Factors Pertaining to Rising Divorce Rate and Post-Divorce Problems Faced by Women in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT:

Marriage is a social and legal bond between two partners. Divorce rate is rising in Pakistan from last few years at an alarming rate. The study is meant to find the major factors related to divorce rate rising in Pakistan and post-divorced problems faced by women in Pakistan. The major objective of the proposed study is to identify and explore those factors, in Pakistan, that are attributing towards the rise in divorce rate and the problems faced by women in their post-divorced life. This research is qualitative in nature. The qualitative research mainly focuses on women life experiences after their divorce. This research is more about "why" and "how" the problems are being faced by divorced women. Major factors found are in-laws' interference, temperamental incompatibility, extra marital affairs, young age, less education, less income, parents' divorce, lack of patience, forced marriages, fantasizing media and inequality. The study has provided solution with reference to the Islamic teachings which may help in reducing the divorce rate and post-divorce sufferings.

Keyword: Divorce; Factors; Problems; Women; Forced Marriages

1. Introduction:

Marriage is a bond between partners as it is a social and a legal relationship between them. Recently, with an increase in uncertainty, the human beings desire for lasting family bond. But it is becoming difficult to sustain marital relationship through various weathers. When such relationship breaks, it has adverse effects that influences distressed people and also cause to society overwhelms. It interferes with the process of psychological satisfaction.[1] Divorce is so traumatic causing depression in

adults as well as in children involved in the incident.[2] In Islam, when the male partner says 'talaaq' to his wife, named as "divorce" whereas when the marriage is dissolved due to an agreement between the two parties i.e. on wish of the female partner, it is named as 'khulah'.[3]

Divorce, universally, is rising at an alarming rate. In Belgium, it is noted to be 70% whereas in Hungary, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, and Portugal it is 60%. Viewing Pakistan, the divorce and khula is being observed as well. In Punjab province, cases of khula were reported 16,942 that have risen to 18,901 in 2016[4]. Another report also identified that 15,000 cases in 2017 whereas 6,000 cases of khula were reported in Karachi and Lahore, cities of Pakistan respectively.[5]

1.1.Problem Statement:

As mentioned above, since 2014, the divorce rate in Pakistan is rising as well as a number of issues/problems are being developed as a consequence, so, it is essential to explore prevailing factors that are accountable for dissolution of marriages in Pakistan. This study explores the key factors pertaining to the rise in divorce rate along with the consequences on the female partner.

1.2 Research Questions:

The proposed research questions are:

1. What are the factors pertaining to the divorce rate rises in Pakistan?
2. To what extent the females are negatively affected?
3. What are the problems divorced women face in Pakistan?
4. How to reduce divorce rate and post-divorce sufferings according to Islamic laws and teachings?

1.3 Objectives:

1. To explore the factors related to the divorce rate rises in Pakistan.
2. To identify the post-divorce problems faced by women in Pakistan referring to the society and family support.
3. To find Islamic perspective in order to combat the issue of divorce as well as to reduce the sufferings of females.

2. Literature Review

A divorce is a legal form of dissolution of a marriage. It is only legitimized by the Almighty ALLAH in very unavoidable circumstances but

is least liked in the front of ALLAH in Islamic acts. Divorce has adverse psychosocial consequences for partners, with children of divorced spouses being hit hardest. Today's children are tomorrow's important human resources.[6]

