



Socioeconomic Determinants of Divorce in Pakistan: A Case Study of Bahawalpur

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the socioeconomic determinants of divorce in Pakistan. For this purpose, the data of one hundred respondents was collected from 23 union councils of Bahawalpur City using a convenient sampling technique. A questionnaire comprising close-ended questions was used for data collection. For data analysis, the Ordinary Least Square method is used. The OLS estimates show that education, mutual love and mutual understating are found to be positively related to the duration of marriage whereas economic issues, family interference and infertility are found to be negatively related to the duration of marriage. The influence of variables education, mutual love, mutual understating and infertility on the duration of love is found to be statistically insignificant. Therefore, based on the outcomes of the study, it is concluded that socioeconomic factors are vital to influence the duration of marriage.



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INTRODUCTION

Divorce is the separation of a man and a woman from one another, which eventually affects the children and divorced women. Women in society often struggle with depression, anxiety, loneliness, and other issues. It impacts not just the family members but also the progress of the

country. Families raise children and foster the nation's future economic growth, yet divorce has a detrimental effect on the nation's entire system (Fahad & Khan, 2020). Divorce is an event that may have several perspectives. Age at the time of marriage, race and social class like structural and life course factors are considered by sociological researchers (Bumpass et al., 1991). Every country has a legal procedure for the incidence of divorce. According to the Family Courts Law Act 1962 (amended in 1964), after the petition from the side of any of the spouses and after the decree of law, the marital relationship is terminated. Countries may have differing demographic, ethical, legal, religious or sociological treatment of divorce but its outcomes seem to be common, in general. There are some genuine reasons why Muslim men and women are allowed to seek this last option.

According to Azhar et al., (2018), the primary causes of divorce in Pakistan are associated with social, economic, cultural, psychological, political, and religious factors. Since divorce is a complicated process in Pakistan, each divorced spouse has a unique reason for ending their marriage. A few of the main causes of the increase in divorces are young age and love marriages. Younger couples who are married are not emotionally mature enough to make the kinds of decisions that ultimately result in divorce. They don't speak with one another because of a range of daily worries or expectations, reluctance, and egos, which increases the divorce rate (Atif et al., 2021). These couples are not cognizant of one another to the fullest extent, and it's also possible that being financially responsible for one's own needs shouldn't be ignored (Ali et al., 2017; Rubab & Alam, 2022).

Moreover, divorce is a regrettable consequence of Pakistani society's rigid and traditional customs and ideals. Lack of information and ignorance of one's rights bind women more than men. Accordingly, cultural disparities between spouses, a wide age gap between them, and a lack of mutual understanding are among the major reasons why women file for divorce (Haq et al., 2020). But in Pakistan, forced marriages, joint families, and short tempers are the main causes of divorce. According to Ramzan et al., (2018), factors that contribute to divorce are such as joblessness, a lack of trust, extramarital affairs, inequalities in the social and cultural position of the couples, poor communication, the husband's second marriage, and impatience.

In Pakistan, the entire family arranges marriages rather than just the couple. As a result, because of the patriarchal nature of the family structure, in-laws frequently meddle in the affairs of married couples. As a result, there is a lack of understanding between spouses, and divorce occurs in a harsh setting (Qamar & Faizan, 2021). Similarly, the most frequent grounds for divorce in major Pakistani cities including Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, and Islamabad include sexual dysfunction, domestic abuse, and temperamental incompatibilities between spouses (Khan et al., 2019). Similarly, forced marriages in which the bride or groom is compelled to marry against their choice and their willingness is not taken into account are a major factor in Pakistani marital failure. These coerced partnerships strain marriages, lead to miscommunications and ultimately result in divorce.

