

## Mother-Daughter Relationship in Pakistani Muslim Culture

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The present study undertook an exploration of mother-daughter relationship in a Pakistani Muslim context. Data was gathered from seven women of diverse age groups ranging from twenties to sixties through creative interviewing technique. Data analysis was done through discursive psychology. The analysis revealed that whereas social constructions of daughters resound with other focused identities and strong moral and economic discourses, it is usually a daughter rather than a son whom a mother perceives as a part of herself. Thus, in a social context which is highly male dominated, mother-daughter relationship forms a basic and highly reciprocal matrix of a woman to woman socialization which serves functions of adjustment, sharing and sustaining women's familial relationships.

*Keywords:* mother, daughter, Muslims, culture

The current exploration into mother-daughter relationship comes from its underrepresentation in Psychology as we teach and learn it in Pakistan, and also observations of broader cultural traditions that overshadow it.

The beginning point of Psychology courses at an intermediate level in Pakistan is an "official version" of Freud's theory with Oedipus and Electra complex explanations of formation of gender identity; the son represses his feelings towards the mother and in identifying with father, develops a masculine identity. However, the corresponding Electra complex, although following same dynamics of identification, ends up in a quite different way from Oedipus complex. Whereas this 'unfolding' of what is considered here a natural biological pattern, ends up in a "gains" for a son of an appropriate masculine identity, for a daughter it results in an everlasting inferiority over a loss of not having masculinity. An accompanying blame for her mother for this loss presents an overall picture of mother-daughter relationship being judged in hyper-masculine terms. Alongside this development of identity of both the sexes along masculine standards, we see both complexes involve parting with the mother (the feminine) of both the sexes either through repression or negative feelings of blame. In so far as above 90 % of students in introductory Psychology courses in Pakistan are adolescent girls, a skewed emphasis on Freud in contrast to other 20<sup>th</sup> century theories within psychoanalysis raises concerns regarding this picture where development and maintenance of identity in particular, presents a woman's sense of self as it appears to men.

Objective and scientific discoveries about girls' development of identity still have Freud as lens and are quite normatively applied across cultures without a consideration to their relevance. Scientific studies, for example, concluding losing of self-esteem of a girl way down adolescence and resulting largely from how they perceive themselves being evaluated by boys of same age, resonate with Freud's emphasis on a girl's establishing her self-concept through

making herself attractive for men. Physical maturation is conceived as being less positive for girls than boys (Brooks-Gunn & Peterson, 1983; Simmons & Blyth, 1987) especially their relational identity primarily formulated against masculine vision of themselves rather than in its own right. In contrast to this view of woman's identity as shaped by men around her, a woman to woman relational identity, of which mother-daughter relationship is a basic form, receive either neglect or degradation in both old and new mainstream psychologies which form our curricula, as Chodorow (1978) puts it, "it seems as if there is a long way to go before the individual inhabiting social and developmental psychology books will give way to a woman's perspective".

Apart from how Freud dominates our teaching and research practice, his accounts as Totem, Taboo, Moses, and Monotheisms, have stories of father and son recapitulating them in development of both the individual at phallic stage and evolution of religions. Feminist psychoanalysts as object relations theorists have emphasized the utter omission by Freud of pre-oedipal stage in relation to gender identity formation. As Flax (1976) pointing out Freud's starting of story of human civilization from a point where women had been subordinated by men and his corresponding difficulty in understanding the early relationship between mother and infant, regards it in fact as a confirmation of "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" so that the earliest experience with mother is as repressed in individual consciousness as it is washed away from our collective memories.

Although feminists have provided alternative approaches to classical theories, there are still epistemological questions that need to be addressed; and there have been concerns whether post-modernism itself has overcome the essentialist view rendered by science and whether feminism while deconstructing the dominant theory in social sciences itself adjusts to the local and culture specific explanations. These questions are crucial as neither patriarchy manifests itself in one standard form, nor do women's experiences across the globe can be framed in one model. What is sometimes rejected or under-represented as being "indigenous" poses questions very basic to nature of feminism itself. If feminism is a discipline for the women, the need to incorporate diverse experience and reality is inevitable; if it conceptually approaches masculinity and femininity as social constructions, there is a wide range of gender and social roles across the world and manifested in a variety of ways, each of which needs to be understood in its own

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cultural frame of reference. My interest in mother-daughter relationship specifically also drew from how I observed, experienced, and felt about it as pivotal to women's lives and relationships in a family in a culture where generally mother-son or father-son relationships are given more preference.

Social constructions of a mother and a daughter are quite divergent in Pakistani culture. This seems complicated as it is a daughter who ultimately becomes a mother. As for the status of a mother in Muslim cultures, it is this unmistakable association of mother and motherhood with the sacred which follows from Islamic spiritual framework in which these themes run along four dimensions; they are implied semantically, related to as historical accounts, practised as basis of rituals in Hajj and very central to understandings of commandments for individual life; and this holds for all sects of Muslims.

The Ultimate Divine understood in terms of mother's love is evident in the meaning of the very first Ayah beginning the Holy Quran "Bismillah er Rahim" describing Allah in feminine attributes of extreme kindness and forgiveness with 'rehman' and 'rahim' having the same root in Arabic as 'reham' meaning mother's womb. Hajj rituals of running between the two mountains of Safa and Marwah are to commemorate the memory of Hajra, the mother of Ishmael, who as Old and New Testaments hold, was the slave girl of Sarah, wife of Abraham, and whom Sarah gave to Abraham as wife. According to Holy Bible, when Sarah had her own son, she asked Abraham to leave Hajra. He left her and her son in desolate mountains latter called Makkah. As the story goes, Hajra's baby Ishmael started crying out of thirst. Hajra set out in search for water. She was standing on the small hill of Safa; she looked towards the hill of Marwah and thought that there was water over there. When she reached Marwah, there was no water; it was just a mirage. She turned facing Safa and thought that there was water over there. She returned to Safa, but again there was no water; it was just a mirage. As mother, desperately looking for water for her child, Hajra ran between the hills of Safa and Marwah seven times. Finally, she saw that a water stream had started at the feet of Ishmael. This steam is still running beside the Kaabah, and it is known as Zamzam. God so much loved the spirit of motherhood demonstrated by Hajra, that He has commanded the Muslim pilgrims to walk between the hills of Safa and Marwah when they go for the pilgrimage. Hajra's story as a mother eventually became formative of Islam as a religion and the basis of Hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah.

