As being Professional and Self-sufficient Lady, I Will Not Marry"- An Exploratory Study

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Marriage is the oldest and widely accepted institution in the world, but new normal of the modern era influenced this institution in a very adequate way. It is commonly observed that financially independent women are avoiding to bound themselves in the rope of marriage. This qualitative study is designed to explore this shift in usual pattern of society. The nine (disinclined to marry) professional (doing some job) women were recruited in this study; their ages were between 25 to 35 years and they were purposefully inducted in the study. The predominant aim of the study encouraged us to go for telephonic interviews that lasted from 20-30 minutes. Before starting the data collection, a formal protocol of study was approved from the departmental research committee. The data were audio-tapped and transcribed by three veterans of qualitative research; memos were also incorporated along with the data. Content Analysis was used to analyze the transcribed data through the lens of Rubin (2021). None of the authors of this research have anti-feministic reflexive orientation that may cause any inclination towards some specific outcomes. This study has been taken care the rigor criteria given by Tobin and Bagley (2004). The findings exhibit that the burden of responsibility, sacrificing career, mistrust in men, financial dependency, compromised decisions for self, letting go of freedom and autonomy were the main factors that were the reason behind compelling a lady not to marry. Findings of this study make us able to see the real picture of the issue that was under the carpet otherwise.

Keywords. Not-to-marry, professional women, qualitative inquiry, Pakistan

Women are integral part of our society. To carry on with the traditions of life, people are given certain roles to perform. In Asian

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societies, women have been associated with many typical roles such as caretaking of household, family and kids; doing household chores and childrearing (Eagly, & Wood, 2012). Outside the house, women are still associated with the roles that involve caretaking, for example nursing, daycare, and teaching are some professions which are highly suggested for women because of their requirements of caretaking. With the passage of the time, there has been this certain belief that women should be warm, kind, caring, collaborative, and obedient (Deaux, 1984; Eagly & Steffen, 1984). Because of such conceptions, women are expected to be totally different in each group they are playing a role. They (women) have to be lacking the traits that are held by the opposite sex (male). This concept further posits that according to these specific gender roles, men and women; being in the identical situation, are asked to play totally different roles.

One of the roles is getting married, having kids and taking care of family. But recently people have started backing up from this certain role. More importantly, more women have been seen to postpone their marriages than men these days. In many countries, Western and Eastern more and more women started postponing their marriages. Now women are preferring singlehood as an option too. These days there are many people who do not like the idea of getting married at early age or they do not even want to get married, while in past this ratio was very low (Goldstein, & Kenney, 2001). The idea of thinking marriage as the ultimate goal of people's life has been changed a lot over past few years. Now young people and sometimes their parents take singleness as a life style. Mostly people in the west don't think idea of getting married is any better than staying single nor do they judge those who gets married (Thornton, & Freedman, 1982). But still marriage is seen as a main developmental part in almost every culture (DePaulo & Morris, 2005; Morris, Sinclair, & DePaulo, 2007), people who remain single at a "marriageable age" have to face various discriminations and stigmas, especially women (Gui, 2020). People who are not married yet or those who are not at least engaged in a romantic relationship, are said to be less responsible. They are perceived as less mature and less well-adjusted than those who are married (Etaugh & Birdoes, 1991; Morris et al., 2008).

Many empirical studies from different countries show that marriage rates are falling. Literature have shown us the factors that play a major role in a woman's decision to not getting married include wanting higher levels of economic freedom, higher rates of divorc1e and partnering out of wedlock. The decision of not getting married in many Western countries is explained by what some have experienced as the "deinstitutionalization of marriage" (Cherlin, 2004), the

"individualization" of intimacy (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2005), or the rise of "pure relationships" (Giddens, 1991). These findings shed more light on how one takes the intimacy associated with marriage. Although as time passes, more flexibility and fluidity is found in life conceptions, people are still being highly judged if they do not want to get married or if they delay their marriages from the certain age that is set by society. Other studies have also pointed out that being single is often perceived as being at loss, which is associated with having less importance in life (Reynolds & Taylor, 2005).