Living in two or more is desirable in terms of family but in Pakistan, a female-subordinating society, in-laws are not always family supporters. Duration of marriage with increased shared history, shared children, common friends and sexual compatibility and thus acquiring firm-specific capital and sizeable emotional and financial costs in the face of dissolution, locks people

in relation (Becker, 1977). Rearing children adds up to the marital capital and thus the expected gains. Infertility or having no sons encourages dissolution. Education may lead to the reduced division of labor between mates and can cause lower gains from marriage. Wealth adds marital stability and accumulated wealth is something taken as a couple's specific resource, and undoubtedly divorce will bring an end to this benefit. Economic hardships build stress which leads to disagreements over new finances, provokes irritation among spouses and dims expressions of emotional support (Akter & Begum, 2012). Incompatibility in terms of traits of mates (intelligence, race, language, social background) lowers the gain from marriage and thus leads to dissolution. Keeping in view the discussion, this study focuses on some demographical determinants (age at the time of marriage, female education, fertility, family interference), psychological determinants (compatibility, mutual love), and economic determinants (financial issues, education level) of divorce which have not been discussed before in Bahawalpur (Pakistan) with the special reference of economics. Therefore, the outcomes of the study will assist in determining the socioeconomic causes of divorce in Bahawalpur. Based on the findings appropriate policies can be designed to reduce the divorce rates in Bahawalpur.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Different studies analyzed the factors of divorce such as Harsoyo & Darmawan (2023) analyzed the factors of divorce in Indonesia. Their study showed that extramarital affairs, economic issues, household debt, poor financial management, and unemployment were the main causes of divorce in Indonesia. Similarly, Ramzan et al., (2018) studied divorce status and its major reasons in Pakistan. Unemployment, financial pressure, lack of trust, higher education, religious conflicts and misunderstanding were found determining factors. Similarly, Mahmood et al., (2016) analyzed the social and economic factors affecting divorce in Multan Pakistan. Graphical analysis revealed that the education of the husband, income of the husband, use of drugs, age at marriage, Bata system, wish for a son, and husband abuse were affecting women's divorce in Pakistan. The study by Ramachandrappa (2012) analyzed the family structural dimensions of marital disruption in Bangalore city. Lack of communication and understanding between spouses, financial freedom, lack of time at home, irritating working hours, financial security and stress were brought to light as major causes of marital disruption. In addition, Javanmard (2012) studied the extent of legal divorce in Kharmabad city of Iran. Results revealed that 21-25 and 26-30 years were the high-risk age groups for separation leading to divorce both in Iran and India.

The study conducted by Khurshid et al., (2012) worked on the reasons for divorce among married couples in the context of Pakistani values to determine the existing state of matter. Statistical analysis revealed that various social, personal and psychological factors were among the major causes e.g. communication gap, stressed-out lifestyle, lack of understanding, relationship with in-laws, financial pressure, infidelity etc. In the case of Iran, Roshanfekar et al., (2012) tried to show how the rate of divorce was a function of living cost, per capita income, income inequality and the men's level of education. Findings reveal a positive impact of living costs and income inequality on the divorce rate while per capita income and the level of education are found to be negatively related to the divorce rate. Similarly, Abedinia et al., (2011) studied gender people requesting a divorce in the family courts in Tehran has paid during the years 2006-2007. Results revealed that women are more influenced by socioeconomic status, violence, sexual problems and addiction on the other hand, men found more cultural and social

problems. The study by Sayer et al., (2011) used three ways of national surveys of families and households (NSFH) to determine how employment and satisfaction affect men's and women's decisions to leave marriage in the U.S. Findings revealed that either husband or wife could be more conducive to divorce when husband is unemployed, when wives enjoyed better than average marital peace, their employment affects neither exists, but, wives employment with below average marital satisfaction more likely lead to divorce.

