

A STUDY OF DOWRY AND MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENTS IN A RURAL AREA OF DISTRICT FAISALABAD

Tabinda Anjum, 'Niaz Hussain Malik & 'Saeed Ahmad Khan

*Department of Rural Sociology & 'Department of Agri. Education,
University of Agriculture, Faisalabad*

Dowry has become an essential part of marriage practices in Pakistan. With the passage of time, it has become a curse, particularly for the low socio-economic part of the society. This situation necessitates thorough probing and systematic research to assess the gravity of the problem. The study was conducted on a sample of 150 married rural women in the village 66/G.B. situated on Jaranwal road, district Faisalabad. Data were collected with the help of an interview schedule. It was revealed that in majority of the cases, the marriages were held with their first cousins and the dowry was expected by in-laws in some form or the other. It was further found that the value of the dowry was non-significantly related with marital adjustment.

Key words: dowry, marriage, rural area

INTRODUCTION

Family is one of those social institutions which are accepted by individuals due to long established traditions. A family unit cannot come into existence without the institution of marriage, since the institutions of family and marriage are interdependent.

Marriage in Islam is not a private and personal affair of an individual or between the two individuals, but is a matter of concern for the society to which they belong.

The marriage under such a situation needs social recognition and hence the display of pomp and show in various forms and ceremonies is observed in which dowry is considered to be the most important one.

The literal meaning of the word dowry is "the money, goods or estate which a woman brings to her husband in marriage" (Webster, 1979). The basic idea behind the dowry system has been to provide some financial assistance to the married couple in terms of clothing, utensils, furniture, etc. to enable them to start an independent life. In many societies, the daughters are generally deprived of the landed property of their parents, thus dowry is considered a sort of compensation for that deprivation. But with the passage of time, the dowry has become an unbearable burden for the parents particularly for those who have poor economic conditions. However, in this society, dowry is considered as a key to the future marital adjustment. If the parents of the bride belong to higher social class, the amount of dowry given acts as a symbol of pride and respect for them. Therefore, they spend lavishly on dowry. However, due to this trend, sometimes poor

girls do not get married simply because their parents fail to fulfill the requirements of dowry. In a society like ours a common man has low income, dowry therefore becomes a big problem for him to get her daughters married. Ismail (1991) observed that the undesirable practice of dowry has created a very painful situation especially for the middle class families. The helplessness of poor and middle class parents is awfully on the rise.

Islam does not like the prevalent dowry system. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) married his daughter Fatima (R.T.A.) in a very simple manner. Instead of dowry, there is a concept of "Dower" or "Mehr". Nevertheless, in spite of its non-requirement in law and being against religious teachings, dowry has become one of the most unwanted yet important customs of our society.

Keeping the said aspect in view, the study was undertaken to get an insight into dowry and marriage arrangements in a rural area of Faisalabad district.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the village 66/G.B. situated on Faisalabad-Jaranwala road, 25 kilometers away from Faisalabad city. One hundred and fifty married women, aged 20-40 years, were the respondents. They were selected by simple random method. Data were collected with the help of an interview schedule by the researcher herself. The data so collected were statistically analyzed and interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 10 Distribution of respondents with regard to their relation with husbands (before marriage)

Responses	Number	Percent
1st cousin	81	54
2nd cousin	21	14
Same 'Biradri'	48	32
Total	150	100

The above table indicates that more than half of the respondents (54 %) were married with their 1st cousins. while 32 % had been married with 2nd cousins. Brown (1952) reported a high degree of marriages within kin groups. He found that of 107 marriages in a Keatuchy mountain community, only 31 involved persons were 3rd or closer cousins.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to the consideration of dowry as a substitute for land

Responses	Number	Percent (out of 69)
Yes	15	21.08
No	54	78.02
Has no land	81	54.00
Total	150	100.00

Table 2 indicates that of 150 respondents who had been given dowry, a large majority (78.02%) did not consider, dowry as, a substitute for land, whereas 54.00% respondents parents had no land. However, 21.08 % respondents considered dowry as a substitute of land and the parents had to comply with this demand for the marriage of their daughters.

Table 3 shows that of 69 respondents who had been given land as a substitute for dowry, a simple majority of 64.04 % was still undecided in this regard. Most of them responded that as their brothers were still younger thus no decision seemed possible in near future, while 36.02 % were the respondents who made no such demand. However, the remaining 17.04 % respondents expressed that their in-laws demanded dowry as a substitute for land.

Table 3. Distribution of 69 respondents regarding getting landed property according to Islamic law

Responses	Number	Percent
Yes	12	17.04
No	25	36.02
Yet not decided	32	64.04
Total:	69	100.00

Table 4. Association of value of dowry with its effects on adjustment of marital life

		Marital adjustment	
		Yes	No
Low	No.	39	29
	%age	44	56
Medium	No.	21	09
	%age	24.1	17.6
Hgh	No.	27	13
	%age	31.0	25.4
Total	No.	87	51
	%age	63.5	36.5

Association of the value of dowry with its effect on adjustment of marital life was proved as non-significant. These results show that dowry is not a key to marital adjustment.. Islam (1992) studied the factors affecting the marital adjustment of couples in rural communities and observed that traditional authority of mother-in-law was a strong factor hindering marital adjustment.. It may thus be stated that dowry has some effect but it does not provide an assurance for marital adjustment..

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