Historical accounts of previous faiths Judaism and Christianity, start with a mother's story---the mother of Moses and the mother of Jesus. It is interesting to see that reverence for Virgin Mary is so much there that, as acknowledged by Life Magazine (1996) large numbers of Muslims are making pilgrimages to Christian shrines in Lourdes and Mexico city. Muslim women in particular, attach great spiritual and emotional significance to Virgin Mary as a mother and a saint. This is because she is one of the few historical personages with the distinction of having a chapter in the Quran (called Surah Maryam) named after her and also because she has been regarded as "above women of all nations". Almost every expecting mother in Pakistan is recommended to recite Surah Maryam frequently while she is expecting so that both the mother and child would be safe.

While the Quran emphasizes that amongst fellow human beings the one who stands first in terms of rights are the parents, it gives more consideration to a mother's rights than a father's. "Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to

parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor. And out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: My Lord! bestow on them Thy Mercy as they cherished me in childhood" (17:23-24). "We have enjoined on man and woman (to be good) to his/her parents; show gratitude to Me and to thy parents; to Me is (thy final) Goal. If they (parents) strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration) and follow the way of those who turn to Me (in love)" (31:14-15). "We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents; in pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth" (46:15).

Amongst many sayings of the Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him), the Hadith most strongly believed by all Muslims undisputedly, is "heaven is beneath mothers' feet." Another belief is whereas parents have more rights than any other relationship, a mother carries far more rights than that of a father. The Hadith directing this is also one of the most quoted and believed without any controversy among sects is "A man came to the Prophet and said, 'O Messenger of God! Who among the people is the most worthy of my good companionship? The Prophet said: Your mother. The man said, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your mother. The man further asked, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your mother. The man asked again, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your father (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 8.2).

This emphasis along multiple dimensions perhaps has connections with a middle aged mother being a strong matriarch in Pakistan, where religion deeply influences people's lives. This is so much that more often than not, life partners for sons and daughters are a mother's choice than a father's. At a cultural level too, a mother's love is considered as the deepest bond in a person's life. Traditional Punjabi sayings and poetry about mothers are "mothers are a cool shade" "nobody will ask a son to come back home after a mother is dead" and "with whom else can I share my grief except my mother ... who else will understand it?"

Social constructions of a daughter, however, show a stark contrast to that of a mother. Traditional folk sayings about daughters is "daughters grow like neem tree and sons like a mango tree." Neem tree grows much faster and is fruitless whereas a mango tree has a relatively much slower growth, meaning that daughters would soon reach marriageable age when they would leave whereas sons would take long time before they become a support to their parents. Another name called humorously for a daughter is "mar janee" in rural areas of Punjab meaning "better be dead" and "daughters are guests" meaning that they eventually have to leave. A very popular prayer for daughters is 'may she be lucky'; "luck" connotatively refers to her married life. It also implies that she would have little control over circumstances hence it can only be prayed that she gets a caring partner and in-laws. Folk songs for son's wedding are always joyful whereas those for daughter's wedding are mostly sad and women sometimes cry while singing them as they depict feelings of departure forever from parents' home, e.g., songs meaning "Don't say goodbye today; my plea is to let me remain in your house for one more day", and "daughters have to leave; this is how it is, they would break the deep bonds and live in their new homes".

These social constructions are thus framed in patriarchal systems that understanding women as a property instil almost a need to put a mother and a daughter in contrasting roles and images; the one who

stays and rears up a man's family is functionally different than the one who goes away to rear up another man's family. Mother's love and closeness for a daughter needs to be disrupted by man-made systems which understands a mother as belonging to oneself and a daughter as belonging to other. No wonder then the idiom in Urdu and Punjabi combining mother and daughter in one unit as "maan-beti" (mother-daughter) carries negative connotations. In so far as patriarchy evaluates both according to standards suiting a male oriented family where only a son is "waris" the one who carries on the lineage of the family, a direct relationship between mother and daughter is of course threatening.

No wonder then that there are corresponding twists in the translations, understanding, and emphasis of our religious scriptures so as to facilitate a patriarchal family and societal structure. Religious instructions regarding a mother are considered a son's repertoire and a daughter is expected to be raised up in ways that would facilitate her parting with her parents and adjusting in a new family rather than being a support for her parents in some way. Mother-daughter relationship is obscured in religious consciousness too where mothers of sons are more related to in history of religions, but rarely is mother of Mary and the section of Quran relating God talking to her and telling that a daughter can be of more worth than a son, is mentioned in any religious talk about mothers. Thus, the general commandments of religion have become to be known as addressed to men and there is this simultaneous narrowing of a woman's spiritual sphere where spiritual uplift can be gained through servitude to husband; the consistent evaluation of woman in relation to her husband leaves hardly any space for a woman to woman relationships.

However, amidst these patriarchal standards and traditions, equally deeply ingrained are women's ways of understanding their social world and ways of coping to its difficulties; interestingly, they may not be claimed as such and form the silent and hidden part of the apparent picture. Women to women understanding and dealing of family and social relationships is in fact more subtle one, and forms a support system that maintains their own and men's relationships. A basic matrix of this is mother-daughter relationship that, contrary to traditional mainstream psychological theories restricting parental role to early years, continues throughout life.

The study explores various dimensions of mother-daughter relationship in Pakistani Muslim women. It aims to find out the various social contexts that provide a basis for a daughter's very close bonding to her mother.

The first part of the study would focus particularly on girl child and analyse how discrimination against her is constructed and maintained through various resources as justification, disclaimers, and labelling her with certain identities. The next part of analysis is concerned with how these discriminatory practices themselves become a basis for a deep empathic bonding between mother and her daughter, how it modifies itself from being an elementary dyad of a girl's socialization to a strong support system and finally a system of women's understanding of the social world around them.

## Method

### Sample

Interviews were held with women participants only considering the nature of the topic. The sample consisted of 7 women of diverse

age groups ranging from 20 to 60. Brief description of each is provided with extract from her talk. All except one who was a housemaid belonged to upper middle social class. One elderly woman was interviewed as a grandmother of a girl child. The rest were interviewed as mothers of daughters.

### Measures

*1. Creative Interviewing:* This technique takes a critical view of traditional methods of interviewing as superficial and posits that structured surveys only catch more than a glimpse of the actual experience of the participant. According to Douglas (1985) "Creative interviewing involves the use of many strategies and tactics of interaction largely based on an understanding of friendly feelings and intimacy, to optimize cooperative, and mutual disclosure and a creative search for mutual understanding" (p. 25). Creative interviewing hence is a more flexible approach that allows more freedom and power on part of the respondent who actively constructs his/her experience therefore, may take much longer time than traditional interview.

