LATE MARRIAGES AND INFERTILITY: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS ON HEALTH

Hina Saleem, Dr. Abid Ghafoor Chaudhry, Adil Jabbar, Sara Mishal
Department of Anthropology, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi

Corresponding Author:
Hina Saleem
PMAS- Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi
h.saleem74@hotmail.com

Abstract: Pakistan one of the South Asian countries where the trend of late marriages is on an increase affects the fertility rate visibly. Late marriage and infertility has an imperative relationship which going to be one of the most dominant phenomena in our current societal settings. The aim of the study is to explore the causes of late marriages and its effects on fertility. The study was conducted in the vicinity of Rawalpindi. The sample size was 70 respondents selected by using convenient sampling technique. The data was collected by questionnaire tool. The study revealed that education of women, caste system, phobia of idealistic life and economic empowerment are the major causes of late marriages. The study also showed that 65.7% respondents agreed with the fact that late marriages do affect the fertility, due to which complications arise in conceiving a baby or miscarriages and sometimes leads to infertility in spouses. The males and females both are responsible for infertility in this regard.

Key Words: Infertility, Late Marriages, infecundity, Miscarriages, Anthropology, Women, Caste System

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the important social institutions in Pakistani society which is creating strong bond and ties among families. “Marriage is a bond between a female and a male who start living together, having sexual, social and cultural intimacy and share livelihood to live a life” (Saleem, et al. 2015). According to Nations (1990) it is a “universal social institution”. In the marriage institution the strong bonds and intimacy is strengthened by the birth of child which on the contrary declines due to infertility. One of the root causes of this is late marriages practiced by both male and female in the society.

Late marriage is one of the prevailing universal trends where people decide to get married at later ages. Delayed marriage is an undeniable trend in the United States. By the early 1990s, median marriage age had risen to its highest level in the 20th century, for both women and men. From the mid-1980s, it has become increasingly evident that throughout several East and Southeast Asian countries the age of marriage has increased almost up to 25 years for women at their first marriage (Leete 1994).

People are now more likely to be materialistic and marriages are now becoming optional in this era, where everybody is struggling for getting more and more riches in order to have better living standards. They are also afraid of losing their social and economic freedom which understandably is a part of getting married. Achieving high social status is one of the major factors in late marriages. Today’s living generation are inclined towards luxurious life and for meeting this demand they spend most of their time in making money even at the cost of ignoring one of the most important social institution of life. Thus this neglect later becomes cause of some serious issues in their later lives. The growing trend of late marriages is causing some serious issues in society. Some of the major causes behind delayed marriages are cultural, economic, social and educational factors. Today’s men remain busy in pursuit of good career and money to fulfill their luxurious needs. Presence of “unmarried sisters” in house is the social factor behind delayed marriages. A brother with sisters has to earn a lot for the marriages of his sisters while delaying his own marriage. One of the changing trends for delaying marriage is closely associated with “rise in educational attainment” (Caldwell, et al. 1982). The cause of postponement of marriage is related to the changed role and traditional status of women (Sathar and Kiyani 1998). The most important change which is likely to occur as a result of rising age at marriage of females is change in their status. Most female tend to achieve higher educational qualification before thinking of a married life. Thus prolong years of study make them older and out of the desired age bracket suitable for marriage. On the contrary however higher educational qualification of women cause sense of superiority
and intimidation to the male folk which further delay marriages. People of all educational backgrounds have delayed marriages, although the delay has been longer among the more highly educated (Iseen and Stevenson 2010). Infertility is the barrenness of women and men to a child. “Infertility is defined as failure to achieve pregnancy during one year of frequent, unprotected intercourse. Evaluation generally begins after 12 months, but it can be initiated earlier if infertility is suspected based on history or if the female partner is older than 35 years” (Jose-Miller, et al. 2007). According to Ayurveda, infertility is the process in which a couple is unable to conceive after two or more year of marriage and even after first delivery fails to conceive again (Sharma, et al. N.d).

Infertility can be primary and secondary. In primary infertility, the couples who never conceive fall in this type (Slutsky 1999). Secondary infertility includes those cases in which couples fail to conceive for second time. This includes miscarriages and abortions etc (Frank 2007).

It has been observed and many studies also reveal that age at marriage is one of the important factors which affect the fertility. The higher age at marriages has led to decline in fertility. Many studies reveal that age at marriage is an important social factor (Lapham 1970; Tein 1970; Bhadra 2000). The fertility rate decreases when age at marriages increases as a result it shortens the reproductive span due to which complication arise in achieving pregnancy (Kaur 2000).

