



Practice of Dowry and Domestic Violence

Rawal Priyanka and Singh Jyoti
Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

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Abstract

Marriage is an auspicious ceremony which unites two bodies' two souls. It's a lifelong bonding of one man and one woman but to the great extent, the major problem is of "dowry culture" in our society. Demand of dowry is a major problem in Indian marriages; it is a deep rooted social evil. As we are living in the 21st century but the truth still persists that the women in our society has been ill-treated. After or before marriage she has bereft of her own identity and looked upon to her family members or on husband for basic necessities. This study defines the relation between domestic violence and dowry demands. Forty cases of dowry related domestic violence were studied here from western UP, India. Most of the women in this study experienced dowry related domestic violence got married in their early age 52.5%, from rural background (55%), have a lower household income (55% cases) and not working (92.5%). Majority of cases reported in the early years of marriage (55%), and they were from lower educational background. The result of this study indicates that Economic empowerment, together with higher education and modified cultural norms may protect the women from such type of social evil.

Keywords: Dowry, marriage, domestic violence.

Introduction

India has a very rich culture. Marriage is an auspicious sacred ceremony which unites two bodies and souls into one and it is not only bonding of two people but a strong bond that brings two families together according to their culture in arranged marriages. Paying dowry is an essential part of arranged marriage in Indian cultures. Dowry related Violence can occur soon or sometime after the marriage where the demand of dowry seems to be displeasing to the grooms family. These types of violence occur almost in all societies, it has no caste, class or the religion. As we are living in the 21st century, still women harassed or ill-treated because of male dominating society¹. In this society women bereft her own identity and dependent on others for their basic necessities. They are not only cheated for her nobility but also suffer from the corruption by the men and become the victim of cruelty within the boundaries of her own house. However this pain/ordeal does not stop here, it may cross its limits, pressurize her to commit suicide. Many types of torture may be given to them like burning, beating, abusing etc.

The study conducted had attempted to review the culture dowry system in western UP India and analyses the major factors due to which demand of dowry is increasing in our societies. Dowry is "goods given by the bride parents to the groom's family". In 1961 the demand of dowry becomes illegal, demand of dowry become culture in all societies². It's a social system that keep alive the torture on women and their deaths³. Over the last many years, obstructed laws have not proved a great change in this social practice. According

to the National Crime Records Bureau of India total 8,618 female deaths related to dowry disputes recorded in 2011³. In most of the reported cases, women's are sufferers of great psychological torture, ill treatment, harassment, and a very common reason to this is low bride price or in sufficient dowry so as to fulfill their greedy desires. In spite of great reforms and challenges taken towards educating a girl child, our society seems to be insensitive towards this bad practice.

This study suggests a relation between domestic violence and dowry demands. Higher ill-treatment and abusing to female has been when a groom and his family not pleasing with dowry payments⁴. Crimes affected women in the society gives complex, low self esteem and low status to the parents of a girl; in this modernization of era lower and middle class families and laws are generally against such types of crimes⁵.

Dowry related domestic violence has been considered as, a major problem in the society, increasing day by day in India, this is the matter of deep thought about the death of females due to dowry⁶. The latest literature review expose to view that non- governmental organization, social activists, and the Indian government has, as much not changed over the ten years. As a result the problem has increased and took a frame like that it will never changed in future².

The objective this study was to understand the role of dowry demands in marital discord resulting in domestic violence as reported by women who sought help. In present study forty cases of dowry related domestic violence were taken from western UP, India. The study sought to analyze the

demographic characteristics of the women included in the study and to learn about the prevalence of dowry and its role in different marital problems faced by these women including domestic violence.

Material and Methods

The samples of the study consist of the women who complained of domestic violence due to dowry demand. All the 40 women who comprised the sample of this study were personally contacted and administered a pre-designed, structural interview schedule. The subjects were guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study show that out of a total of 40 women who were included in the study and complained of dowry related domestic violence 52.5% females were between the age of 15-20 years and 40% were between the age of 21-25

years and 7.5% were more than 25 years of age (table -1). 95% of the samples belonged to Hindu religion, 2% belonged to Sikh and 3% belonged to the Muslim religion (table-1). A majority of these women had an arranged marriage 95%, while 5% had a love marriage. The education level of these women (table-1) indicates that only 8% females were highly educated (post graduate). A majority of them were living in joint family (85%) while 10% were living in nuclear and only 5% were living in extended joint family (table-1). The calculations showed that 85% females complained of domestic violence having female child whereas only 15% having male child. Majority of women included in this study were house wives. A majority of these women (55%) were from a lower income group. The time after marriage since when dowry demand were made is shown in Table 1. It shows that in majority of the cases (55%) the dowry demands were made soon after the marriage, in 23% cases it was between the 2-3 years of the marriage, in 17% of the cases between 3-5 years of the marriage.

Table-1

S No.	Factors	Details	Percentage
1	Age	15-20	52.5%
		21-25	40%
		26-30	7.5%
2	Religion	Hindu	95%
		Muslim	3%
		Sikh	2%
		Christian	-
3	Region	Rural	55%
		Urban	45%
4	Family	Nuclear	10%
		Joint	85%
		Extended	5%
5	Status of Family	Lower	55%
		Middle	32.5%
		Upper Middle	12.5%
6	Child	Male	15%
		Female	85%
7	Type of Marriage	Arranged	95%
		Love	5%
8	Education	No formal	20%
		Primary	21%
		High School	20%
		Secondary	20%
		Graduation	11%
		PG	8%
9	Time since marriage when dowry demand reported	Months- 2Year	55%
		2Years-3 Years	23%
		3 Years-5Years	17%
		5 Years –Above	5%

