

CHANGING REASONS OF DIVORCE IN DISTRICT BAHAWALNAGAR: COMPARISON OF THE DECADES OF 1990 AND 2000

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative research explores the changing reasons of divorce in District Bahawalnagar over the period of two decades i.e., the decades of 1990 and 2000, as the world witnessed the rapidly changing dynamics of world of information and technology at the turn of the century. The sample of the study comprised of 10 participants, including 5 divorced females from 1990s and 5 from the decades of 2000. The tool of data collection was in-depth interviews. For the purpose of exploring the changing priorities of marriages and the importance of mental health and interpersonal relationships, a thematic semi-structured interview guide was prepared. The theoretical lens of social exchange theory was used in this research and data analysis was done using the technique of thematic analysis. The study found that traditional gender roles have changed, and women are becoming more empowered. The increasing divorce rate can be normalized in the future, but the legal system in Pakistan is not helping women secure legal rights.

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INTRODUCTION

This study explores the changing reasons of divorce in District Bahawalnagar of Punjab, Pakistan. The world witnessed the rapidly changing dynamics of world of information and technology at the turn of the century, so the two decades of 1990 and 2000 were selected for the study. Marriage is a social institution that has been present across different cultures throughout history. Marriage rates have fallen in recent decades and divorce rates have risen, and the defining characteristics of marriage have changed globally. Divorce is the termination of legal obligations and duties associated with marriage, resulting in the dissolution of a couple's matrimonial bonds, and has become a significant social and ethical concern

globally (Abrams, 1989). In the intricate tapestry of human relationships, marriage stands as a cornerstone, weaving together lives, dreams, and aspirations (Amato & Previti, 2003). However, the dynamics of marriage and its dissolution have evolved significantly over the years, reflecting the broader shifts in social, cultural, and economic landscapes (De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2006). As we traverse the corridors of time from the mid-20th century to the dawn of the 21st century, we witness a metamorphosis in the factors underpinning marital bonds and unraveling marital ties.

Family is a crucial social institution, and when partners refuse to stay in marriage, it causes chaos and negative effects on spouses and offspring. Marriage has evolved over the past centuries, with divorce being a central phenomenon reflecting societal norms, values, individual experiences, cultural contexts, and socio-economic factors. Understanding these reasons is crucial for effective interventions. Divorce rates are steadily and consistently rising worldwide (Donnellan et al., 2015). This presents a concerning scenario for the family institution's continued existence. The divorce rate varies greatly between nations. For instance, the divorce rate is as low as 3% in Chile and as high as 70% in Belgium (Eurostat, 2022). According to Eurostat (2022), the divorce rate in the Czech Republic, Portugal, Hungary, and Luxembourg is approximately 60%. Similarly, the divorce rate in the United States of America is 60%, which is believed to be the sixth-highest divorce rate in the world. Extramarital affairs, money problems, poor communication, persistent arguments, gaining weight, irrational expectations, unwanted sexual assault, loss of closeness, inequality, and some of the most common causes of divorce globally are not being ready for marriage (Amato & Previti, 2003; Amato & James, 2010; Spanier, 1976; Stanley et al., 2006). Traditional reasons for divorce like adultery and physical abuse are issues but there are new relational problems like discontent and poor communication (Amato & Previti 2003). Increases in women's work and societal changes, such as deinstitutionalization of marriage and renegotiation of gender roles, have altered intimate relationships and redefined marital commitment (De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2006).

LITERATURE REVIEW

We are living in a time of vast social, cultural, and economic upheaval, as well as previously unheard-of diversity in household living arrangements. These developments have profound effects on marriage and divorce in the twenty-first century. Sociologist George Homans explains the decline in social relationships as a process of negotiated exchanges based on rewards, punishments, and resources (1958). If partners do not achieve rewards and costs, the relationship lacks excitement, leading to feelings of being ignored and no longer valued. By including costs and rewards (in the form of products, time, and services), the relationship can stay dynamic and fulfilling, which is necessary for a strong dyadic bond. Specifically, these elements enhance satisfaction and support the notion that they made the right kind of commitment to one another. claim Lavner et al. (2014, p. 114), “Positive behavior between young couples “declines their likelihood of divorce as they grow in age together” and helps maintain happiness. When a person considers the advantages and disadvantages of their marriage, it is more likely for doubt to arise negative or positive interactions.”