### Procedure

Data collection was done through interviews primarily. Creative interviewing was done and was based upon accounts by women of their life experiences and views regarding the topic. I had prior rapport with each of the participants; nevertheless, they were formally given a briefing about the topic and were assured that their confidentiality would be ensured. The names of the participants and people they have mentioned in their talk have therefore been changed in all extracts.

### Data Analysis

The analysis of data was done through discursive psychology which explores how participants present their versions of the world, of society, events, and inner psychological worlds in conversation. It explores how psychological activities as justification, rationalization etc, are used by the participants to achieve their interests in talk. It hence takes language as performing actions and is concerned with how participants manage to accomplish their constructions of their social worlds. In doing so it treats realism whether developed by participants or researcher as a rhetoric that can itself be decomposed (Edwards, 1997; Mckinlay & McVittie, 2008). Following are the selected extracts from participants' talk; each extract is followed by analysis that highlights themes resulting from analysis.

### Extract

*I: "Is it right that sons are always more in demand as they will bring in daughters too when they get married? Whereas one's own daughters will go away; But are daughters-in-law like one's own daughters?"*

*Ms Zubaida: "No, first of all, I believe daughters in law are real daughters. We should treat them like that. As for myself, I was always there with Ayesha....and Fatima too, ....you see from my*

*relatives who came to see Fatima when she was born....., well, they seemed happy but happiness was, you see, carrying this so so sort of thing. If it was a boy they would have been carrying the whole hospital on their heads out of joy; ... but you believe it or not, I did not once cut a sorry figure for the baby girl; as for my son, he was also very happy, kissed the child and first thing he said was that I am waiting for the time when she will be able to rush to gate calling me 'baba, baba' when I am back from office. He started talking to her calling her 'our little sparrow' and urging her to say 'baba.' .....and this happened. Although we bought all sorts of toys for Ayesha, she is especially fond of kitchen sets. She pretends to cook food, carries it with so much care in a small tray and goes to her grandfather's room saying loudly, 'dadoo your food is ready.' Sometimes he is taking rest at that time and I forbid her from disturbing him. But if he happens to see me forbidding her, he always says, 'this only a daughter can do'. You see, only at the age of seven, she has everybody running around her in the house. ...".*

### Analysis

The informant, who is a woman in her early sixties, answers my question in which I suggest a reason for preference for sons being that their wives would become daughters to their parents and hence having a son means having both sons and daughters whereas a daughter would herself be eventually leaving. She answers only the second part of the question and shares that it is her belief that daughters-in-law are real daughters; but remarks following this declaration are that a daughter-in-law should be treated like a real daughter themselves negate her belief that she is in fact a person not a real daughter but can be treated like that as a matter of choice; and to this she adds her example of being with Ayesha (her daughter-in-law) at all times. She does not answer the question whether sons are preferable due to some reason, but gives an example of her own behaviour of "not being sorry" over a girl's birth amidst so many people who were not so happy. Again, she first acknowledges and establishes that at social level a girl's birth does not carry the happiness that is there on that of a boy's as she herself constructs the relatives' response over the latter as "carrying the hospital on their heads out of joy" but manages to single out herself as a moral person who did not once cut a sorry figure over it. In both the instances, she manages to both firmly establish gender discrimination as a rule and then present herself as an exception to it. However, she concludes that the child would herself be operational in bringing happiness for her being by engaging in acts that would create her own place. It is noteworthy here that this idea runs in all her descriptions of other people's observations of the child; the child's father is waiting for the child to speak and rush to the gate to greet him. The grandfather is appreciating her acts of care as an exclusive act of a daughter. Her proud remarks that "only at the age of seven she has everybody running around her" suggests a sense of achievement in which the girl child is herself pivotal in gaining love through acts of care for others that are described earlier in the text.

An evaluative discourse is very prominent here that when the girl child is suggested to be good enough for getting love out of people by her thoroughly subservient performance. Interestingly, at the same time, she declares her granddaughter's acts resulting from a natural inclination; and asserts these acts as natural on part of her by commenting that "we bought all sorts of toys for her" thereby

claiming that despite the fact that the child was allowed a broader repertoire of behaviours, she nevertheless naturally chose to engage exclusively with those that guaranteed care for others and ensured her strong bonding with them. The "thorough naturalness" of behaviour that is emphasized by the informant seems an effort to cover the quite outstanding discourse on "conditions of worth" created for the girl child. This highlights a daughter to be accepted for what she does in contrast to a son who is accepted for what he is.

It is also interesting to note that whereas the informant talks about child's bondage with her father, her grandfather and interaction with herself as forbidding the child from doing something, the child's association with the closest one, her mother, is not mentioned.

The birth of a child marks the beginning of a new family within the old one of which the grandmother has now become a powerful matriarch. She uses several modes of communication to preserve and secure the previously existing relationships by orienting the child to broader paternal family rather than mother. The child's association to paternal relatives is much emphasized as compared to that for mother and the latter is seen as one of her children rather than being an absolute authority for the child. The informant while initiating her talk about daughters, brackets together Ayesha and Fatima as her daughters. By saying "I was always with Ayesha....and Fatima too". The informant serves both her interests; she puts them both on the same level, as her daughters and simultaneously portrays daughter-in-law as dependent on her and needing her support. Very frequently a daughter's birth gains compensatory remarks versus congratulatory remarks over that of a son, and daughters while praised for some achievement are described in terms of other focused identities.

