular the rural population admires and follows their teachings, mode of healing and practices wholeheartedly. Reviewing this stance, the people of Khanewal district cannot be excluded from the league. For the treatment of genetic diseases like epilepsy, heart diseases, kidney diseases, color blindness, thalassemia and sickle cell anemia and mental retardation they observe the traditional practices.

#### **4.10 Discussion**

People who celebrate matrimony with their close kin or kin from the same family experience delayed marriage usually. Since family marriage is termed as the late marriage. It is an interesting and socio-biological issue faced all over the world. Acknowledging that late marriage is harmful for well-being and psychological functioning; the people nonetheless find it attractive and pragmatic enough to observe. The interpretation and the analyses of acquired data concludes that alternative hypothesis is verified in the present research, i.e., increased level of late marriage results in greater risk of genetic disorders. The statistical information also obtained about the relationship between delayed marriage and the occurrences of genetic diseases illustrates positive correlation between both. The research demonstrated that the people who seek cousin marriage nourish the physiologically challenged infants. And this analysis was supported through the Edward Westermarck theory of childhood familiarity. The childhood familiarity theory suggested that the children who reside with one another all their childhood have minimum sexual desires towards each other. In this way, during delayed marriage, the family members and cousins live together (Bittle et al, 2001 & Westermarck, 1920). Cousin marriages increase the risk of genetic problems. As human inbreeding theory stated that the sexual relationships of family members have defected progeny (Strauss, 1955). The research confirms that people prefer cousin marriages for retaining the blood purity which is considered as a significant notion of ethnocentrism. And on the basis of ethnocentrism people title themselves as superior hence only enhancing social networking among their clan and caste. They do not get married among other families. According to the alliance theory the family marriages create bond between the families and these empowered groups' in-turn exhibit their supremacy and influence over the suppressed population. Moreover, cousin marriages are being practiced to confine the wealth in the single family. Correspondingly, if we emphasize on the social capital theory, it reveals the cost and benefits of human relationships (Homans, 1961). The cost and benefit of cousin marriage is confined to wealth and blood purity patterns. And the single family as well as the blood purity can also be found. Majority of the subjects were aware of severe impacts of cousin marriages on the next generation. Consanguineous marriage is a lethal marriage for health. Majority of the rural population perceives the cousin marriage as the finest marriage among all especially in context of religion. People do not check the risk of late marriage. As a result, most of the people are suffering various genetic problems in district Khanewal.



## 5 Conclusion

Delayed marriage is mainly a social biological problem for the people of Khanewal district. The dynamic nature of this dilemma develops the curiosity to discern the reasons and motive behind delayed marriage. Importantly, in spite of recognizing the risks of genetic disorder and imbalance, masses stick to such practices to secure wealth, preserve the blood purity, ethnocentrism and the caste.

In context of the district populace suffering from several genetic diseases, like thalassemia, sickle cell anemia, epilepsy, color blindness and mental illness, the treatment mechanism involves healing and medical procedures. Whereas, the spiritual healing comprises of amulets and prescriptions distributed and approved by the saints.

The cousin marriage not only augments the risk of genetic issues but also adds to the economic burden of the family. From cousin marriages, the various chronic diseases come into existence. These chronic diseases take bigger time span to cure. The longer time span consumes unlimited resources and economic burden becomes evident. The current research also confirms that many patients of consanguineous risks mentioned that hefty amount of their revenue has been invested in the treatment of these diseases.

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