In a study, Hawkins, Willoughby & Doherty (2012) discovered that, among 886 divorced parents surveyed, growing apart was the most often stated cause for seeking a divorce (55%). This was followed by the inability to communicate (53%), financial difficulties (40%), marital issues (37%), adultery (37%), and inadequate attention (34%). Recent de-institutionalization of marriage in Western nations has led to a lack of a transforming process for cohabitation, with various triggers causing a lack of congruence in commitment-forming behavior (Stanley, 2010). Partners' commitments may not always align with their relationship status, necessitating further research on factors influencing commitment in different types of partnerships. Global trends greater personal choices, while polygyny is declining due to social pressures and exclusivity (Karraker & Grochowski, 2012). In Australia, divorce is primarily due to alcoholism-related abuse and economic factors (Featherstone, 2013). The 'Big Five' model suggests high conscientiousness and agreeableness couples have stable marriages, while neurotic or extraverted behavior increases divorce rates (Boertien & Mortelmans, 2018). In Kerala, alcoholism, violence, and financial crises contribute to high divorce rates.

Before the 20th century, divorce was uncommon due to economic, social, and emotional barriers. It was considered a prerogative reserved for men, the church, and wealthy. In Catholic nations, it's now lawful. In the 20th century, legal separation of marriages provided relief for victims of domestic abuse and allowed them to find happiness with new partners. Gender roles are changing globally, with women pursuing higher education and fulfilling careers. A feminist movement advocating for gender equality emerged in the 20th century, but the process is slow, and women still bear a disproportionate share of unpaid labor and caregiving duties. The age gap between couples significantly impacts marital satisfaction and stability, with high age gaps leading to issues like stepchildren, compatibility issues, health concerns, socialization problems, and criticism (Lee & McKinnish, 2018). Many divorcees report patriarchal behaviors from their spouses, which serve as a divorce simulator. Technological modernization and the overuse of social media in family life have also contributed to unequal power dynamics and increased divorce rates. In India, the belief in living independently rather than maintaining marriages is also contributing to these issues (Vincent & D'Mello, 2018).

If we see regionally, divorce rates in Iran have increased significantly, with factors such as cruelty, husbands' interest in other women, failure to fulfill their role as providers, and interference from in-laws or relatives contributing to the issue. Post-divorce consequences include psychological issues like anger, loneliness, shyness, and feelings of inferiority.

Matrimony is a significant turning point in a couple's life, and divorce in Pakistan is influenced by various factors such as social, economic, cultural, psychological, political, and religious elements (Ibrar & Naqvi, 2017). Early marriages and romantic feelings contribute to the rise in divorces, as young couples may not be mature enough to make decisions that lead to divorce. Major divorce bases among Pakistani males include adultery, conflicting behavior, lack of commitment, societal demands, son preference and economic difficulties (Azam et al., 2021).

Lack of patience is the most common factor cited by population of 48% then came the detachment from religion (33%), the impact of Western culture (27%), women putting their careers first (12%), and men showing no interest in getting married. In Pakistan, the practice of Khula, which grants women the right to file for divorce if they are unhappy in their marriage, is becoming more common. According to data (Mehmood, 2020), the Punjab Province in Pakistan reported 13,299 cases of Khula in 2012. It increased to 14, 243 in 2013, and 16, 942 cases were reported from Khula in 2014. 18, 901 cases were reported in 2016. It demonstrates that Pakistan is seeing an increase in the divorce rate (Munir & AbdulQuddus), 2018).

