

Research Article

GROWING ISSUE OF LATE MARRIAGES IN PAKISTAN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Saima Ghazal^{#}, Iqra Akram^{*}, Sabeen Andleeb^{*}, Muhammad Azeem Raza^{*}, Muhammad Asif^{*}*

Department of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Punjab.

Abstract

Since the mid-1980s, the average age of first marriage has risen to roughly 25 years in various East and Southeast Asian countries. Pakistan is one of the South Asian countries where late marriages are becoming more common and therefore exploring the reasons for delayed marriages is worth investigating. Hence, the current study typically focuses on exploring factors undertaken while making decisions for marriage, explaining delayed marriages in Pakistan. Purposive sampling was used to select 14 participants and semi-structured interviews were conducted and analysed using IPA. The results highlighted key themes which include; physical/personal, financial, familial sociocultural factors, along with key demographic factors (education of women, caste system, and family size). Appearance and effective distinctiveness were also considered important among the personal/physical aspects based themes of the study, while in financial factors, the key codes were inability to find a good match due to financial requirements, dowry, status quo, and comparisons with relatives. The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of delayed marriageability in societies with collectivist cultures, like Pakistan. The results of this research will help family counsellors to assist parents on how to make successful decisions timely to end the social problem of late marriages. *ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 23(2) February, 2022; 1-13.*

Keywords: Late Marriages, Marriage as an Institution, Delayed Marriage, Timely Marriage, and Parental Decision-Making Power.

Introduction

Asia is historically different from Europe when it comes to the age of marriage. In recent times, age of marriage in Asia has increased by many years [1]. From the 1970s to the middle of the 2000s, the median marriage age for females has increased from 21.8 to 24.7 years [2].

Pakistan has a more collectivistic society whose entire marriage process shows trends that are quite unlike the trends and patterns of the West. Marriage, in the Pakistani context, stands for the getting together of two households and parents are the decision makers.

Because of this concept, marriage in Pakistan is a part of the closely knit social fabric. Its stability and durability are crucial to the entire society,

not just to married ones [3]. The age for marriage by law is 16 and above for females and 18 and above for males in Pakistan.

To investigate the trends of marriage in a particular nation, it is important to take into account the usual age at marriage of that country [4]. Based on 2005 statistics, 3% of Pakistani women around the age of 35-39 did not ever marry [5].

These causative elements are education, occupation, economic status, urbanization, mate preferences, religion etc.

Nevertheless, the necessity of investigating the factors behind these marriages remains a priority, especially in our culture.

Arranged marriages, particularly by parents, are encouraged and preferred to arrangements by the couples themselves [6]. Arranged marriages are still prevalent in Pakistani society and that can explain the crucial part parents play in the decision-making process of their sons'/daughters' marriages.

Parents' flawed decisions about their offspring's marriages are one of the contributing factors of delayed marriages. As the parents choose a suitable spouse, they often make wrong decisions, which ultimately hurt the one who is marrying. No actions are being taken, either, to minimize this issue. The current research pays attention to the reasons behind delayed marriages and how parental decision making can add to this problem. Late marriage is the phenomenon observed when an individual who matured in every aspect of his existence (mentally, spiritually, financially and physically) has not yet married either because of not finding a spouse or for other reasons [7].

Delayed marriages result from various demographic, socio cultural, educational and socio-economic aspects of the individual. Some of the international and national aspects are dowry, income, status, earnings, job, beauty, cast, education, marriage bureaus, etc. Many socio-economic variables also impact the age of marriage and can cause the postponement of marriage. Parents' level of literacy also has a statistically important impact on the age of the individual at the first marriage for both of the sexes [8]. Important shifts in social-structures like growth in educational attainment, urbanization, and the materialization of modern posts for single females are linked with increasing marrying age.

Moreover, it has been documented by many researches that the economic conditions of the individual's family are crucial in specifying the time of life when that individual is going to marry [9,10].

Urbanization positively relates to marriage of males and females as shown by various researches on marriage trends. The first marriage age depended upon the kind of area where the individuals lived in [11]. Research also found

that males and females who lived in rural areas had a higher probability of marrying at an earlier age than males and females from urban areas; women entered marriages at an earlier age than males [12].