In addition, Raz-Yurovich (2012) analyzed the main theoretical perspectives that seek to explain the economic determinants of divorce in Israel. Results showed that women's earnings did affect the divorce risk. The study revealed that high shared earnings improve marital stability. Only the wife's working hours and industry were found to favorably increase marriage instability, while the husband's wage was found to have a negative impact on the likelihood of divorce. The highest divorce risk was found for couples in which the wife earns as much as or more than the husband. Likewise, Graaf & Kalmizn (2006) attempted to see the effect of five social determinants of divorce in the Netherlands naming parental socio-economic status, educational attainments, religion, and parental divorce and having children. The role of education appeared to turn from positive to negative. In recent years, the lower educated seem to be more inclined to divorce than the higher educated. The reversing effect of social class on divorce was rarely tested. Lastly, Ahmad (1987) examined the pattern of divorce in Bangladesh. Results revealed a negative relationship between divorce and age at marriage, and divorce was found more common among Muslims, illiterates and rural women. The association of the duration of marriage before divorce was found to be very low while childlessness was found to be strongly associated with the divorce rate.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To analyze the socioeconomic determinants of divorce in Pakistan, the data of 100 male and female respondents was collected from 23 union councils of Bahawalpur City. The divorced, widow and 2nd marriage individuals were the target population of the study. A questionnaire comprising close-ended questions was used. The study used duration of marriage (as a proxy of divorce) as a dependent variable while age at the time of marriage, education level, understanding, in-laws interference, infertility, mutual love and economic issues in terms of monthly income, were taken as independent variables. The following econometric model is developed to analyze the determinants of divorce in Pakistan:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Duration of Marriage} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Education}) + \beta_2(\text{Economic Issues}) + \beta_3(\text{Family Interference}) + \\ & \beta_4(\text{Mutual Love}) + \beta_5(\text{Mutual Understanding}) + \beta_6(\text{Infertility}) + \\ & \beta_7(\text{Age at the time of Marriage}) + \mu_i \end{aligned}$$

Duration of marriage is taken as a dependent variable in a model while education, economic issues, family interference, mutual love, mutual understanding, infertility, and age at the time of marriage are taken as independent variables. In equation (1), $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_7$ are the coefficients of the explanatory variables and μ_i is the error term.

Description of Variables

Different socioeconomic variables are used in a study as factors of divorce rate. In this section, the theoretical link of variables is discussed.

Duration of Marriage

As the duration of marriage increases, it becomes convenient to keep a healthy marital relationship going, but, even if the story is the other way round, a long companionship along with several other contributing factors (like the presence of children with less than 6 years of age) makes it easy to swallow the disagreed points.

Education Level

The ability to resolve mutual conflicts due to a better mate choice, better access to cultural and social resources and improved communication skills, are all ultimately contributed by a higher level of education. Thus, the notion that educated people are better able to resolve their differences through improved and effective communication (Shah et al., 2021a; Shah et al., 2021b).

Financial Pressure

Financial difficulties cause family members to become stressed (satisfaction is gone), and irritated, and their emotional support system to break down, ending the stability of the marriage. The motivation for marriage is found in the division of labor and economies of scale, but if it is not ensured in the form of access to shared income, the implicit and explicit cost would lead to divorce as was concluded by Friedman (1984).

Understanding

Symbolic integrationists highlight problems within the individuals as a cause of divorce. Mutual understanding seems to significantly nourish the durability of marriage. To change with time is a natural phenomenon and yes, for both of the spouses. A good understanding level enables the partners to give some space to each other, with the changing dimensions. No one is perfect in the world. Compromises and sacrifices add beauty to this relation, but all this in practice, depends upon understanding level.

Infertility

It's a universal phenomenon that, the presence of children works as a barrier to divorce because children are also taken as a public good which might be sacrificed, in the face of divorce. In this regard, social psychology is of the view that the presence of children leads to improved marital commitments.

Age at the Time of Marriage

Early age at the time of marriage is associated with perceptions of immaturity and difficulty in getting into the marital role. People marry relatively early when they are unduly pessimistic about their prospect of attracting someone better and don't want to incur high search costs. Persons marrying relatively young have greater search costs and are less informed about themselves, their mates, and the marriage market (Gray & Silver, 1990).

Mutual Love

Love is a bonding which widens the patience level, reduces the level of false ego and enhances the level of sacrifice, even in the face of adversity. Thus positively contributes to the strength of marital relationships. Friedman (1984) wrote that love is associated with sex and secondly, it reduces the conflicts of interest that lead to costly bargaining.

In-Laws Interference

Despite all the positive efforts made by the spouses, artificially created differences may be ripe due to too many negative or dramatic roles played by in-laws. A spouse not able to incorporate himself/herself in the new family may face bad relations with in-laws thus, may face dissolution of marriage.