MATERIALS AND METHODS
The current study is conducted to explore the causes of late marriages and its effects on fertility. The location of study is Rawalpindi and sample of 70 respondents were drawn by using a convenient sampling technique. To gather information on set objective an interview guide was designed. The collected data then was cleaned vigorously and analyzed on SPSS. The percentile and frequency tables are applied to reveal the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Causes of Late Marriages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caste System</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows the varying responses regarding causes of late marriages. 67.1% respondents were of the view that “caste system” is one of the major reasons of late marriages. Late marriages takes place in societies where “caste system” exists and their feudal family system and status become reason for late marriages (Muzaffar 2013). To maintain the purity of blood, land, status and honor of family the parents are reluctant to practice exogamous marriages due to which girls and even boys remain single or marry in later ages. 47.1% respondents were of the view that those women who are educated postpone their decision of marriages. The age at the time of marriage is one of the important factors which affect the fertility (Bumpass and Mburugu 1977). Well-educated women generally delay their marriages and childbirth. Education depresses the fertility by rising the age at marriage (Nag and Singhal 2013). Education decreases the fertility by raising the age at marriage, strengthening the propensity to be in labor force, fostering a favorable attitude towards small size norm and improving the awareness and use of family planning methods (Patnaik 1985; Arora 1990; Vashisht and Rana 1991).

In the study 62.9% respondent reveals the fact that due to phobia of living an idealistic life female postpone their decision of marriage. The growing concept of “euphoria of idealism” is also one of the serious most issues in our community, as individuals are in search of “perfect” being in their life, (Muzaffar 2013). Hypergamy is also one of the most dominant units in idealistic life due to which people delay their marriages. “In many societies hyper gamy marriage practice is the mode through which female climb up on the social ladder (Saleem, et al. 2015). In waiting of practicing hyper gamy some women get married in late ages.

The economic factor is one of the major causes of late marriages as 77.1% respondents showed their positive response regarding this cause of late marriage. The economic cause is interlinked with social status. Social status matters a lot now days, people do not prefer to marry unless they are not having ‘commodity income’ (Schultz 1974). To support their families, as cited by Segelstein the
prevailing wisdom nowadays is that one should reach a certain level of maturity and financial stability (Segelstein 2014). Due to all these causes males and females delay their marriage decision.

Late Marriages Affecting Fertility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows the frequency results of weather late marriage affects the fertility on not. 65.7 % respondents answered positively in accord that late marriages cause infertility. Due to late marriage the reproductive system gets affected, decreasing the ability to produce eggs and sperms properly which leads to infecundity in sex partners and also leads to difficulties in conceiving a baby. “The higher the age at marriage the shorter will be reproductive span which in turn reduces the fertility rate (Choudhary 1984; Kaur 2000). “The delay in marriage for females in particular has direct impact on delaying the age of sexual initiation and the age at first birth” and it has been seen as a precursor of fertility changes in many societies”(Satharand Kiani 1998). In this analysis30% respondents were of the view that late marriage doesn’t affect the fertility in women where as 4.3 % were of the view that it does not necessarily lead to infertility, but such cases have often been noticed.

Responsible for Infertility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows the results of “Who is responsible for infertility”. Only 4.3 % respondents were of the view that male is responsible for infertility. 14.3% respondents termed females responsible for the infertility. A immense number 81.4 % respondent were of the view that both male and female are responsible for infertility which shows the awareness of the people about the issue. The majority of people are aware that infertility is not just associated with females but the male can also be in fecund. “In approximately 40% of infertile couples, the male partner is either the sole or a contributing cause of infertility” (ASRM 2012). “Major causes of infertility include male factors, ovarian dysfunction, tubal disease, endometriosis, and uterine or cervical factors (Jose- Miller 2007). Problems with ovulation are common causes of infertility, accounting for approximately 25% of all infertility cases”. The infertility in our country is always associated with females but study clearly showed that infertility is on just on the end of female but also males are responsible for infertility

CONCLUSION

The study was undertaken to explore the causes of late marriages and its effects on fertility. It was identified that increased motivation to attain educational in women, the caste system, idealism regarding luxurious life by practicing hyper gamy and economic stability are the major causes of late marriages. The study also revealed that due to late marriages the fertility rate in male and females is affected. Further the study depicts that not only the females but males too are the reason behind infertility due to which difficulties in conceiving baby occur. Late marriage is one of the major factor due to which barrenness is seen in both genders.

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