According to equity theory, spouses who feel over or under-benefited in a relationship create disparity and a sense of unfairness, and they restore to changing behaviors, such as filing for divorce (Ruppanner et al., 2018). Furthermore, economic model of marriage, a woman's participation into the workforce reduces the benefits of specialization for a couple and heightens marital discord. Additionally, marriage is explained by Becker's theory of marital instability. Marriage dissolves when the predicted utility (satisfaction) of getting a divorce is greater than that of staying married. People often seek to maximize their enjoyment from the items they like to consume; in the context of marriage, partners seek to maximize their happiness through material possessions. Numerous studies have extensively documented the increasing trend of divorce cases and factors in various regions of Pakistan (Khan, Sikandar & Akhlaq, 2019). The causes of divorce that have already been identified in the literature are dynamic, multifaceted, and particular to a place and era. Certain political, religious, psychological, cultural, and social factors have an impact on them. It is impossible to generalize the causes of divorce from a particular situation. However, there hasn't been a distinct literature analysis of how divorce causes and incentives changed in the last decades of 20th century and initial decades of 21st century.

THEORETICAL LENS: SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Social Exchange Theory offers a thorough understanding for the complexities of marital relationships and the processes underlying divorce. According to Social Exchange Theory on the principle of maximizing rewards and minimizing costs individuals engage in relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Within marriages, partners engage in a continuous exchange of resources, affection, and support, with the expectation of receiving benefits in return. When the perceived rewards of the relationship outweigh the costs, individuals are more likely to remain committed. However, when the balance of rewards and costs shifts, leading to dissatisfaction or unmet needs, individuals may consider divorce as a means of maximizing their overall well-being (Cook et al., 2013). This theoretical lens allows for the examination of both individual-level factors, such as communication patterns, personality traits, and conflict resolution skills, as well as broader societal influences, including cultural norms, economic conditions, and gender roles. By analyzing the dynamics of exchange within marriages and the impact of societal factors on divorce the researcher choose method of qualitative research as it enhances a comprehensive understanding and interpretation of the objectives with exposing underlying meaning in interpersonal

communication. The primary goal of this research is to use data collection and exploration to refute or validate current knowledge. Social Exchange Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the motivations behind divorce and informing interventions aimed at promoting marital stability and well-being.

METHODOLOGY

As the study is about exploring the changing reasons of divorce by doing comparison of two different decades so comparative case study was used as a research design as it is a suitable method for identifying and measuring the connections between two or more variables by comparing groups that are subjected to various treatments depending on their preferences or circumstances. The researcher chose qualitative research because it enhances a comprehensive understanding and interpretations of the objectives. Our theoretical stance was based on social exchange theory.

The study was conducted in District Bahawalnagar area of South Punjab. Through purposive sampling, divorced women were located from the social circle of researcher and attorneys. The tool used to collect data for this study was method of in-depth interviews. As this allows the interviewer to establish a rapport with the subject before posing delicate questions and having a discussion about traumatic experiences, interviews are the most effective method for studying and researching complex and delicate subjects. In-depth interviews were conducted with 5 divorced females from 1990s and 5 divorced females from the decade of 2000.

The targeted participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study when the researcher approached them. The participants were informed of the study's purpose. The participants' true names were concealed and false identities were given to them during data analysis. The instrument i.e. thematic interview guide was developed. To aid in the organization and flow of the interview, the researcher created an interview schedule. Every woman who had been divorced was asked the same set of questions regarding her personal experiences and opinions regarding the evolving reasons for divorce. Thematic analysis was carried out in order to accomplish the goal of the data analysis. The interviews were audio recorded and then verbatim transcribed. Themes were found after the data were carefully examined. The literature review helped the researcher focus on particular areas of the subject at hand during the data analysis stage.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

During analysis of transcribed data, following themes (See Table 5.1) were generated. It was realized during data analysis that each theme was related to the other and it was discovered how divorce rate is affected due to evolving priorities for successful marriages. The themes also reflect the changing reasons of divorce in the time period studied and all related factors such as economic, cultural, technological, interpersonal relationship gaps, lack of mutual understanding and traditional gender roles enforcement. The themes and sub-themes that emerged during analysis of data are listed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Evolution of priorities for a successful marriage over time	• Defining successful marriage • Changing priorities • Reason of divorce • Comparison of two generations
Increase in divorce in new generation	• Divorce: A taboo • Marriage for survival • Technological advancements' negative impacts on marriage • Staying out of abusive marriages while protecting own happiness
Economic and cultural factors and rising divorce rate	• Financial stability and marital success • Breaking traditional gender roles • Rising divorce trend in cities and countryside • Emotionally engaged and supportive partner
Psychological and interpersonal factors and divorce	• Lack of mutual understanding • Division of household chores • Impact of financial independence on traditional gender roles • Being loved by partner • Effect of psychological and interpersonal factors on divorce • Sticking to an abusive marriage • Communicating feelings • Trust and intimacy for future relationships affected by divorce • Justice of law system for rights of divorced women