Table 1: List of Variables

Variables	Description
Dependent Variable	
Divorce	Duration of marriage
Independent Variables	
Education	Number of schooling years
Economic Issues	= 1 if faced economic issues = 0 if not
Family Interference	= 1 if Yes = 0 if No
Mutual Love	= 1 if Yes = 0 if No
Mutual Understanding	= 1 if Yes = 0 if No
Infertility	= 1 if Yes = 0 if No
Age at the Time of Marriage	Number of years

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To analyze the socioeconomic determinants of divorce in Pakistan, we have used the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) method for data analysis. The estimates of the OLS model are given in Table 2. The results show that education has a positive and significant relationship with the duration of marriage. It means as education level increases, the chances of divorce decrease and the duration of marriage increases. The coefficient of education shows that an increase in education by one unit leads to an increase in the duration of marriage by 12.427 units. In contrast, economic Issues have a negative relationship with the duration of marriage. It means as economic issues increase, the duration of divorce decreases and the chances of divorce increases. The coefficient of economic issues shows that an increase in economic issues by one unit leads to a decrease in the duration of marriage by -0.117 units. However, this relationship is statistically insignificant which indicates that by cooperation of husband and wife, these issues can be sorted out. On the other hand, mutual Love has a positive and significant relationship with the duration of marriage. It means as mutual love increases, the chances of divorce decrease and the duration of marriage increases. The coefficient of mutual love shows that an increase in mutual love by one unit leads to an increase in the duration of marriage by 2.049 units. Mutual understanding has a positive relationship with the duration of marriage. It means as mutual love increases, the chances of divorce decrease and the duration of marriage increases. On the other hand, infertility has a negative relationship with the duration of marriage. It means as infertility increases, the duration of divorce decreases and the chances of divorce increase.

Table 2: OLS Estimates of Socioeconomic Determinants of Divorce

Variables	Coefficient	S.E.	T	Sig.
(Constant)	7.442	2.302	3.234	0.002
Education	12.427	4.325	2.873	0.005
Economic Issues	-0.117	2.957	-0.039	0.969
Family Interference	-5.047	4.577	-1.103	0.273
Mutual Love	2.049	1.050	1.952	0.054
Mutual Understanding	3.385	1.127	3.004	0.003
Infertility	-5.843	3.044	-1.920	0.058
Age at the Time of Marriage	-0.076	0.089	-0.860	0.392
R-Square	0.189			
Adj. R-Square	0.126			
F-Statistic	3.002			
Prob.	0.0000			

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Duration of marriage has been found positively related to the non-occurrence of divorce. Results reveal a positive relationship between education and the durability of marriage. Becker's analysis of optimal sorting also confirms the results. An insignificant negative relationship is observed between financial crises and the duration of the marriage, which finds its roots embedded in the fact that financial pressures lead to stress among family members as viewed by Friedman (2004). Infertility seems to be significantly negatively related to the duration of marriage. In this regard, social psychology is also of the view that the presence of children leads to improved marital commitments. Age at the time shows a negative but insignificant relationship with the duration of marriage. Persons marrying relatively young have greater search costs and are less informed about themselves, their mates, and the marriage market. Mutual love appears to have a strong positive impact on the duration of marriage. The result is conformity with the theory of Friedman that love is associated with sex and secondly, it reduces the conflicts of interest that lead to costly bargaining. Mutual love and care for each other raises commodity output and caring raises their total incomes by making part of their output a family commodity. Results reveal an insignificant negative relationship between in-laws' interference and marital duration. Keeping in view the outcomes, it is concluded that socioeconomic factors are crucial to impact the divorce rates in Pakistan. Therefore, the study suggested that there is a need to raise awareness about the consequences of divorce for both men and women to reduce the deceptive appeal of social and electronic media. The government should take steps to improve the economic status of the people as it is one of the important factors that cause conflicts in a family. Similarly, the education level in a country should be raised as educated people are more aware of the rights of their families. Female education should also be enhanced especially in rural areas. Lastly, it is vital to update the curriculum and familiarize students with human ethical requirements for a good family life to deliver moral education to them.

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