The increasing age at marriage has been linked to the changing dynamics of mate-selection. Moreover, late marriages, along with the impact of films, education and growing liberalism, all could be strongly associated with the selection of mates as per the personal desire of males and females. Similarly, the higher the acceptance of the spouse by either of the two families, the greater was the marital satisfaction in Indian families as highlighted in a research [13].

The combination of psychological and sociological aspects on which individuals base their preference for a mate are love, social status, economic status, literacy, physical attractiveness and wishes for kids and making a household [14]. However, the criteria for status in society can differ across cultures. According to many researches, males are inclined to select females who can physically attract them while females are inclined towards males with a respectable economic standing [15]. However, there are many variations in the average marrying age for different religious communities as shown by researches.

Many researches carried out in the continent of Asia point out that the age at marriage was the highest in the followers of Buddhism [16]. Research brought to light that as the practice of the caregivers to include their daughters in the process of mate selection and marriage increased, so made the daughters' demands to be married later in life.

One other element which was reported to have influence on the marriage age was none other than the transfer of dowry. Even though, dowry payment is not always compulsory, the parents of the female had to delay the wedding until they had acquired the required sum [17]. There is much evidence from previous research that marriages can be deferred based on dowry and how parents take time to save enough money for it. Besides all this, one factor that plays a part in late marriages is the individuals' attachment

towards their parents, which does not let them marry at an early age. Moreover, pursuing careers and acquiring education can significantly determine when the person decides to get married. The financial status of households in society often necessitates the women to find jobs out of the home. A few are perfectly inclined towards marrying, but they cannot get other persons to marry at all because of some difficulties [7].

The influence of the parents on the marriage of their child is very important. Research shows that experiences in families of origin, particularly parental distress and divorce, can have significant effects upon young people's future relationship attitudes and experiences [18]. According to research, a person's ego, following their participation during the divorce of their parents, will most probably significantly affect the perceptions and views of that person on marriage in general [19].

Becker theory of marriage considers marriage as a path in which both males and females look for a life partner and see if they are worthy enough based on the utility that this marriage could provide them compared to their current state. There is a duo of principles which this theory is bound by.

As marriage is never, in practical terms, involuntary, it is assumed that it depends on inclination of either parties; that is the first principle. The other principle is that males and females pursue the mate which they consider to be the finest as they tend to compete in the pursuit of suitable partners. If unsuccessful, individuals exceed the suitable marrying age [20].

Kales investigated what the civilized individuals thought about marriage between people of different caste. The Attitude scale was administered on the 200 individuals of the chosen sample, which consisted of lawyers, doctors and educators. The findings of the research clearly indicated that there were significant variances in the outlook of various civil citizens regarding out of caste marriages [21].

The literature crowns education as the most significant variable which could have the biggest effect on late marriages. It is also very necessary that other variables relating to economic and social status and demographics need to be studied too. Education is among the more common causes. Past researches also confirm that there does exist correlation between education and the age at which the individual marries [10]. Young females who plan to finish their college level of studies tend to put off their marriages for later [22].

It was seen how big of a role education and race play regarding the trends of marriage by researchers Isen et al. It was seen that women who had gone to college married at a later age and had lesser offspring. They were also not dependant on marriage for finances and were generally more satisfied with their married life. They also did not opt for divorce; in fact, their rates of divorces have plummeted when contrasted with women who did not receive college education. On the other hand, trends of marriage were not as affected by education in men than in women [23].

To study the part played by educational level and background of the family in the age at which an individual is married, Marchetta et al. led a study on young-aged Senegalese females. Education of the female once again proved to have a very big part in putting off of the marriage and raising children. The study further indicated that decisions as a wife and a mother were very linked and knitted together; when the first baby was born also has a link with how long the marriage lasted. The results also confirmed that the parents' education also has a role to play in this [24].

As was evident from previous researches, they emphasized upon a number of causes for delay in marriage; beliefs, attitude and their preference regarding the goal of the marriage and the spouse. How these variables were influenced has been extensively scrutinized as well. Making decisions about marriage has an important part in the whole progression of marriage. Parents' decisions are a variable which can affect the lateness of a marriage.