Evolution of Priorities of A Successful Marriage

With evolving times, institution of family has evolved from joint to nuclear in which marriage plays an important role. Concept of a successful marriage does not revolve around healthy children, economic stability and having all the basic survival needs being fulfilled, as it was considered so previously. Rather the priorities for a successful marriage have evolved over time. One of the participant Alia, who became a divorcee in 2019 gave the researcher an explanation about her priorities of a successful marriage and said, “my mother always lectured me to be thankful for a *roti* [bread] given by your husband as at least he is fulfilling his duties as husband and this is the key to a successful marriage. And my priority was not the bread he is bringing but also the respect, mutual understanding, emotional support, and acknowledgment for little things I did for him.”

Defining Successful Marriage

One of our participant Qudsia who became a divorcee in 2017 is a successful lawyer. She said that, “a marriage is successful when there is understanding and tolerance between couples. With that there should be communication, commitment and good companionship.” She also added that most of the cases of divorce on daily basis are due to lack of commitment and intolerance adding up with financial challenges and infidelity.” Tabassum who became a divorcee in 1999, said that “a marriage is successful when you stay very loyal to your partner and stand for them no matter what the situation is. She further added that, “nowadays extra marital affairs are a big reason for unsuccessful marriages.”

Changing Priorities

In modern times people have greater emphasis on compatibility and mutual understanding. For a marriage to be successful in this time, it has become relevant to challenge traditional structure of marriage including a shift in traditional gender roles as equality is now the basis of a successful marriage (Amato, 2010). Alia said “successful marriages are now very hard to maintain as priorities of people from this relation has changed. Women are more educated now and they know about their rights and they speak up for themselves.” She further added, “compatibility is now the priority; both partners want their partner to be compatible and believe in equality of the relation.”

Reason of Divorce

Divorce is the dissolution of marriage legally. It’s an emotionally challenging and complex process. Divorce is a personal decision that individuals make according to their circumstances so we can’t call it good or bad. Tabassum said, “reason of my divorce was having 4 daughters consecutively and no son. As I was not able to give heir to their family my husband was constantly forced by his mother to divorce me and he remarried another woman.” Alia said, “I took divorce from my husband as he was very abusive towards me and my children. We had no mutual understanding or emotional compatibility. He used to treat me like a robot that is always ready to work for him, who never gets tired and has no emotions.”

Comparison of Two Generations

People now see marriage through the lens of individualism. They place great emphasis on personal growth, equality in relationships and independence. Older generations had strong commitment to traditional values. They considered marriage as lifelong institution that has to stand test of time no matter what the circumstances (Amato, 2010). Financial stability was central to successful marriage. According to Ayesha, “we didn’t have the policy of use and throw. Neither in relationships nor in material things. As long as the marriage had no physical or mental abuse, the woman was asked to adapt and adjust with the man. Divorce used to be the last option.” She further adds, “today’s generation has no tolerance or patience over things when they get out of the box.” Another participant Tabassum said “today’s generation is more educated and financially independent. Women today not stay in a dysfunctional relationship due to finances as they used to in the past.”

Increase in Divorce in New Generation

In Pakistan divorce rate has been increasing. Women today want more autonomy and they are well aware that they can leave the marriage for reasons like psychological abuse of not being at peace mentally rather than severe reasons like physical violence. Asiya said, "I am a mother of 2 and I left my abusive marriage last year. I had no advance degrees but my cooking skills. I started my cooking business and when it started growing and I became financially independent with that emotionally independent enough to leave my marriage." Hania said, "marriages today are about quality unlike past when success of marriage was dependent upon longevity. And you had to live with that married woman tag no matter how abusive the marriage became. But today people are challenging traditional norms and values that are rooted in society."