There are many reasons of divorce. Some of them include higher education of female partner, sectarian dissimilarities, geographical aspects, ethnic dissimilarities, difference in language, impotency on part of male spouse as well as the most important dissimilarity in culture are stated to be few common reasons contributing in increase in the divorce rate in Islamic countries and Pakistan in particular.[7] One study has been carried out in August, 2020 with the major objective of reviewing divorce in Pakistani society. Total twelve articles have been reviewed from the internet. The research indicated that divorce is a dangerous social problem in Pakistan. Its number is increasing day by day. It has concluded that divorce is a social issue affecting the family and is slowly destroying the society.[8] Divorce produces chaos in family and the affected life. It has been noted that divorce damages the life of marital partners, socially, as well as with their children or family. The study found that divorce rate in Pakistan is, now, increasing making it devastating for survival of the family.[9] Based on life stories of women, one research work is conducted analyzing post-divorce experiences of highly educated as well as the trained women. It studies economic, social, social welfare of divorced women; in particular, how they were able to adjust to their new lives after divorce. It is found that when divorce creates a variety of difficulties like financial, social and parenting problems, it also provides assistance to the participants. Participants develop a number of survival strategies despite the difficulties and challenges they face that plagued their agency during and after the process of divorce. In this study, while the cessation of marginalized relationships with urban, educated and well-functioning women could be considered a liberation for her, it would be an exaggeration to say that women enjoy their independence and start anew, as do men.[10]

Marriage rates are falling, but the value of marriages in life cycle has changed that is focusing on rise in age at first marriage, rise in divorce following extraordinary rates of remarriage as well as decreasing age gap between spouses. The topical changes in the family practices claim a reconsideration of theories regarding family.[11]

2.1 Review of Divorce Cases in Different Provinces of Pakistan:

In Pakistan, divorce rate has increased but people do not realize the marital responsibilities. In 2010, divorce cases 40,410 were reported in court of Karachi. In Pakistani, the divorce exerts shame on family and becomes their definition.[12] Approximately 150 cases of divorce were reported daily in the courts in Lahore since 2014. The major reasons included getting married early as people are well at handling their marital encounters in late 20s and 30s as compared to their adulthood. In 2013, in Gujranwala, 5000 couples applied for divorce. 3000 out of 5000 were married early and in rush. Moreover, joint family system leads to arguments with the in-laws that culminates in cancelation of marriage. Working women were less likely to be the part of problematic marriages, and were also least interested in compromising to make the demanding marriage work. Another factor were leading to divorce is extramarital affairs. One study was also conducted in District Malakand, KPK involved 25 divorced women cases. The educational level of these women was up to metric level. Findings showed that the divorced women were confronted with socioeconomic problems. The divorced women face problems like lack of aspiration, less economic support, problems of transport, residential moves as well as the lack of adjustment.[13]

The previous studies have focused on the issue of divorce and its effects on the society but the lacking factor is the Islamic teaching as a solution to combat the issue. This study focuses on the factors of divorce, negative effects along with the teachings of Islam as a solution to the problem.

3. Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature. The qualitative research mainly focuses on women life experiences after their divorce. This research is more about “why” and “how” the problems are being faced by divorced women. An in-depth descriptive analysis will be conducted using literature reviews, case studies, surveys done on this topic.

4. Factors Pertaining to the Rise in Divorce Rate in Pakistan:

Divorce is basically not the end of relationship, it affects partners, family, children and the society as well. Worst effects on children of the

family feel post-divorce. Divorce may leave children with the feeling of anger, loss, stress, anxiety and confusion. Divorce affects children's future also. The common factors, as researched, include extramarital affairs, financial differences, lack of communication, arguing, gain in weight, improbable expectations, sexual abuse, and lack of intimacy, inequality, and not being prepared for the marriage.[14]

A lawyer in a family court said "Women are now not thinking twice before taking up matters to the court. They know they can demand alimony (one-third of husband's property) and then lead a normal peaceful life".[15] Some of the major factors are as follows:

4.1 In-Laws' Interference:

Pointless interference and unnecessary hindrance of in-laws are causing fights between spouses who finally end up on divorce.

4.2 Temperamental Mismatch:

Temperamental mismatch in which the couple has variant interests, different perspectives of life and opinions. There lies no coherence in living style as well as in their mental compatibility.

4.3 Extra Marital Affairs:

Extra marital affair is another significant factor in Pakistani society which is most prevalent. The partners who may cheat on their partners are unlikely to develop a healthy and happy relationship. In Pakistani society, deception is reflected as an unforgivable act making the relationship a curse.[16]

4.4 Young Age:

Marriage at the young age also rises probability of divorce, particularly in the early years of the marriage.