According to Reynolds and Wetherell (2003), the benefits of being married or being in a long-term romantic relationship contribute to the less importance of single people, especially because of what single women are said to be at loss. From these research findings about single women, researchers have noticed that single women have been facing a difficult and complex set of dilemmas. Some of those dilemmas are; if a single woman talks about their desire for a relationship they are being called shameless, and are being perceived as deficient and desperate for men. As there are new resources that allow many single women to be active about their careers and empowered but there is also a continuation in drawing great pressure on women to fulfill the traditional gender expectations. These roles emphasize that women should get married and have children at an "appropriate age". Many single adult women are facing difficulties in their lives because of this. They are trying to do both, pursuing their personal goals and playing the gender roles assigned by the culture. This is being too much for their daily lives and mental health.

Many studies on single women in Asian countries have been conducted. For instance, Rosenberger (2007) has conducted a long-term study on single women in Japan. It revealed that in East Asian cultures, women are considered adult only after being married. If women are still not married in their 40s, the consideration about their adulthood is "elongated and ambiguous." Moreover, those women who are single in their 30s are called names like useless and even "loser dogs (makeinu)" or "demon hags (onibaba)" (Yamaguchi, 2006). In recent years, with the bar of numbers going up for always-single women and their continuous increase in efforts for constructing single women's identity and being free from discriminations and prejudices, this group of women has started being accepted in culture and has become less "non-normative" (Maeda & Hecht, 2012).

A research in collectivistic region showed that issues in family and intimate relationships influenced single women to decide not to get married. Some women said they are single because they couldn't find the right person. Some respondents said they have had some

intimate relationships, but due to several issues like commitment; age; responsibility and stereotypical gender roles made us stay single. Some women mentioned about past breakups, and their feelings for men that wasn't reverted back has made their perceptions negative about marriage and romantic relationships (Maeda, 2008).

Tian (2013) suggested that in China, for marriage standards women's beauty and youth are more valued than their socioeconomic attainments and success. One study found that there are many differences for the roles and income in the gender-based employment patterns, wives and mothers have to face significant disadvantages in the job. They have to work for more time and they get fewer salaries as compared to men at the same jobs. They also have to do more household chores than their husbands (Zhang, et al., 2008). These issues and problems make many well-educated and financially independent women feel reluctant toward marriage. Sarbuland and Qamar (2020) conducted a qualitative study to understand how unmarried working women in Pakistani Society perceive their unmarried status. This study revealed well-being of women plays a great role in the perception of their unmarried status. Women who have high well-being get support from their family and they seem satisfied with their status, whereas on the other hand, women get to face many problems in their life and they seem less satisfied with their status with lower level of perceived well-being. Women in Pakistan like the idea of staying single. Literature on this specific topic is very rare in Pakistani context. The present study was aimed to fill this research gap.

Marriage is considered the most important institution in Pakistani culture. Adults (Women and Men) are expected to get married around certain age. Marriage is big deal for women in Pakistan. In our culture, it is considered forbidden for women to remain single and continue life living alone. There is an emphasis that women must have a support of man who can be her father, brother, husband or son. In past women were never encouraged to prioritized their career rather than marriage (Hussain, 1999). Recently it has been seen that this notion is revolutionized, many women are having seen delaying or completely giving up the idea of getting married in Pakistan. Empirical studies have revealed that women who have independent careers and come from educated and stable backgrounds tend to be more hesitant about deciding to get married. Although, the reason behind this decision according to women's perspective is yet to be explored in depth. This study was aimed to identify the reasons

underlying decision of Pakistani women for staying single and never getting into a marital bond.

Method

In order to investigate the study variables exploratory research design was used. The objective of current study was to explore the underlying causes of women's decision of not getting married.

Sample and Participant's Recruitment

The nine women who were disinclined to marry (self-reported) age range 25-35 years participated in this study from Southern-Punjab, Pakistan. All the participants were employed and financially independent. They were purposefully inducted into the study.

Research Question

One question was aimed at this research study:

Why independent women in Pakistan have decided not to get married?