Divorce: A Taboo

In Pakistani society if you are a divorcee, you would be rejected by society no matter how successful or hard working you are. Divorce is a stigma that is rooted in our culture. Divorced woman is considered as shameful and vulgar even when she wants to marry again as the responsibility of divorce is usually pinned on the woman. It is taken for granted that it is her responsibility to take care of her husband and family (Amato, 2010).

Alia said, "when my husband physically assaulted me for the first time I came home and talked about the situation to my mother, I was shocked to hear about her reaction that, 'it was just a slap! Why are you overreacting?' and she told me to go back and make the marriage work otherwise I will not be welcomed in my parents' house."

Marriage for Survival

In the past, marriage was believed to be a permanent bond. Practical considerations like social status and economic stability were of greater importance in marriage. For women, marriage was important to secure financial resources and to be accepted in society as a person who has fulfilled her destiny. Aymen said "it was considered that if the husband is fulfilling basic needs of the wife and is financially stable then they are living in the happiest marriage. Emotional intimacy, mutual understanding and partnership had no place in the marriage or these factors were never the reason of divorce."

Technological Advancements' Negative Impacts on Marriage

There is an increased disbalance between personal and work life which is straining marriages. Social media is giving unrealistic expectations to people about ideal married life as people are sharing their best moments on social media which is leading to destructive comparisons. This can be better understood by the term FOMO which is 'fear of missing out' and an idea that people out there are having better time than you. It is impacting mental health of couples by giving them a sense of comparison and leading to depression and deterioration of overall wellbeing.

Tabassum said "Work from home on laptops and cell phones is trouble. You have this phone in your hand all the time, even if you are sitting on dinner table or attending a family gathering. This makes it difficult

to connect with people around you in real time. And when you don't give the time to your intimate family, your relationship suffers." Alina said, "use of dating apps and easy access to people who are apparently far away, is paving path to cheating. This has added mistrust within relationship."

5.2.4 Staying out of abusive marriages by valuing own happiness

With increasing awareness about the detrimental effects of abuse on mental and physical health, there is an increase in acceptance of society to survivors of abusive relationships. There are still cultural and societal factors that force individuals to stay in toxic relationships. However, on the other hand, there is a growing recognition about safety, happiness and self-care, and people prefer leaving such relationships. Ayesha said, "I feel really happy when I see women standing up for themselves and leaving any relation that is affecting their individual happiness and compromising their self-worth." According to Qudsia, "in marriage, love, trust and mutual understanding should be above all. Now women are becoming aware about prioritize their own happiness over toxic relations."

Economic and Culture Factors and Rising Divorce Rate

Economic factors like financial instability have a direct relationship to marriage dissolution and divorce. When a couple does not have stable income, they do not feel secure as this affects living costs and childcare expenses. Similarly cultural factors like gender roles, family pressure, societal expectations and religious practices etc., are increasing the number of dysfunctional marriages. There is now an increase in the number of couples who want shared household responsibilities and follow the concept of nuclear family due to unnecessary involvement of other family members. Asiya said, "economic factors have a great impact on increasing divorce rate but cultural factors are more responsible towards rising divorce rate. These cultural patterns are now threatened and patriarchal system is being challenged."

According to Sadia, "the cultural gender roles i.e., man is the primary breadwinners and woman is responsible for all household duties is causing conflicts in this generation leading to marital dissatisfaction, eventually resulting in divorce."

Financial Stability and Marital Success

Due to evolving individual values and societal norms, the centrality of financial stability has shifted. Other factors such as mutual respect, communication, shared values and individual happiness have gained more importance while financial stability still plays its role in reducing stress and providing good marital foundation. Hadiqa said, "financial stability is not as central to marital success as it once was. People have assigned marital satisfaction to other factors like love, respect, intimacy and standing with each other in difficult times."