### Extract

*I: "They seem quite industrious.. Asiya and Asma are in medical colleges and?"*

*Mrs. Quyyum: "Yes, they are hardworking but you see intelligence is God gifted. Asiya, as you know is specializing as a general surgeon from Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. I am proud that she is a topper. Kanwal took after her father and is a lawyer. But she is preparing for civil services exam and I am sure she is going to achieve her goal. Asma is in third year in Allama Iqbal Medical College and Bushra has also received a distinction from National College of Arts in Sculpture. She is a born artist and is most sensitive of all. May be also due to the fact that she is the youngest and most pampered by both us and her elder sisters".*

*I: "I see! Did you ever think you could have a son as well?"*

*Mrs. Quyyum: "Yes especially when people said so. But now I feel proud of my daughters".*

*I: "Who were the people? What did they say?"*

*Mrs. Quyyum: "Their phuphoo (father's sister) always longed for sons but their father believes that our daughters are no less than sons. You see wishing for a son is one thing, but we never regretted over a daughter.....God wills what He thinks is the best for us.... we are happy and proud of them".*

### Analysis

The informant interrupts my question enthusiastically so that she

can herself describe her daughters' outstanding career and personal qualities. She attributes their achievements more to intelligence as something natural to all her daughters rather than hard work. Her response to question of whether she ever thought of having a son as "especially when people said so" suggests that she wished for a son owing more to social desirability than anything in itself. The word "now" suggests as if after hearing people's comments for a long time and feeling accordingly, she has begun to feel proud of daughters after they have achieved careers considered respectable in society. She presents her daughters' achievements as a compensation for not having a son. She answers my next question very briefly and proceeds to focus more on her husband's and her own feelings as daughters' parents. Her husband's pride in her daughters which she expresses as "our daughters are no less than sons" suggests an "other focused identity" given to daughter where a daughter at her best can be no less than a son. Also, identity as daughter's parents is expressed through a disclaimer of "never repenting over a daughter" which serves to first establish a regret over a daughter and then denying it as an individual choice. Reminders of God's will and decision immediately following it seem to be used here both as ultimate justification presented to people of four daughters.

I: "Yes, but did she or any of your relatives say something that you disliked?"

Mrs. Quyyum: "Of course! Their phuphoo (father's sister) was especially intolerable every time I was expecting. You see there were no ultrasounds and I never knew the gender. But she was so inquisitive and always saying things like if one has a craving for sweets then it's going to be a boy...."

I: "Did you ever feel such craving?" (I laugh)

Mrs. Quyyum: "(smiles) Not exactly. I don't remember that I especially craved for sweets. I knew she is doing that to create an atmosphere ... you know.. so that if I have a daughter she is able to raise hue and cry....like Oh! I had so many hopes this time...(laughs)".

I: "Then she must be doing that, did she?"

Mrs. Quyyum: "Oh yes.... and it grew with each of my daughters...and sometimes even now".

I: "Didn't it become intolerable at some stage then?"

Mrs. Quyyum: "Yes, in fact I told her... and several times that we always thanked God for giving us healthy children. What if He gave me a son that was not normal? Or a son that was disobedient? And I also think daughters are better than sons anyway."

I: "How?"

Mrs. Quyyum: "Who is going to feel for parents? A son or a daughter? Who is going to recite Quran for us after we are dead and pray for our forgiveness? Who will cry the most at our funeral? Who is thinking about us and is concerned the most with our well-being?"

### Analysis

I have to repeat my question to which the informant now responds more explicitly. The words "there were no ultrasounds and I never knew the gender" to deal with the burden of responsibility on part of mother of having produced a girl child that she must have faced at that time. After hearing an association between craving for sweets with a birth of a boy afterwards, I equate craving for sweets with an anticipation of birth of a son afterwards, and hence laugh

and ask whether she had such a craving. The informant intelligently takes my point and constructs her past to match the present by saying "Not exactly I don't remember..." However, she has much more to deal with at present too, where she has to justify her four daughters to others who have been teasing her till now. Whereas a personal feeling towards daughters is reflected in earlier extract considering daughters as individuals by words as "is the youngest, and most pampered.... and sensitive of all", responding to people involves both a moral discourse where, as a believer, insofar as no one can think what is good for her/him better than God, nobody should question God's will. It also portrays human helplessness over God's decisions thus doing away with perceived responsibility on part of mother for having given birth to by other people. She further continues to find worst possible outcomes of God's will by setting up contrasts as "a healthy daughter versus an abnormal son"; this again conveys "other focused identities" which accept a daughter not in her own right but by comparing them against what are considered here the worst possible outcomes; hence thanking God for a daughter is in turn a thanks to Him for not giving the even worse. Moral evaluations also seem rather unbalanced where it is not "obedient daughter versus disobedient son" but "daughter versus disobedient son" implying that whereas son may or may not be showing moral behaviour towards parents but a daughter would essentially do so. This, further consolidated by next statement that daughters are better than sons anyway because of their concern and care for their parents resounds with same theme of son is what he is and daughter is what she does for parents. It is interesting to observe that a moral discourse in these extracts especially refers to daughters. Whereas moral justifications and evaluations surround a daughter right from her birth to her upbringing, her relationships, and her identity as the "honour of a family", whereas they are quite absent in case of a son.

An economic discourse was very evident in participants' talk about daughters. Meaning units such as

"In these tough times where you have to think before buying wheat flour, only one daughter is enough" and "I have three daughters, two are married off, one remains," suggest an economic discourse where more often than not daughters are categorized among two groups the "married off" and the "remaining." Whereas it is considered bad for sons to be called enough, its often said so when there are two or more daughters.

Despite that daughters enjoy special status in many families depending upon their birth order in relation to sons and also the considerations that they are in their parents' house for a short period of time, by and large there is this general perception of a daughter as a burden; she is considered a burden psychologically too as if she is a misfit in her in-laws and if marriage ends up in a divorce, sons and their wives would be the family and daughter may not have any role central to them. Marriage is considered the ultimate 'settlement' for a daughter.

Daughters are felt as burdens with marriages being commercialized in Pakistan. Saving schemes show a daughter leaving her parents' home clad in heavy jewellery and an expensive wedding dress. Others show a bride with a credit card in her hand and looking back at her parents thanking them with a satisfied smile on her face as if credit card and the accompanying bank account is the legacy she got from them. Still other companies advertise their products as items to be given in dowry. However, with both parents and especially mothers being ambitious for giving their daughters the best education possible, the burden is seen as dual. For an

average person arranging a daughter's wedding means at least above one hundred thousand rupees even if the party is going to be of an average stature. Most parents can only perform Hajj after they have all their daughters married.

Despite the fact that a son is preferred over a daughter, Pakistani culture shows a mother being far more close to her daughter than her son in many ways. How does mother and daughter become close to each other in a scenario where son is preferred over a daughter? This has not much to do with a girl child as it has to do with the mother's self-image of herself and feelings for a girl child as a replica of herself as she would undergo the same experiences which being quite normative are inescapable. As indicated by extracts below, a mother's first feelings for a son may be of pride but for a daughter it is an image of herself that she sees in her. In contrast to an understanding of a mother's feelings towards daughter as framed within the discourse of someone to be given away, I argue that within the mainstream understanding of a daughter as someone to be given away, a Pakistani mother and daughter effectively maintain a deep bond which continues throughout life and this perhaps is the only standpoint from which women challenge the mainstream discourses on 'parting' as their destiny. The birth of a daughter, especially the first one reinforces a woman's bonds with her mother. The following extract is from a conversation with a young woman in her twenties who got married just after she started her job as a doctor, and is a mother of a five months old daughter.