A study was carried out to investigate the impact parental attitude towards marriage had on the age at which their son got married by Jennings et al. The attitudes were recorded through interviews from parents in the less urbanized parts of Nepal. It was found that the parents' attitude did have distinct and significant impact on the son's behaviour regarding marriage. To measure the sentimental bonding between the parents the researchers made a longitudinal survey. After the data was analysed, it became clear that the children married at a smaller age when their parents had a deeper and more fortified sentimental attachment. There were no differences identifiable on the basis of the sex [25].

Another research showed discrepancies between the mates preferred by parents and the mates their children preferred. The parents were found to have a higher tendency to gravitate towards mates who showed that their parents had invested a lot in them and those who displayed more conformity to the group the parents belonged in; conversely, children preferred those who had a higher quality of genes. 242 young adults were selected as the sample. The less younger and married subjects displayed more discrepancies. Furthermore, women who preferred that parents have control over the selection of mates and men who based their selection based on the social comparison were reported to have higher levels of conflict [26].

Over the course of the last few decades, the elements of marriage in Asia have seen some significant alterations while the patterned tilt towards later marriages has remained gradual and constant all over the continent in the past 50 years. The nations where arranged marriages have become scarcer, have also experienced an increase in late marriages. Being single has started to become the norm for females who have good educational records [27].

Shahzad tried to identify different factors behind women's age when they marry, in the context of Pakistan as the country has started to experience a change in demographics since the last decade of the 20th century [4]. Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) 2006-07 provided the

data [28]. The data was analysed and the factors were examined. Education of women and where the individual lived had a sizeable impact. The effects of modern style of living were the established reason behind why residency in urban areas affected the age at marriage. This also is possible that urban women had more chances to enrol in an educational program.

Saleem et al. collected data from 70 people to identify reasons behind marrying late and what implication this has regarding fertility. As identified by the study, the main reasons for marrying late were female literacy, financial status, inclination towards pursuing an ideal life and the issue of caste. It was further revealed that around 65% of those who participated in the research believed that marrying late does have an impact on fertility. This poses many problematic situations where the spouse is unable to get pregnant or is vulnerable to miscarriages. Both genders share responsibility regarding infertility [29].

Husain et al. researched the mate preferences on the psychological level in the context of Pakistan. Differential analysis and average scores were used to get to the results which indicated that there indeed was present the idealization of particular proclivities towards mates with specific psychosocial characteristics. The results also indicated that mate preferences differed substantially on the basis of sex; males were inclined towards more beautiful females while females were inclined towards males who were adequately educated [30].

To put it in a nutshell, one important social issue, on the national and international level, is marriage at an elder age. There have been many previous researches that comment on the causes behind this problem. A few of these important reasons include culture, economic status, and variables of social and educational nature. Pursuit of higher literacy, job status, SES, the religion of choice, industrialization, the area of living etc., are the few more of these factors which can significantly affect the marrying age. In Pakistan, the most significant aspect perhaps is the degree of involvement of parents in arranging the marriage. Parents in collectivist

cultures possess the power to impact decisions regarding their children's marriage greatly. The international exposure to this issue can be attributed to the prevalence of late marriages in the West. Even in Asia, these trends along with peoples' priorities regarding marriage have changed with the time. The pattern of delayed marriages is on the rise in the Asian continent and there have been quite a few researchers, to find the aspects which contribute to this rise, a number of which are in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent. But even though this is such a studied topic, not one study can provide us with the entire context and the aspects interacting behind this phenomenon. We also cannot undermine the part played by the parents in the procession of the marriage, especially in Asian countries like Pakistan and India, where love marriage is not as acceptable as arranged marriage. Because of our limited knowledge about how significant parental contribution can be to marriage, we need to research this topic as extensively as possible.

The purpose of this study is to explore the current reasons behind late marriages and prime focus on the role of parents and their decision-making skills contributing towards the issue. As few studies have been conducted, mainly focusing on and exploring parental decision-making skills regarding delayed marriages, so the findings from this study will fill the much needed gap in the literature related to delayed marriages especially in context to Asian marriages. The research and its findings would be helpful for people to identify roots/causes for this growing issue and may also guide future researchers to explore strategies so as to better overcome this problem.