Breaking Traditional Gender Roles

Breaking traditional gender roles is impacting marital bond in both negative and positive terms. The couples who are sharing household and care giving responsibilities have reported a higher level of marital satisfaction. When financial responsibilities are also divided equally, the burden is not too much for one shoulder. But these couples face backlash from the society. Also, shifting gender role dynamics may

create adjustment difficulties in marriage if one partner does not think like the other (Wilcox & Dew, 2019). Alina said, “it is now the need of the hour to break these traditional gender roles which are the foundation of patriarchal society no matter what the consequences are. We have seen a surge in divorce rates because our women have started challenging these gender roles.”

Rising Divorce Trends in Cities and Countryside

Divorce rate is now rising in both urban and rural settlements but it is growing too fast in urban as compared to rural areas. Women in urban areas are comparatively financially more independent and they do not compromise their happiness in marriage. They are also at times educated enough to know about their rights so they want equality in the relationships. They do not tolerate abusive behavior of their husbands. On the other hand, in rural setting mostly women are usually financially dependent and are not educated to know about their rights in marriage. Because of more cultural control, they do not challenge traditional gender roles and tolerate abuse. Tabassum said, “Life is hard for rural women but they have adapted to it”.

Ayesha said, “in rural setting traditional values and norms are deeply rooted and divorce is considered as a biggest sin and stigma. Due to this fear woman do not even think about it.”

Emotionally Engaged and Supportive Partner

For a healthy and fulfilling relationship, emotional understanding, empathy and active listening is very important. This leads to mutual understanding and respect by creating a sense of intimacy and connection. Alina said, “support and emotional engagement are the foundations to longevity and satisfaction of relationship. It is rare to find partner who are emotionally available.”

Qudsia said, “Emotionally engaged and supportive partner is everybody’s desire. It gives your partner a safe space to express emotions which strengthens the relation. I always wished this in my partner. This yearning for an emotional connection made my soul tired.”

Effect of Psychological and Interpersonal Factors and Divorce

Psychological and interpersonal factors play important role in divorce. Psychological factors include the aspects such as emotional stability, personality traits, coping mechanisms and mental health conditions (Chris Fraley, 2002) And interpersonal factors include conflict resolution skills, communication styles, trust and quality of relationship. When these factors are in conflict and are not addressed, they can cause marriage strain. According to Alina, “due to past experiences when a partner struggles with trust issues, it can lead to jealousy and suspicion within the relation which can cause conflict and ultimately divorce.” Hadiqa said, “If conflicts are not resolved over time due to lack of effective communication, it leads to resentment building thus affecting the foundation of marriage.”

Lack of Mutual Understanding

When partners fail to understand feelings, perspectives and thoughts of each other, communication can be affected, which results in greater misunderstanding and conflicts. When partners are not understanding each other, it becomes impossible for them to resolve conflicts as they may struggle to find common

ground to reach satisfactory solutions with mutual consent. Sadia said, “lack of mutual understanding can make partners feel emotionally disconnected and they may struggle to empathize with the emotions of other, which results in creating a sense of isolation and loneliness.”

Division of Household Chores

Division of household chores between partners give a sense of equality and fairness making both the partners to feel valued and respected in relationships. Hadiqa said, “dividing household chores is of a great advantage to those who are performing parenting duties equally. This leads to a strong marital bond.” Alia said, “in a society where traditional norms and values are deeply rooted, this thinking can have serious consequences. If your husband washes clothes with you, he would be labeled as ‘*zan-mureed*’ [worshiper of wife].”

Impact of Financial Independence on Traditional Gender Roles

Financial independence of women allows them to be less dependent on their husbands and it shifts the traditional gender roles where man is the primary breadwinner and women is the caretaker only. Hadiqa said, “biggest challenge that financial independence of women gives to traditional gender roles is of division of household chores. They renegotiate caregiving and household duties equally based on their preferences rather than being confined to traditional norms and values”.