#### Extract

*I: "Do you know the causes? Do you feel one feels gloomy afterwards and sometimes it persists? Or there are other causes? Did you yourself try to come out of this?"*

*Maria: "To tell you the truth, I didn't; right from the day I woke up on walima morning, I felt I don't have a self."*

*I: "but you have one; everybody has."*

*Maria: "No everybody doesn't have one; and can't, for it would be very indecisive then whether to control or to be controlled.."*

*I: "Yeah that's right. But you are a doctor, specializing further... shouldn't be assertive? I mean as an educated person?"*

*Maria: "(laughs) and you M.Phil. in Psychology.. shouldn't be knowing?"*

*I: (laugh) yes that's right."*

*Maria: "(becomes solemn) It is not just who we are but where we are and at the top of that I became pregnant after just a month...hospital and work...and then no rest as they would complain that I am in my room never to come out till he is back sort of things..."*

*I: "But you need rest, don't you?"*

*Maria: "(laughs) Peace of mind is a better option, so I opted for that; but now I have time as he is quite finicky about her (daughter) taking good rest and so i slip in and sleep for a while...but you see someone comes in, opens the door for no reason or perhaps so that I can't sleep anymore...(laughs again)..or sometimes just because dado WANTS to see her.....her daughter comes and pulls Fatima out of her bed to their room where they both sit chit chatting in the afternoon..they take her to the supermarket even...and then you know flu was out and she took her to dars e Quran with her....."*

*I: "Must have felt terribly bad"*

*Maria: "Not bad! I know each and everything going on with me and I know why am I sick! These little things are not so little....but I*

*know all would say I am making mountain out of mole's hill.... but my heart sinks when she comes and takes her away without even asking me...you may call me mad but my heart sinks... this is what is going to happen ultimately..... but ammi says things would look like a charge sheet.....she says I should make sure my daughter is mine wherever they take her...I wish I could see her more often...."*

*I: Why can't you stay with her for a while?"*

*Maria: "Yes, I did, but not for long. They said they miss my daughter..(laughs) wouldn't they?.....you know what ammi would say if she were here? She would say I am thankless (becomes solemn again)....No! in fact she says they are just human beings like me and it's foolish to think that they run this world...they are not God..."*

#### Analysis

The informant is a mother of a five months old girl child and is living in a joint family system. She has been feeling depressed lately and is still not feeling well. I am interested in whether the informant, being a doctor, points out physiological (as postnatal depression since she felt like that after delivery) or social factors of her situation, and whether she has tried to come out of it. The informant in her answer does not relate her depression to birth of a child; she goes back the very next day after her marriage when she felt like not having a 'self;' to my resistance of her comments she explains her sense of self which is constructed as meaning control over one's life. In contrast to my view that everyone has a self, she makes it a matter of choice; self is there if you feel it and if you do it would put its demands of free and deliberate choice, in her case, to control or to be controlled would be deliberate choices which she escapes by feeling that she does not have a self. I resist again her view of herself by evoking identities believed to make one assertive. She rebounds my comments that being in Psychology I should have ample understanding that this is not possible; I agree to this considering her circumstances, so she makes the point more explicit that choices do not result from identities but from circumstances. Control seems to be the theme connecting discourse built here. Her little control over someone taking her daughter away from her is the most terrible for her. She realizes that this may seem trivial and if she shares it people may say she is making mountain out of mole's hill, yet the words "this is what is going to happen ultimately" convey her construction of an everyday experience at a deeper level which connects with her own experience of detachment from her mother. Her baby girl taken away is seen as fatalistic where she realises the tragedy of daughters ultimately married and moving away from parents. Her sudden shift to her mother, her thinking about her own situation and longing for her hence follow these words. "My daughter is mine wherever they take her" play both as a defence in her day to day situation with little control, and also consolidate her bonds with her own mother regardless of getting married and moving away from her. Her imagination of her mother's response to her situation as "they are human beings like me..." serves to ultimately resolve her conflict over control by equating other people on the house with herself and essentially helpless as human beings. Her mother's thinking thus is central to her perceptions of the circumstances and makes her achieve an in-built solace within herself. She manages to make sense of control in a broader spiritual context where God has the ultimate control regardless of how powerful human beings may appear to be.

Many women articulate their feelings in spiritual and religious frameworks; men's religious gatherings show themes of how to control (rival groups, heretics, agencies, family, women, and children) and women's understanding as everything being controlled by God ultimately is interesting in this connection.

Daughter's reciprocation to her mother is equally strong and very frequently a mother and a daughter exist as one strong and mutually empowering psychological unit in varying contexts.

Daughter as a sharer of financial burdens is very much obvious in lower most classes of Pakistan comprising of housemaids. Almost all housemaids who come with their children have their daughters working with them. If a son happens to join her mother, he will just sit aside and see his mother working and occasionally attending him meanwhile. The following extract from a talk with a housemaid shows a mother's dependence on a daughter for financial and other household liabilities.

#### Extract

I: "When do you get back home?"

Samiya: "Never before six or seven. I have three houses to work at. I keep cleaning and washing clothes first, and go in afternoon to wash utensils and clean kitchen in evening. In winters it is almost the whole day. My husband comes in early."

I: "Who takes care of your children?"

Samiya: "Girls."

I: "How old are they?"

Samiya: "Shakeela is quite wise now. She is eleven years of age. I am thinking of bringing her with me when second one gets a bit older. She is about eight."

I: "And how many children?"

Samiya: "They are three. Akram goes to school. The rest two are young."

I: "What are their names?"

Samiya: "Akbar and Asghar".

I: "Who pays Akram's fee?"

Samiya: "I do".

I: "And when Shakeela would join you on job, can she go for some hours to Dar-ul-Quds as they have evening classes?"

Samiya: "No. Baji I know what you are thinking. But we are poor. I wish Shakeela could go to school. The second one said that when she saw Akram going, but my Shakeela is so understanding that she didn't even say that. She knows her father won't let her stay with me for long, and she knows there is no use of reading four books when she has to leave and work like me. So she is more interested in staying with me".