Materials and Methods

Research design

Reasons for late marriages and the role of parental decision-making was explored *via* qualitative case study research design and the data were collected using semi structured interviews with the sample of (N=14)

participants, among whom 7 had a daughter or son unmarried, with a minimum age of 28 and above, and 7 had their children married timely.

Procedure

The study aimed to investigate the reasons and the role of parental decision-making skills towards late Marriages in Pakistan. The sample was taken from Lahore and Jhang, Pakistan using the purposive sampling technique. The nature of the research was briefed to each participant and assured them of the confidentiality of data. The data was collected using a specially designed semi-structured questionnaire with the help of previous literature. The questionnaire included general information about the participants, questions to explore factors/reasons for late marriages, possible solutions for the problem, and parental role in taking marriage decisions. Interviews were transcribed and analysed through an interpretative phenomenological approach. Themes were emerged after transcribing the interviews.

Data were analysed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) by Pietkiewicz et al. [31]. According to this approach, data can be analysed in three stages:

Stage 1: Reading transcript and making exploratory notes.

Stage 2: Transforming notes into emerging themes.

Stage 3: Seeking relationships and Clustering Themes.

Results

The present study revealed four master themes highlighting reasons for late marriage according to parents, and sub-themes were generated from the data. The data also presented parents' perception of their role in decision making process. These themes and parents' opinions regarding criteria for mate selection are discussed as follows (Table 1):

Table 1. Subordinate themes and global themes.

Subordinate Themes	Global Themes
Education	
Financial independence	
Family background	
Family problems	Personal/physical factors
Caste	Financial factors
High standards	Familial factors
Dowry	Sociocultural factors
Negative attitude	Demographic factors
Good characteristics	
Poor decision-making patterns of parents	
Not giving up the search	
Agree with a suitable proposal	
Follow Islam	
Consult with children	
Ignore materialism	Parental decision-making;
Openness to out of caste marriages	advise for timely marriage

Personal/physical factors

Parents highlighted personal and physical factors as reasons for delayed marriageability which includes physical appearance, negative attitude, good characteristics, education, and high expectations were prominent.

Looking for an educated partner came out as most frequently reported reason for late marriages. Also, duration or level of education influences the timing of marriage. The gap between educational level of boys and girls contribute to late marriages as well. With the passage of time, standards and expectations of people are becoming high. Everyone wants to find proposals according to their high expectations in terms of materialistic features, resulting in only a few people becoming successful in finding a mate who meets their standards.

As one parent responded, “Education and sometimes poor family situations are reasons of late marriages. Proposals do not fall rightly on people’s expectations and often relative’s death becomes the cause of late marriage. In old times, parents marry their children early when their children became mature. In this modern era, children are becoming independent. They get high education, then do a good job and their likes and dislikes create hurdles in a timely marriage.

They also want their spouse to be same highly educated as they are themselves.”

Similarly, another participant also shared his views as, “To those we want to marry our children, they don’t meet our expectations. The girl/boy must be educated. Have independent earning. Family must be good. All these aspects hinder the process of marriage.”

One parent shared his thoughts in this way, “Good proposals are rare. Boys are not enough educated while girls are over-educated, which cause a delay in marriages.”

Some parents remarked negative attitude of children towards marriage as the reason for the delay in marriages. Most parents prefer the good characteristics of a girl/boy. They said that boys/girls should be obedient, pious, responsible, morally upright, and not indulge in any unethical activity.

One participant mentioned that parents and children have high standards for which they search many proposals and meet many people, so their decision-making skills become weak because of too many options. They can’t decide which marriage proposal is better. It has become challenging to find a good and decent family, causing a delay in marriages. He said that everyone wants a boy with good education, job and house for their daughter, and there is a lack

of these necessities. In this modern era, people have become more materialistic as compared to the old era. People are becoming money conscious these days and also prefer those marriage proposals which are well-settled and rich.