Interview Questions

1. Did you ever think about marriage?
2. What are some advantages of marriage?
3. What disadvantages marriage has?
4. When did you decide that you do not want to get married?
5. What are the reasons that made you decide it?
6. What do you think will happen if you get married?
7. How do you feel when someone from your family or friends gets married?
8. Why marriage is not on your priority?

Some probing questions were also asked to understand the context completely and deeply during the interviews.

Data Collection

The predominant aim of the study was planned to be explored through in-depth telephonic interviews. Before starting the final data collection, a formal protocol of study was approved from the departmental research committee. The selected respondents for interviews were informed beforehand and humbly asked for their cooperation. The data were audio-tapped and transcribed (McLellan et al; 2003) by three veterans of qualitative research; memos were also incorporated along with the data. All the necessary arrangements were done before the interviews started to avoid any possible interruption. The interviews lasted from 20-30 minutes. After the interviews, respondents were provided with a counseling session as an incentive. This study has taken care of the rigor criteria given by Tobin and Bagley (2004).

Analytic Approach

Content Analysis was used to analyze the data for this research study. While coding the data, steps given by Rubin (2021) were followed;

Firstly, all the relevant (to objective of the research) transcribed data from the interviews were gathered. Then we coded all of the gathered transcribed data, this step is known as 'Open Coding'. Next step was about paring down the codes, for this all the similar codes were gathered and pared up. After this with the pared down list, closed coding was done for all the interviews and it was ensured there was nothing irrelevant left in the data. For last step, the data was rinsed and repeated.

For transcribing data, a training session was conducted with experienced coders to understand the coding process and being familiarized with the rules of coding. For the coding all the calls were checked carefully so that any important information is not left out. Descriptive coding was used to perform content analysis.

Ethical Consideration

Respondents were informed about the objectives of research study. An informed consent was taken from them. None of the authors of this research have anti-feministic reflexive orientation that may cause any inclination towards some specific outcomes. Only those respondents were added in the study, which were willing to be the part

of it. Respondents' anonymity and confidentiality were maintained. Their names were not disclosed to anyone or anywhere in the study. Respondents were told they can withdraw from the interviews and the study anytime they want.

Discussion

During the analysis process, only those portions of the interviews were focused that were related to the research objectives. A detailed process of coding is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1

Generation of Final Codes from Verbatim

Age	Profession	Verbatim	Codes	
27	Teacher	*Why would I want to get marry if all I have to do after is to be a slave for my in-laws.*	1.	Letting go of freedom and autonomy.
		After marrying I can't do anything just because I want it. I would have to ask for permissions and would have to think hundred times before I do it.	2.	Compromised decisions for self.
34	Freelancer	*Marriage means I can have no privacy. First, I would have to take care of my husband, then there would be kids and more you would have to think about your husband's whole family. You can't do anything solely. You cannot make plans with your friends like now.*	1.	Burden of responsibility
			2.	Letting go of freedom and autonomy.

Age	Profession	Verbatim	Codes
32	Nurse	*These days everyone wants a job holder wife. Men just want the benefit they can get from us. If a girl doesn't have a job she would have no independency in the marriage. She would have to be dependent on her husband. If there are gonna be things like this I think I am better without marriage.*	1. Mistrust in men. 2. Financial dependency.
29	Lecturer	*All the men are just same. You can never trust them. All they want is to have sex. They would be so sweet to you every time they want something. And all that is just a lie. Why would I like to marry someone then?*	1. Mistrust in men
25	Doctor	*After marriage men don't give their wives money for their personal use. They just want to dominate others. They like the attention only on themselves. They restrict women in so many ways that isn't even necessary. Wives can't wear clothes they like, can't get a haircut of their own choice.*	1. Financial dependency 2. Compromised decision for self. 3. Mistrust in men

Age	Profession	Verbatim	Codes
34	Health worker	*Married couples mostly don't have time for themselves. They always have something to do for the sake of family. They barely get time for each other. Moreover, there come so many complexities and responsibilities with marriage.*	1. Burden of responsibility 2. Compromised decisions for self
26	Teacher	*I have seen around me that women work so hard for their studies, careers. Right after they get married they are being told to stop doing whatever they were doing. They have to take care of the family and babies. They need to stop focusing on their careers. This really hurts me. I don't want to do compromise on my career. I like this independency more.*	1. Sacrificing career. 2. Burden of responsibility.
30	Lawyer	*In my parents' house I have always been taken care of. Whatever I want I get that but I don't think after marriage that can be possible. I would have to agree for things I don't want to do. I would have no time to see my friends. I would not be able to visit my parents any time I want. Staying single is way better.*	1. Compromised decision for self 2. Letting go of freedom and autonomy