I: "Ok. That's very painful for you I realise..."

Samiya: "No! you are my baji and I know you are asking all that for some good purpose. There are many people like us.. And also even if you don't ask, you have an idea already. But I am fine".

I: "Ok. Let's change the topic anyway....When do you have your dinner?"

Samiya: "(laughs heartily) me? Anytime after all have had their meals. Sometimes we enjoy after he is asleep again at night. Shakeela and I, we mother-daughter eat and talk and talk. She had some chicken put aside for me that she got from Anwar baji's place. But that is not every day".

I: "what about the second one? I don't know her name?"

Samiya: "Farzana... she is a bit rough and naughty... well she eats along with others and doesn't wait for me..... but sometimes she

does.."

I: "Shakeela does? Every time?"

Samiya: "Yes, in fact there is so much to be talked about (looks in the air excited)".

I: "What do you talk about?"

Samiya: "All matters. About me, about children, about when I was not at home. Baji has given her a mobile. She hid it from her aba and showed it to me only."

I: "Why do you think she did that?"

Samiya: "So that she could contact someone if she needs help at home. He will snatch it when he see it. I gave her your number for morning, baji Anwar's for afternoon and baji Rehana's number for evening (cheers up and seems very happy). She has learned many things in it (laughs very happily)".

#### Analysis

After listening to the informant's job description and timings, my question is who takes care of her children even though I know her husband, who is a labourer on daily wages and due to some illness (as I know from my prior interaction with her) comes in earlier. I put across the question as I take it for granted that her husband would not be looking after the children. Her answer "girls" sets a context in which girls are not included amongst children and that they take care of the children raises another question in my mind of whether they are excluded from being children on the basis of age. Her answer reflects that age is not the defining factor of childhood for a girl, for both of them are at a school going age. I thus inquire about whom she calls children. All three are boys as I ask their names which are boys names and she mentions the eldest going to school as well. It won't be quite long when eldest daughter would be joining her mother on job, whereas no such considerations are for her son Akram who attends school. I hence ask directly if Shakeela would be able to pay for herself in an evening school? Her response "baji I know what you are thinking.... we are poor" shows her understanding of what I am thinking in terms of gender equality, as she proceeds to explain why she can't send her daughters to school. Her constructions of restraints to that are both economic and social and suggests daughters and sons having utilitarian functions in an environment of economic adversity; however, daughter is playing this role here and now, as she would ultimately be leaving and son in so far as he is expected to stay can be invested in. She acknowledges her daughters feelings about this deprivation at the same time, which makes me realise that it must have been painful for her too; her idea of my doing this interview for some "good purpose" and her awareness that there are many people like her suggests she still wants to be part of anything that can be done at large to do away with these conditions. Realizing that I would not be able to come up to her hopes, wish to change the topic anyway. I wish to know about her and her family's activities when they all are at home and ask when does she have her dinner? She laughs heartily and says "me?" as if wondering whether the question was asked about her. This last part of extract which she relates most happily, sounds like her end of day time of relaxation which she enjoys with her eldest daughter. It is marked by many indicators that make mother and daughter closest to each other than any other person at home as daughter waiting for her mother so that they eat together, putting part of something special aside for her mother, and is the only person at home upon whom the mother relies for information

when she was not at home. Mobile phone appears almost as a mother-daughter secret which guarantees their contact throughout the day. It appears as symbolic to her of both being progressive and having connections with the outside world. She expresses a sense of achievement on part of her daughter and takes it partly as a compensation for her not being educated.

Whereas in lower classes daughter is a burden sharer more in economic sense, among families financially well off daughter is still a burden sharer for her mother but in emotional sense only. Most mothers do not wish their daughters to take on many home responsibilities while they are studying, and this trend is increasing with growing emphasis on education and sometimes career for daughters; but all daughters share their mothers' worries much more than sons. Spirituality for example, which for women, is very often contextualized in familial roles, is transferred not only as a prayer but as a role that a daughter takes on from her mother. Reciting Surahs and Ayats for safety of one's children is what usually mothers do. In so far as daughters are inquisitive about what their mothers are reciting, they instantly learn more of those ones that relate to their own and their home and family's safety.

Mother and daughter as one unit are referred to in both Urdu and Punjabi but as discussed earlier, it is used more often for something negative about a woman as domestic intrigue, for instance. It is used most often by relatives from women's in-laws in certain contexts of conflict and annoyance with her. Comments as "these mother daughter" are not up to something good here. Thus suggesting mother and daughter are one unit in thinking, feeling and acting in completely synchronised manner. But mother daughter intimacy being constructed in a negative way may imply a sense of threat from the underlying awareness that a married woman although apparently a part of another family, is still attached to and sharing everything and "leaking out" information to her mother. The following extract is relevant here.

I: "Is it good for children to be pampered? I mean this saying that 'give them golden food, but see them with a lion's eye' is it outdated or still relevant?"

Tahira: "Well that matters to a small extent but one shouldn't be too harsh. Bushra being younger than Awais remained more pampered both because she is a girl and has an edge to that, and also because she was younger. Awais has grown to be responsible and is ahead of his age in several respects, as you know, we never pampered him. Also, he is outstanding in his class. Once, he shared with me that his maths teacher was somehow strict with him; I told him to deal with him at his own; you see I anticipated that he may never be able to solve conflicts at his own if he knows that someone is always there for him whatsoever".

I: "Do you also expect the same from Bushra?"

Tahira: "Well my Bushra is so docile that she never comes up with anything against anybody. I have found her always forgiving of others".

I: "Yes. Looks like so. Forgiveness is in turn rewarding for oneself as one feels relaxed after that."

Tahira: "Yes. One feels so...that's my experience. As you already know what Guddo is and to what extent she can go, she never spared Bushi as well; you see, once her unnecessary criticism grew intolerable. She was just supposed to drop Bushi and come back. But she joined in with girls for the whole party and continuously criticised Bushi for wearing a short shirt. Bushra is never without a dupatta and if short shirts are in fashion, what's wrong with that?"

I: "That must have been really hurtful for her".

Tahira: "Of course, but then we know that helpless because of her nature and also pretending to be young, that woman could not avoid both her staying there and joining girls and expressing her jealousy for us. Bushra is accustomed to her too, but, you see, she was more hurt as Guddo should do whatsoever here....to find friends a good forum to discuss family... I don't understand... But you see, Asad is so fond of his brother and bhabhi that Bushra never said anything to anyone.