Effect of Psychological and Interpersonal Factors on Divorce

Psychological and interpersonal factors play important role in divorce. Psychological factors include emotional stability, personality traits, coping mechanisms and mental health conditions. Interpersonal factors include conflict resolution skills, communication styles, trust and quality of relationship. When these factors are in conflict and not addressed, they can cause marriage strain. According to Alina, “due to past experiences when a partner struggles with trust issues, it can lead to jealousy and suspicion within the relation which can cause conflict and ultimately divorce.” Hadiqa said, “If conflicts are not resolved over time due to lack of effective communication, it leads to resentment building thus affecting the foundation of marriage.”

Being Loved by Partner

Feeling valued and loved by partner could have a positive effect on marital stability and satisfaction, thus lowering the probability of conflict and divorce. According to research, strong emotional bond, intimacy and trust in a relationship are directly linked with greater satisfaction in relationship and resilience for the challenges faced by both partners. Sadia said, “it is great to be loved and valued by your partner, but it is just one aspect of healthy marriage. Other factors like mutual respect, conflict resolutions skills and shared values are some of crucial factors contributing to successful marriage.”

Staying in an Abusive Marriage

Basic survival needs include food, shelter, clothing, safety and healthcare. These are essential for individuals to lead a healthy life. Abuse in marriage has long lasting and harmful impacts on mental health and wellbeing. Ayesha said, “no, it is not okay to stay in an abusive marriage, no matter how much of the

other needs are being fulfilled. If the relation is not giving emotional or mental satisfaction, one must leave it immediately.” Cultural and social pressures force a woman to stay in harmful abusive relationship.

Communicating Feelings

Understanding feelings can build trust, intimacy and connection in a relationship. It leads the couples to resolve conflicts constructively by communicating effectively. When a person feels understood or heard, they express problems more openly (Gottman, 2008). Tabassum said, “Understanding feelings of your partner can build a healthy relationship with empathy, support and mutual respect.” Aymen said, “Emotional support is one of the main ingredients of happy and healthy married life. It makes your partner feel validated and increases empathy thus they become more compassionate towards each other.”

Trust and Intimacy for Future Relationships Effected by Divorce

Divorce has potential impacts on individuals such as difficulty with commitment, trust issues, fear of vulnerability and changing priorities. For a moment, divorce jeopardizes the whole life of the individual if they do not seek professional help as there are serious emotional aftermaths of divorce. Sadia said, “divorce in itself is an experience nobody wants to go through. It is painful and life challenging. It destroys your emotional and mental wellbeing. Your trust is completely shaken, especially if marriage involves deception and betrayal, it gets nearly impossible for the victim to trust any other person.” According to Hadiqa, “divorce makes you highly sensitive to red flags which are potential warning signs in new relationships. Divorce survivors are quicker to recognize these behavior patterns that can cause relationship problems in future.”

Justice of Law System for Rights of Divorce Women

One right of women in marriage is *Mehr* [Right of dower set by religion]. If the wife has not received dower at the time of marriage, then she is entitled to receive it after divorce. It is a form of financial security. There is also a right of maintenance and alimony which holds husband responsible for providing exact amount for the maintenance of wife. As far as the rights of child custody and maintenance are concerned, if the couple has children and they are of tender age, then custody is granted to wife and if the boy is above 12 years of age, the custody is granted to the father. Sadia said, “there are many rights listed in our justice system for the divorced women but there is negation of these rights when it come to the women seeking *Khula* i.e., divorce that is a biggest drawback”. Tabassum said, “I was not financially independent when my husband divorced me. Despite the right of *Mehr* which was an obligation to my husband to pay, I faced many court trials to get it and it was half of the amount listed in my *Nikah* certificate.”

CONCLUSION

Our research on the dynamics of divorce in Pakistan has shed light on a path characterized by changing priorities and difficulties. What constitutes a successful marriage has changed significantly over the past decades. In the past, having steady finances was considered essential to a happy marriage. On the other hand, our results indicate a profound shift in modern ideals. These days, companionship and emotional

health are more important than ever, changing the fundamental structure of marriages. This paradigm shift highlights the increasing awareness of the value of companionship, emotional support, and understanding between partners in maintaining a happy relationship. It denotes a shift away from materialistic worries and toward a more comprehensive strategy for marital contentment. There is a need to focus on the changing priorities of people and shifting traditional dynamics accordingly.

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