Age	Profession	Verbatim	Codes
35	Motorway officer	*Since I was young my parents worked hard so I can study well. After so many years of hard work I got my job and finally I am living a satisfied stable life. I don't want to lose it now after marrying. If I get married, they would ask me to leave my job and be a housewife. I can't do this now. So instead of going back to struggling I am happy in my present life*	1. Sacrificing Career 2. Compromised decision for self

Many of the women interviewed, explained their views as they regard marriage as an important institution and they are not against it. They have no issue if others want to get marry. The fact is that they are not married nor they want to get married themselves, and they have various reasons about this decision of staying single, which are quite diversified. After analyzing the findings of in-depth interviews following six codes were emerged.

Figure 1. Reasons of not being married.

Mistrust in men

The most common factor that was revealed from the interviews was "mistrust in men". Many women find it hard to trust men and deciding to marry someone not trusted is surely a difficult task.

As Respondent 3 said, *"These days everyone wants a job holder wife. Men just want the benefit they can get from us."*

According to Respondent 5, *"After marriage men don't give their wives money for their personal use. They just want to dominate others. They like the attention only on themselves. They restrict women in so many ways that isn't even necessary."*

Respondent 4 also said, "*All the men are just same. You can never trust them. All they want is to have sex. They would be so sweet to you every time they want something. And all that is just a lie. Why would I like to marry someone then?"*

Studies showed that what a man wants from his wife is typically influenced by the gender roles and identities given by society.

Financial Dependency

"After marriage men don't give their wives money for their personal use. They just want to dominate others. They like the attention only on themselves" (R5).

Women these days want to focus on their careers and being financially independent. Gaughan (2002) revealed that many women postpone their marriages or decline to get marry with increasing economic independence.

According to Respondent 3, *"If a girl doesn't have a job she would have no independency in the marriage. She would have to be dependent on her husband. If there are gonna be things like this I think I am better without marriage."*

These days in different cultures such as Nigeria, where women are encouraged to be social and pursue their dreams, they are also expected to be dependent and docile (Omokhodion, 2009; Oderinde, 2002). Further the wealth or financial independence is highly associated with masculinity (Smith, 2007). If women possess much of economic resources they are degraded and being judged by their husbands and society. Another research study found that if men possess many economic resources they get more respect and attention in the family but for women it decreases likelihood (Dykstra & Poortman, 2010).

Letting Go of Freedom and Autonomy

Studies on single women revealed that females who have never married and have a stable career are happy in enjoying larger domains of freedom and autonomy. Such women consider their status as single women as progress and associate it with their personal development (Fuller, 2001).

Respondent 2 also shared the related concerns as she said, *"You can't do anything solely. You cannot make plans with your friends like now."*

Respondent 8 said about this, *"I would have no time to see my friends. I would not be able to visit my parents any time I want. Staying single is way better."*

Burden of Responsibility

Although marriages are often controlled and have many restrictions associated with them, marriage gives women a certain status and responsibility. Delaney (1991) underlines that an "unmarried woman is socially fully invisible". Literature shows married women enjoy a higher status than unmarried. On the same line, literature shows that women who have kids have an even higher status in this society (Bora, 2005; Kandiyoti & Kandiyoti, 1987).

With all of these advantages there comes a burden of responsibility that scares women of marriage. One of the Respondents said,

"Marriage means I can have no privacy. First I would have to take care of my husband, then there would be kids and more you would have to think about your husband's whole family"(R2).

Same way, Respondent 7 says, *"Right after they get married they are being told to stop doing whatever they were doing. They have to take care of the family and babies. They need to stop focusing on their careers."*

If a woman has grown up in a single parent family, there is possibility she would like to remain single. A study revealed that females reared in a one parent family, whether it is the father or mother, tend to remain single and that is maybe because of the greater family responsibilities and also because of the advantages of singlehood they have seen their parents enjoying (Forsyth and Johnson, 1996).