Financial factors

Financial independence plays a vital role in mate selection which adds to the delay in the marriage decision. Parents viewed a good job or independent business as essential in a good proposal. An increase in unemployment has led to delay in marriage as parents prefer settled mates for their children. According to the girl's parents, powerful socioeconomic status, having a separate house and car, and well-settled boys are preferred for marriage.

According to one parent, "Financial stability and late employment are one major reason. There is growing unemployment in the country instead of high education. That's why mostly children go abroad for employment and this process takes a lot of time. In result, children cross their accepted marriage age."

Another parent mentioned that, "For a timely marriage, education, good job, beauty and good character is needed." Some participants said that children should be mature, educated, and have a good character to be accepted for marriage proposals. When asked about the boy's features from a daughter's parent looking for her spouse, the parent mentioned that the boy must be good looking, honest, and well-settled. Moreover, those who have better businesses or jobs, earn money by themselves, and have better families and are attractive and well entertained.

Additionally, one parent confirming to considering beauty standards while choosing a mate suggested that, "Partner should be educated, well organized, earns well and should be settled. Height should be good as well as appearance."

Familial factors

The structure and size of family and finding a spouse as per the desires causes a delay in marriage. Some prefer small family size while

some prefer strong family background of mate, as in Pakistan, marriage is a family affair, and the whole family is involved in this matter. The parent in causing delayed marriageability also mentioned the family's role in decision making and preference for an arranged marriage.

In addition, parents also look for the job status of the siblings and family members. Besides these factors, caste in Pakistani Culture has always been important while selecting a mate for children. Most people prefer inter-caste marriages. Caste is a big issue in our society, and because of it, parents hesitate to do their son or daughter's marriage in another caste. One of the reasons people prefers inter-caste marriages are that people do not confirm the customs of other caste's family proposals. As one parent remarked,

We have a standard, and we don't acknowledge and prefer our blood relations because of them. We also promote the caste system, which appears to be a major hurdle in the marriage of our children. Family background and social status should also be strong. Spouse-to-be should own a house and a car, as declared by one participant.

Also, one participant who had unmarried daughter mentioned that, "Caste, husband-to-be's employment and household which the other person belongs to are important." Another parent also highlighted the importance of traditional background by saying that, "It is important for the boys' family to have a traditional bond."

In familial factors, parent's decision making power is found to be the pertinent factor contributing towards delays in marriages. Parents with poor decision-making skills make late decisions of marriage for their children. Despite having the least information regarding appropriate criteria of mate selection for their children, parents explicitly claimed their part as prime in choosing a spouse for their son or daughter.

When asked about the solution to this issue, participants who had married their children timely responded with different perspectives. Some participants said that parents should not

give up searching the proposals. They should enhance their social circle, keep meeting with friends and relatives and consult matchmakers. Parents should accept the appropriate proposal and should not wait for better proposals. They should investigate properly and decide on a time.

“According to the participant, we are distant from our religion. We do not follow our religion which hinders the process of timely marriages”.

Also, some parents remarked that a child’s choice should be given due consideration if parents want to avoid the issue of delayed marriageability. If parents ignore materialism and make selection criteria flexible, then there are more chances of timely marriages.

Besides this, preference of child’s choice, better relationships within family and outside family, openness to caste, acceptance of appropriate proposal without waiting for more options and a better understanding of the intricacies of time and present conditions were the characteristics mentioned for those parents who had their children married at appropriate age and time. Some other factors mentioned by parents also included emotional attachment with children, distance from Islam, lack of compromise, negative effects of media and role of fate which may affect timing of marriage.

Sociocultural factors

Most of the participants caused a delay in daughters' marriage was Dowry which has become an integral part of marriage in Pakistan. Sometimes, parents cannot manage Dowry for their daughters, so dowry itself becomes a headache for parents because of high demands from the boy’s family. One of the participants said, “Caste, colour of skin, ancestry, societal and familial conditions and issues, unattractiveness of the children, their fatness, their short height. Other than that, dowry payment being low is also a problem.”

The urban residence is preferred more than the rural residence when selecting a partner. As one parent said, “Those who are well-educated hold public office and those who live in cities are considered and preferred.”