### Analysis

I ask the informant, a mother of two children; a son and a daughter, about her views on a traditional saying. She emphasizes age differences while mentioning pampering her daughter and gender difference while talking about why son should not be pampered as in her view, it would result in certain characteristics unbecoming of a man who has to deal with the outside world at his own; she thus implies that a daughter would not be doing so as she grows up. I therefore ask her if she expects her daughter to be like her son; she responds by mentioning her daughter's personal characteristics of forgiveness enabling her not to have any issues with anyone thereby lessening the probability that she would be in a conflict in the first place. I take that in a general sense that forgiveness is always rewarding without considerations to gender of a person. She agrees to my opinion as she says her experience tells her that forgiveness makes oneself relaxed; as an example of forgiveness, she continues to give example in which her daughter was quite hurt by her aunt's comments. Whereas her words "of course...but then we know..." suggest that her daughter shared it with her, what she says more explicitly at the end is that her daughter never shared it with anyone. She hence negates herself as a person in her daughter's outside social world with whom sharing was done and says "Bushra never said anything to anyone". Sharing between herself and her daughter is seen by her almost as a monologue with no idea of two separate persons talking to each other. She starts with "its my experience" with Bushra feeling hurt and person responding to relative being mother in her narration "of course...but then we know" concludes with "Bushra never said anything to anyone" with daughter and mother being the same person throughout the text.

The idea of forgiveness here is also not constructed by her as an act out of choice, but as an act inevitable to maintain family relationships and social appearances, with a central consideration given to man of the house, his likes and dislikes. But in so far as forgiveness is not taken as an act out of free independent choice, how would anger against a person find an outlet? One part of the way she and her daughter dispense with their anger against their relative involves making the situation understandable by personality attributions which serve to justify an act.

What is in fact stated here is not forgiveness in itself but commitment to social roles where emotions, especially negatives ones are not expressed as such, as there are too many relationships to deal with. However, mother-daughter communication here is very functional in these circumstances as they mutually express, find explanations, and then decide a course of action which would keep their social relations intact.

### Extract

Zubaida: "She was too immature then; leaving one's home was

the worst thing she did; as I knew what was to happen next and it happened exactly as I had thought. He entered our home went straight to her bedroom, picked up Jibran pushed her away and went out”.

I: “Must have been terrible for her”.

Zubaida: “ Yeah and that is why I said she was very immature then... she yelled and cried at the top of her voice; I tried to calm her down but she said how would you respond if someone takes away your baby...? I remained silent as I knew she won't understand at that time. I only said we will do something tomorrow morning. Next day she woke up early in the morning and came in the kitchen. I was already making tea.. we sat there and I said. You were right. I would have felt the same.. but just imagine how would that moron respond to a baby who has taken him but does not know how to even change a nappy?... she laughed instantly but then suddenly showed signs of worry, I told her the baby would be alright as to be sure and certain his ego won't allow him to do any harm to him when he has taken him way so proudly. ... that very moment Haniya became calm. But tears ran down her eyes for a long time.... I assured her either he himself or his mother or father are going to bring the baby back today and it happened... just after two hours, I was amused to see what Jibran (the baby) had done to her in a night (laughs heartily)....”.

I: “Yes, it must have been almost impossible for her as she didn't have a habit of taking care of a baby...”

Zubaida: “Exactly; I top of that had told Haniya not to be too desperate for Jibran in front of them. Otherwise they would tell us that they are doing it in sympathy. But as i told her, she did come and meet them. She instantly put him in Haniya's lap and said, it was foolish of Faisal to snatch him. How can a baby remain without a mother? ”

I: “How did Haniya's father respond to the situation?”

Zubaida: “Yes it was yet another sort of problem to keep him out. He did not witness the scene so I did not tell him exactly what happened. He didn't even come in the drawing room when she came with Jibran. ”

I: “Why didn't you tell him?”

Zubaida: “Quite obvious. Who would wish to see a head on collision of two cars without breaks..... and since you can have knowledge but not experience... men are going to make everything their ego problem. Nisar would definitely have gave a shut up call to him, must have gone to people in between if not exactly the police at this stage and would have asked for a decision...I mean why should I start something more difficult in a new direction for? Just to break Haniya's home on petty issues?”

I: “Yes I understand but I was just asking because I see that Haniya is quite attached to her father. Did she wish to share it with him?”

Zubaida: “My Haniya is too innocent....it is not just because she is my daughter that I am saying this...”

I: “Yes ... I agree. She is like that”

Zubaida: “She was attached to Faisal as well. And she is generally a loving person for everyone around her. But one of the things she was worried about was her baba becoming upset. She didn't know exactly what to do and I had already asked her not to share....”

I: “Didn't he observe that Jibran is not here?”

Zubaida: “Yeah he did. I said Faisal took him out for some time and would be back soon. He smelled something as it is unlikely for him to take him out without his mother...but then I told him that Haniya allowed that as he was too desperate and Haniya wasn't feeling well.... but late at night I told him slowly... not the exact scene....

but said that his mother would bring Jibran back tomorrow.. and I asked him not to come in if she is alone as it wouldn't look nice....”

I: “What if he talked to Faisal?”

Zubaida: “I already told him there is no need at this situation... ”

### Analysis

The woman Zubaida who is Haniya's mother is talking about a conflict between Haniya and her husband. Her daughter is back to her mother's place and conflict has verged on physical violence when her husband came and snatched the baby from Haniya. Zubaida acts as the sole negotiator and settler of this conflict as she deliberately makes others not to meddle in between so that things go as she has predicted. Zubaida attributes many characteristics to a man to man negotiation of a domestic conflict which are quite opposite to her way of handling the conflict. She is convinced that if handled exclusively between men, they will act out while she is trying to settle it in non-reactive ways as she has instructed her daughter not to even show her desperation for her baby. “I assured her either he himself or his mother or father are going to bring the baby back today and it happened.....just after two hours, I was amused to see what Jibran ( he baby) had done to her in a night.. (laughs heartily).....,” suggests allocating the burden of responsibility of an action totally to the person who initiated the act rather than taking. There are no actions and reactions explained by her; she predicts and gets desirable outcome just by being silent and is happy over the victory, which is the person having to undo what he did earlier. Also, her father would make it grow to “public” dimensions as people in between or may be police, while she is resorting to “private” strategies where information is not leaked out to even all members of the house. Also, she perceives that men would make it an ego problem whereas it is a petty issue. She hence perceives men as acting in an entirely different sphere and is rather reluctant to drag them in her domain. Men are hence perceived by her as acting in different domains of interactions and this is further reinforced by her and Haniya by withholding any information that would let them intrude in what is considered to be women's domain. The marital commitment is with “home” and not husband per se. Zubaida's concerns are to avoid anything that “breaks Haniya's home”; And responding to husband on one to one basis is in itself a threat to home. Zubaida is in fact managing relations than feeling about them. Contrary to the traditional image of women as emotional, Zubaida does not talk emotionally and regards her daughter's emotional tantrums as immaturity although she acknowledges her feelings at her baby snatched away. Zubaida hence is acting as a non-emotional and rational person going by certain “facts of life” which she admits as such.