Compromised Decision for Self

Idealizing marriage and unwilling to compromise on anything about this idealization are found to be reasons for increasing number of single never married mothers (Siegel, 1995). With a happy married life there comes compromises too that are not acceptable for women.

"Wives can't wear clothes they like, can't get a haircut of their own choice" Respondent 5 said.

Respondent 8 said, *"In my parents' house I have always been taken care of. Whatever I want I get that but I don't think after marriage that can be possible. I would have to agree for things I don't want to do."*

In countries such as Egypt, USA, Poland, Germany, India, where highly educated women do not want to do any compromise or lower their expectations for an ideal marriage partner, the numbers of never married older women are increasing (El-Halawany, 2009; Berg-Cross et al., 2004).

Sacrificing Career

In many developed countries, because of women's liberation and their increasing visibility in the labor market, tensions are seen increasing in family structures (Greenstein, 2000). Respondent 9 also shared same concerns,

"Since I was young my parents worked hard so I can study well. After so many years of hard work I got my job and finally I am living a satisfied stable life. I don't want to lose it now after marrying. If I get married they would ask me to leave my job and be a housewife. I can't do this now. So instead of going back to struggling I am happy in my present life."

After marriages women face difficulties in being a good mother and having a successful career, which forces them to choose between their family and work, being autonomous, and earning more (Esping Anderson, 2009).

Adler (2004) reveals that because of certain issues post-industrial women prefer a secure career over a family. He also points out that it is very important for women to learn under which circumstances women would prefer family life in their later lives.

Like other eastern collectivist cultures, Pakistan values communal well-being and family harmony which specifically includes

being obedient to parents more than individuals' freedom (Stewart et al., 2000). The group is very important for a collectivist culture. Even groups' goals and duties are considered way more important than a persons' will (Triandis, 1995). Marriage is also considered a way of bringing families together rather than two persons, and from marriage it is expected to fulfil the family duties more than couples own needs and wants.

In Pakistan, women are forced to follow the traditional roles given by society. In Pakistan with all other patriarchal societies, women are told to ignore their personal interests and wish for the family's good, they are also trained to obey their families about how they need to spent their lives especially when, where and with whom they should get married (Dyson & Moore, 1983). Women are enforced to submit themselves to men according to the traditions of Pakistan. If women say something against it or ask for marrying someone of their own choice, it is considered very insulting (Human Rights Watch, 2000).

Girls' marriages are arranged by family in Pakistan. Everything is arranged by the family with no involvement from the girl. They are left with almost no choice except getting married to the man her family has chosen for her. Many girls grew up watching their brothers and fathers being aggressive and behave in certain ways. They are always told to do as their parents' want and they don't even speak for their own rights (Hussain, 1999). These all made todays' women with just one choice and that is just staying single and not getting married.

Conclusion

The study concluded that women have many reasons and explanations that made them decide they don't want to get married. Some women said they enjoy their freedom and want independency in their lives, and the threat to their autonomy made them staying single. Some of the respondents said they find it impossible to trust men because of their past experiences with them, so they decided to not getting married. Responsibilities and compromises that come with married life and the roles that society has assigned to women are also the reasons which compel women to deny the idea of getting married.

Implications

This study has highlighted the factors and reasons that incorporate women's decision to not getting married. This research is

filling the gap in literature about the reasons of single working women's decision about not getting married. This research can be helpful for students, women, men and psychologists. This research can help with the present problem both ways inside and outside the box. Future researchers who want to work on the same topic can get an idea from the present research.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study was only based on in-depth interviews conducted from the cities of South-Punjab, Pakistan. This research finding can only be implied on working women who are 25-35 years old. These findings can be not true for anyone outside the mentioned range. Study can be extended with many different cohorts and to other areas of Pakistan. Interviews were selected for data collection, and they were quite time consuming. A quantitative approach can be taken to testify the findings of the present exploratory research. Other approaches of analysis can be taken to find more factors of not being married among women.

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