Parents also mentioned equal or better than their socioeconomic status of the family to marry their children. Also, social pressure to maintain a prestigious position in the family and social circle causes parents to look for a mate meeting the high standards is one primary reason for the delay of marriages. Along with this, comparison within relatives and to surpass them adds to this delay as well.

Similarly too much expectations leads towards phobia of idealism. Women idealized their marriages after consuming media or making social comparisons from their friends. One of the most serious challenges in our community is the growing excitement of idealism, as individuals seek perfect beings in their life. Hyper gamy, another important feature in the idealized existence, causes women to put off getting married. Hyper-gamy marital practices, which are popular in many cultures, are one means for women to climb in society [29]. In order to engage in hyper gamy, some women wait until they are far into their 30s or 40s before getting married.

Demographic factors

Higher-educated women are more likely to put off getting married. The age of a woman when she marries is one of the most important factors in her fertility [32]. Women with higher educational degrees are more inclined to postpone marriage and childbirth. People marry later in life as a result of their education, which reduces fertility [33]. As the average age of marriage rises, so does the likelihood of entering the workforce. This promotes a more positive attitude toward the small-size norm, as well as increased awareness of and compliance with family planning measures [34].

The caste system is one of the key causes of late marriages. Late marriages are common in caste systems, where the feudal family structure and people’s social standing make late marriages necessary. Exogamous marriage is frowned upon by parents who want their children’s blood, land, social status, and family honour to remain pure. As a result, many girls and boys marry later in life or remain unmarried.

The Figure 1 below summarizes the themes emerged from the study representing reasons for late marriages along with the advice for timely

marriage by those parents who had their children married on time.

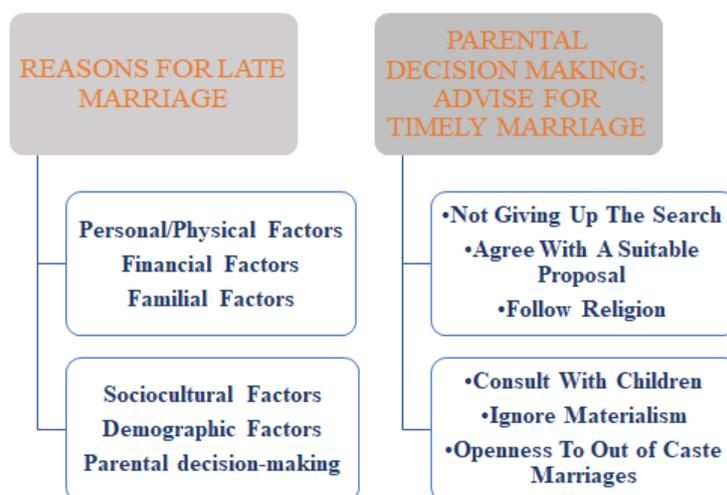


Figure 1. Reasons for late marriages and parent’s advice for timely marriage parental decision-making.

Data revealed that parents play an important role in their children’s lives as their decision-making style or patterns affect timing of marriage of their children. Six sub themes emerged about parental decision-making which helps them to make timely marriages of their children.

Not giving up the search: Participants said that parents should not give up searching the proposals. They should enhance their social circle, keep meeting with friends and relatives and consult match makers.

Agree with a suitable proposal: Parents should accept appropriate proposal and should not wait for better proposals. They should investigate properly and take decision on time.

Follow Islam: According to participant, we are distant from our religion “Islam”. We do not follow Islamic rules that are why we are unable to make a good and timely decision.

Consult with children: If parents do not prefer children choices, then conflict arises and it also effects on timing of marriage. That’s why parents should consult with their children.

Ignore materialism: High standards and materialism is one the reasons of late marriages.

If parents ignore materialism and make standards low, then there are more chances of timely marriages.

Openness to out of caste marriages: Caste is a big issue which creates footraces in marriage decisions. If parents become open to out of caste marriages, then marriages will be chanced on time.

Discussion

Men and women are getting married later in life, which has implications for the marital institution. Most people are willing to give marriage another try, even if their marriages don’t survive as long as they used to. It was found that parents play a significant effect in the decision to marry their children late in Pakistan hence, late marriages are becoming more common and this phenomena is evident not only in Pakistan but around the whole collectivistic countries where socio cultural influences on marital dynamics are similar.