4.5 Less or Lack of Education:

Researches show that couples with college education as compared to high school or not finishing the high school have less chances of divorce.

4.6 Less Income:

Modest income may help partners in avoiding stress level that might lead to divorce.

4.7 Parents' Divorce:

Unluckily, divorce of parents doubles the risk of divorce. If partners experienced parental divorce, their risk of divorce tripled. This does not mean that partners tend to end their marriage in divorce, but it means understanding marital trends and risks and working hard to achieve a fruitful marriage.

4.8 Lack of Patience:

Lack of patience is the major factor in which the partners do not accept the differences among them. Marriage is not a piece of cake, it needs attention and a lot of efforts in order to make it work effectively. Patience is a key to success in life, especially when it comes to marriage. Partners must adapt and get comfortable with each other's habits. For women, the social isolation, readjustment to a new home as well as change in her roles are seem difficult. Financial limitations, needless restrictions and burdening of chores and household responsibilities may cause situations igniting divorce.[17]

4.9 Forced Marriages:

Marriage is a mutual consent or understanding. It should not be forced otherwise it may affect too adversely. The main brick is acceptance because without acceptance, the bond becomes weak. It leads to frustration and dissatisfaction resulting in divorce.

4.10 Fantasizing Media:

The social media, theatres and television took over our lives. The society is idealizing everything they see and begin drawing a parallel line between them and their lives. This causes higher expectation and reluctance to face reality as they start living in fantasy world. The blame game starts and accountability of actions become unaccepted. When spouse does not meet expectations, satisfaction level begins to decline causing unpleasant state of mind and they want to be free of mental torture through divorce.

4.11 Inequality:

Mostly women are not treated equal by husbands. This type of unequal treatment also leads to the split among the couples. This issue is the major cause of divorce in the educated class.[18]

5. To what extent the females are negatively affected?

Divorce harms negatively both women and men. Suffering of women is more than men.

1. Women yield the children custody.
2. Women tolerate greater burdens of finances.
3. Women experience more stress in upcoming lives.
4. Divorce gives freedom and very few responsibilities to the divorced men whereas divorced women suffer more sufferings.

6. What are the Problems Post-Divorce Women Face in Pakistan?

In Pakistan, living with label of "divorced" is taken as shame, strange, offered, arrogant, slut, bossy and fussy. Here in Pakistan where the lives revolve around the agreement of marriage, the women's life after divorce is not a fairytale. The problems of post-divorce women are as follows:

6.1 Financial Impact:

Divorce means a substantial financial blow for female. She is left helpless by the decision of divorce. The cash/money she might have earned and saved, gets compromised. She has to spend that money on her family and its well-being. The financial constraints are the major stressors for woman in order to grow up her children and to fulfill basic needs including three meals a day, clothes, schooling fee and other expenses. The problems are basically associated with the future of her child in all aspects.[19]

6.2 Societal Pressure:

The divorced woman experiences depression, anxiety, loneliness, sense of failure and reluctance for social interaction. Life becomes a curse in our society after divorce. Every day females hear questions including:

1. Why don't you get remarried?
2. Why don't you settle down again"? As second marriage is considered to be another task.
3. The relatives of the female partner tease parents with "why don't you get your daughter married?"

6.3 Stress:

In Pakistan, the divorced woman experiences different types of stresses like emotional violations, emotional incidents, redundancies as well as physical illness. Single woman experiences the feeling of anger, rage, and

poor self-identity. She feels rejected, insulted, being guilty, embarrassed, bitter, and nervous as the after effects of divorce.[20]

6.4 Social Isolation:

Divorce results in the social isolation as she readjusts to the new role which is quite difficult.

7. How to Reduce Divorce Rate and Post-Divorce Sufferings According to Islamic Laws and Teachings?

Islam encouraged to live in peace. Though some differences arise during marriage, it is natural. Particularly during the early years of the marriage. Islam stresses the need to resolve differences.

It was narrated to Abdullah Ibn Umar, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

«أَبْغَضُ الْحَلَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى الطَّلَاقُ»

"Of all the lawful acts the most detestable to Allah is divorce."[21]

7.1 The Islamic Procedure to Follow:

But in many cases, if disagreements are unresolved then the following stated procedure is recommended in Islam before ending the marriage.