Another extract is from a conversation with a thirty-four years old woman, who became a second wife to her (jeath) husband's elder brother after her husband died of hepatitis. She has two daughters and a son in the middle and has one more daughter from her second husband. Her husband's family lives in a compound of seven houses with brothers, a widow sister, and her own parents who are close relatives to her in-laws. Six months after her husband died, her father advised her jaeth to marry his daughter. His own family comprised of his wife and three daughters.

I: “How did your children respond to your nikah with Tassaraw?”

Batool: “Only Wasif is not settled till now. I have big portraits of his father in his room and around every corner of the house. My

*nikah to Tassawar does not affect the lineage, inheritance and everything..... Tassawar gives him time and always talks to him about his father; Tassawar is happy to see that Wasif is so much like Kaleem that even his shoes are rubbed more from the same right side where kaleem's used to be...but he is not settled.... Saniya was the youngest one and she took some time to adjust with this newcomer.. but all children are together and its a big crowd... Soofia (Tassawar's eldest daughter from his first wife) is now taking more care of both the youngest. "*

*I: "Do they share how they feel?"*

*Batool: "Yes...actually, it's not only about Kaleem now. He is and will remain there for me and my kids and for his brothers and sisters. It is more about these things that...sometimes....become complicated... You see my father had already talked to Tassawar that this second marriage would impose things on him as he neither wanted me nor my children to be just a part of it apparently only....and I know Tassawar sometimes feels pressurized and I hence don't further add to it...but still certain things pop up.....as I was astonished that whereas Aiaza kept silent that day, Saniya told me in my ear that it was my turn to be on front seat of the car.....(smiles).. I was astonished at her pointing out*

*I: Why? May be she observes and hence..*

*Batool: "No. she is too young for that actually.... (laughs)..."*

*I: "What about Aiaza? How did she feel?"*

*Batool: "She is tolerant and knew its good to be silent and these are petty issues.....but I understand that she has already gone through so much... all of us have "*

*I: "What about Wasif? Does he talk?"*

*Batool: "Never. But is making resentful faces....goes to his room when all are around...but then he seems complicated...he was shy before this...Tassawar talks to him..tells him about his position as people will be around him in sometime and he will have to deal with a crowd...But then I am satisfied that Tassawar and Wasif have to be together while going out and in lot many of things and mom says it is going to be alright.. "*

### Analysis

The first part of conversation seems to me as a compensation; the emphasis on big portraits of her late husband in every corner of the house especially her son's room, his step father giving him time and a big crowd of children are offered by her as compensations to loneliness felt by her son who is not accepting her mother's second marriage. She thus manages to set a context of family cohesiveness. She mentions her step daughter as taking care of her own daughters, for example. Feeling that my question has not been answered, I ask it in another way. Her first response is to bracket off her late husband from the picture with comments of consolation for herself and everybody in family. It seems like a defence against her conflict between previous and current roles in the family; the current role is more controversial and difficult; she has to assert herself and her children to be on equal grounds; whereas she is satisfied that her son is the only son and inheritor of spiritual seat, it is ultimately her son and her husband who will have to compromise with one another for family and public image sake. Since men have a different sphere of activity where they spend much more time together than they spend with women at home, it is ultimately contingent that her husband gets close to her son. Her observations of her daughter's response seem to reinforce and further her own interests in dealing

with issues in an extended family; since both the wives take turns in going out with their husband, the daughter is concerned that after loss of her father, she does not want to lose her mother in another way; so she makes sure that her mother is as central to the family as the first wife and there is an intact unit of her own amongst all others. There is absolutely no differentiation of interests between mother and daughter and both strive for gaining a home while leaving out father and son to resolve their conflicts at their own in their own way. Mother and daughter are one unit, much synchronised with each other

### Discussion

The present research was carried out to explore mother-daughter bond in a Pakistani Muslim culture. Whereas by and large, being mother of a son carries a strong basis of self esteem for Pakistani women, the current analysis reveals that a mother's relationship with her daughter is far more close and intimate to her daughter. The study highlights that although birth of a daughter may not be disapproved in an outright manner in an educated and financially well off segment of society, nevertheless the discourses that run in descriptions of daughters are often compensatory; daughters are usually described in terms of other focused identities and talk is morally more evaluative for daughters than for sons. There is also a strong economic discourse around a daughter owing to her constructions as a possession to be given away to others. The study further brings forward how within these discriminative familial set ups, mothers and daughters share a deep bond of shared interests, identities, and social actions.

One important and interesting aspect of the study is women's bonds to one another in a highly patriarchal family system. In most cases, women have a secondary position in family regardless of their particular roles; whereas their relationships with men in the family resonate with notions of power and control, their relationships with one another are far deeper and go beyond mere sharing. A basic form of woman to woman relationship is mother-daughter bond which is not only a highly intimate one, but is also a basic and highly reciprocal and mutually reinforcing matrix of socialization where both construct many common understandings of their familial and broader social environments. These constructions are highly contributing to their identities, self images and personal qualities and are also suggestive of ways leading to marital success which is perceived as the most important aspect of a Pakistani woman's life. In environments where women have less control over their own lives and decisions, women experience a psychological exclusion of men from their self concepts as 'others' with whom they have to deal with in order to make their marriage successful. Marital commitment then, is with the home and not husband per se. More often than not then, ironically where marriage is considered the most intimate of bonds, the daughter looks back at her mother for an intimate sharing and advice as she gets married.

### Limitations and suggestions

Although the study reveals important aspects of the topic, yet it remains to be investigated whether these dimensions of mother-daughter relationship are unique to a Muslim society, a South Asian context, or both. A study exploring these themes may hence be conducted in other religious and cultural contexts.

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