Following the foregoing study, it becomes clear that in Pakistan and around the world, beliefs, institutions and behaviour have all conspired to favour later and later marriages. The near-total

abolition of arranged marriage is a major reason in the rise of second marriages. Due to the shifting nature of women's labour force involvement, the average age at which women marry is anticipated to rise in the coming years.

As Bennett et al. found, women with higher educational attainment are more likely to marry than women with lower educational attainment, our conclusion runs opposite to that [35]. According to Becker higher female production combined with assortative matching can raise the benefits of marriage; however our research found no evidence to support this claim. Oppenheimer theorized that declining marriage rates were caused by increasing barriers for those who couldn't afford it, such as those without a college degree and the current study findings are also in support of the above study assertions that financial and demographic barriers including the demands to find an educated match is one of the pertinent reason for late marriages in Pakistan.

In the Philippines, education was proven to be a determinant of not getting married. Education has risen to the status of a non-essential human right because to its importance in the monetary world. Nowadays, it's pointless to hire an uneducated worker. According to the findings of the study, parents prefer a well-educated family above a well-educated spouse. This finding is consistent with previous studies. The educational attainment of parents has a significant bearing on the educational attainment of their children and the marriageable age at which they marry. Bates et al. discovered a connection between a mother's educational level and the marriage age of her daughter. It's challenging to find a mate who's educated on par with you because of the educational gap between boys and girls.

Bad marriage ideas might sometimes force children or parents to put off getting married. Diverse experiences shape people's opinions, say Shurts et al. It's possible to acquire a positive or negative outlook on marriage. As a result, many young people today put off getting married because they think it's a quaint idea.

Another aspect that came up in Dabla's study as published in Greater Kashmir on late marriage was the caste system as consistent with the

current study findings. Parents should be made aware of the caste system, which does not separate people based on race or gender. Islamic law also prohibits discrimination on the basis of race or creed. As a first step, parents should have a well-rounded education that covers both worldly and religious topics. One father claims that these decisions are the result of pure luck. Heaven sets up relationships and decides on marriage.

The study findings are beneficial for psychologists and counsellors in a manner that they can find the current state of the problem and guide parents regarding appropriate decision-making in this particular aspect. It contributes to the body of literature and gleans insight into this preeminent issue of society. This study lays the foundation for family practitioners and counsellors to give due importance to this issue of delayed marriageability and guide parents on effective decision making, so they take timely decisions of marriage for their children and narrow down their broad parameters for mate selection. When analyzing this study, certain limitations must be considered. Initially, qualitative semi-structured interviews with program participants were undertaken; it limits the generalizability of the study findings so, future studies should be carried out with more heterogeneous and diverse samples to have a much wider view on the reasons for delayed marriages in Pakistan. Moreover, besides parents influence on delayed marriages; the role of individuals that are going to be married should also be explored in future studies as demands are also being imposed by the males and females too in mate selection process.

Conclusion

Past literature has identified many reasons for late marriage internationally, but only a few types of research on an indigenous level indicated reasons for late marriages. This study extensively explored the factors which are contributing towards late marriages. Some reasons are not considered without being explored from specific cultural and societal level as some reasons are unique and do not exist in the literature, like the death of one parent and

family problems. This study almost covered all the aspects of late marriages in Pakistan. One of them is parental decision-making power. As parents mainly arrange marriages in our society, that's why the role of parents is influential in making decisions about marriage. Changes in marriage patterns clearly have a stronger impact on women. Due to the longer time it takes for women to marry, the age gap between couples is narrowing. Furthermore, shifting marriage patterns are likely to affect men and women in quite different ways. Educational and occupational decisions made by men have a higher impact on social and demographic change than those made by women. There appears to be a clear link between women's changing lives and a shrinking pool of 'suitable' males to choose from. Nonetheless, as a result of the delayed marriage trends, women are able to take advantage of more educational and employment opportunities. These changes have a direct impact on the social well-being of young people.

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Corresponding author: *Saima Ghazal, Department of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Punjab*

Email: ghazal.appsy@pu.edu.pk

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