1. The partners must try to resolve differences with mutual efforts. The intervention of third party like parents, siblings, cousins and friends causes non-settlement of such disputes. It is suggested that the couple must attempt to have a conversation on the prevailing issue. Narrated Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

   «لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ خَبَّبَ امْرَأَةً عَلَى زَوْجِهَا، أَوْ عَبْدًا عَلَى سَيِّدِهِ»

   "Anyone who incites a woman against her husband or a slave against his master is not one of us".[22]
2. While solving the dispute, two impartial judges, each one from husband's and wife's relatives, must be selected to settle differences.

   The Quran says:

   ﴿وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا﴾

"And if you fear a breach between the two, appoint an arbiter from his relatives and an arbiter from her relatives. If they both desire reconciliation Allah will effect harmony between them. Verily Allah has full knowledge, and is aware of everything."[23]

3. If the second attempt fails, too, wife or husband may pursue divorce.
4. If divorce is served through government office, reconciliation period of 90 days for females is available, known as "iddat".
5. Two parties may reevaluate their views and reunify during the waiting time. If the mentioned limit finishes and still no settlement occurs, then divorce is applicable.

Remember ALLAH saying Quran:

﴿فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ﴾

"The parties should either hold together on equitable terms or separate with kindness."[24]

In case of *khul'a*, the Quran says:

﴿وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا﴾

"It is not lawful for you (men) to take back any of your gifts except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah. There is no blame on either of them if she gives something for her freedom. These are the limits ordained by Allah so do not transgress them"[25]

6. If the wife is pregnant, the waiting period is until her child is delivered plus the iddat period. Therefore, divorce is declared by the husband, but also does not take effect during pregnancy..[26]

7.2 Recommendations for Improving Status of Family:

By viewing the scenarios, certain recommendations in order to improve value of families and to avoid divorce rate, below mentioned recommendations are put in:

1. In Islam, Muslim males and females are allowed to choose partners before marriage.
2. Lack of communication and silence are main opponents of marriage. It is necessary to have conversation with spouse as to avoid divorce.
3. Lack of respect as well as admiration are important sources of conflict.
4. It is necessary to give time, be patient towards the spouse because the marriage stresses proper time, good attention and keen devotion.
5. It is important for parents to grow confidence in children so that they might become capable of making their decisions and facing challenges of their married life.[27]

7.3 Financial Impact:

According to Islamic law, women cannot be financially helpless. The husband is responsible for paying the divorced woman's living expenses until "Iddat". Subsequently, her children and relatives are also responsible for supporting her. If there are no children, the state has a duty to provide fair and reasonable alimony. Regrettably, in Islamic countries, the Muslim Family Law Ordinance 1961 predominates, which provides no support for divorced women. But by contrast, India enacted the Muslim Women (Protection of Divorce Rights) Act in 1986, and after "Iddat" divorced women were allowed to be raised by their relatives. Pakistan has no such laws.[28]

7.4 Payment of Mehr:

To solve the financial issues or to forestall divorce is to pay Mehr. The male who pays Mehr does not have the right to get it back. He should pay it completely before giving divorce.

﴿وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمُ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَآتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ قِنْطَارًا فَلَا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا أَتَأْخُذُونَهُ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُبِينًا * وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا﴾

"And if you desire to take a wife instead of a [current] wife and have given her much wealth, do not take back any part of it; would you take it back with slander and blatant sin. And how shall you take it while you have taken pleasure of

each other and after they have taken from you a strong pledge (at the time of marriage)"[29]

7.5 Spending:

Scholars agreed that husband spends money on his wife it is necessary, if his wife makes herself available to him. But in the case wife refuses to her husband then it is not his responsibility to spend on her. Spending means providing what wife requires of food as well as the accommodation. Wife has the right to do these things even if she has money. ALLAH says (explanation of the meaning):

﴿وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ﴾

"But the father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother's food and clothing on a reasonable basis"[30]

﴿لِيُنْفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِنْ سَعَتِهِ وَمَنْ قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ﴾

"Let the rich man spend according to his means; and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him"[31]

The Prophet (PBUH) said to Abu Sufyaan's wife Hind bint 'Utbah, once she complained that her husband did not spend on her: "Take what is sufficient for you and your children, on a reasonable basis."

It was narrated that 'Aa'ishah said:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ﵂، قَالَتْ: دَخَلَتْ هِنْدٌ بِنْتُ عُتْبَةَ امْرَأَةُ أَبِي سُفْيَانَ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللهِ ﷺ، فَقَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ ﷺ، إِنَّ أَبَا سُفْيَانَ رَجُلٌ شَحِيحٌ، لَا يُعْطِينِي مِنَ النَّفَقَةِ مَا يَكْفِينِي وَيَكْفِي بَنِيَّ إِلَّا مَا أَخَذْتُ مِنْ مَالِهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمِهِ، فَهَلْ عَلَيَّ فِي ذَلِكَ مِنْ جُنَاحٍ؟ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ ﷺ: «خُذِي مِنْ مَالِهِ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ مَا يَكْفِيكِ وَيَكْفِي بَنِيكِ».

"Hind bint 'Utbah, the wife of Abu Sufyaan, entered upon the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, Abu Sufyaan is a stingy man who does not spend enough on me and my children, except for what I take from his wealth without his knowledge. Is there any sin on me for doing that?' The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon

him) said, 'Take from his wealth on a reasonable basis, only what is sufficient for you and your children."[32]

Narrated from Jaabir that Holy Prophet (PBUH) said in his farewell sermon:

«فَاتَّقُوا اللهَ فِي النِّسَاءِ، فَإِنَّكُمْ أَخَذْتُمُوهُنَّ بِأَمَانِ اللهِ، وَاسْتَحْلَلْتُمْ فُرُوجَهُنَّ بِكَلِمَةِ اللهِ، وَلَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ أَنْ لَا يُوطِئْنَ فُرُشَكُمْ أَحَدًا تَكْرَهُونَهُ، فَإِنْ فَعَلْنَ ذَلِكَ فَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ضَرْبًا غَيْرَ مُبَرِّحٍ، وَلَهُنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ»

"Fear Allah concerning women! Verily you have taken them on the security of Allah, and intercourse with them has been made lawful unto you by words of Allah. You too have rights over them, and that they should not allow anyone to sit on your bed [i.e., not let them into the house] whom you do not like. But if they do that, you can chastise them but not severely. Their rights upon you are that you should provide them with food and clothing in a fitting manner"[33]

8. Conclusion:

The study finds that divorce is becoming easy to adopt if the two partners fails to live with each other. The major factors include in-laws' interference, temperamental incompatibility, extra marital affairs, young age, less education, less income, parents' divorce, lack of patience, forced marriages, fantasizing media and inequality. But women are vulnerable to the effects of divorce. Women face more problems as they have to bear the finances of raising their children. Besides this, women are not treated well in the society. They are labeled negatively and viewed as the cause for separation. But it is encouraged in Islam to must resolve disagreements. Divorce is not encouraged in Islam but if this occurs Islam has provided instructions for living a peaceful life for both men and women.

9. Future Benefits

Keeping in view the research work, there might be some future benefits as it may contribute in:

1. Ways to strengthen the marriage bond and curb the rise in divorce rate in Pakistan

2. This may help in establishing counseling institutes by the government as well as the private organizations to help couples cope up with psychological problems and contribute in resolving major conflicts.
3. This research work may also help government in making divorce laws.

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[23] Surah An-Nisa 4:35

[24] Surah al-Baqarah, 2:229

[25] Quran 2:229

[26] Shaikh A," Law of Divorce & Khula in Pakistan," 1-9

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[29] Surah Nisa', 4:20-21

[30] al-Baqarah 2:233

[31] al-Talaaq 65:7

[32] Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5364; Muslim, 1714 and words of Muslim

[33] Narrated by Muslim, 1218