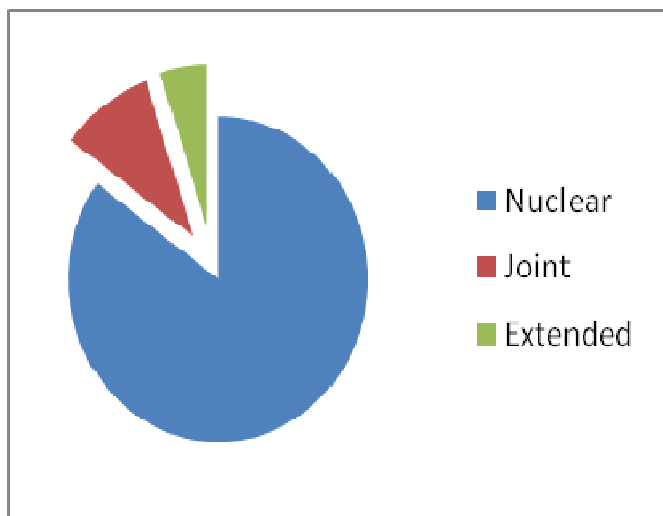


Figure-1
 Type of Family

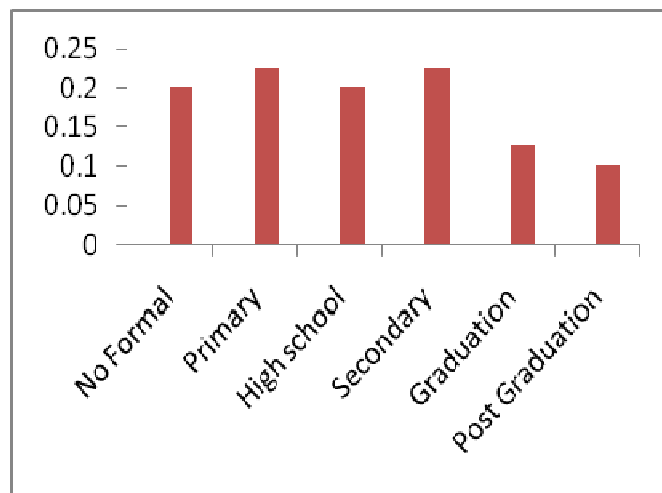


Figure-4
 Education Status

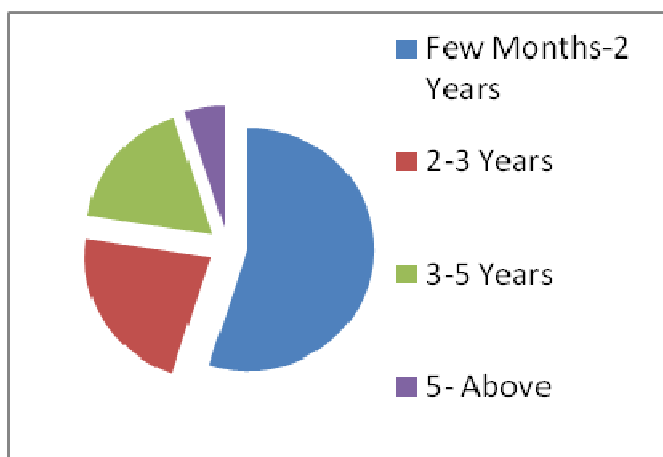


Figure-2
 Time since marriage when dowry demand reported

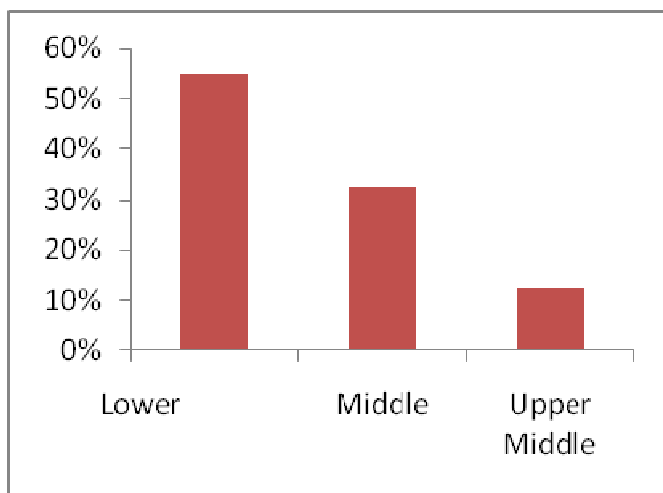


Figure-3
 Status of Family

Conclusion

Dowry is any item or cash given by the bride family to the grooms' family at the time of marriage⁷. Dowry is a major problem with Indian marriages; dowry related violence can occur when the dowry or bride-price is seems to be insufficient to the grooms family. Dowry is bride-price that gives the position of daughter-in-law to any girl in someone's family. It can be added that dowry is a social custom and it is very difficult to change customs all of a sudden; practicing customs generate and strengthen solidarity and cohesiveness among people; many people give and take dowry only because their parents and forefathers had been practicing it. In spite of the fact that practice of dowry became illegal in 1961 and it is still flourishing among all social classes. The youth can definitely play a key role in eradicating this evil practice the cases of dowry free marriage. Till the time, younger generation musters courage to stop this practice and girls resist social pressure to take it, people will stick to this custom. In the study by Singh M,⁸ discussed about dowry related domestic violence and found that, 29.3% of women facing domestic violence reported about this abuse to their parents and another 20.7% to their relatives. 27.6% sought help from elders of community/Sarpanch or neighbors. In present study also we included those subjects who are facing dowry related domestic violence and findings of the present study are also in concurrence with previous ones. It can be concluded that different laws made to stop this evil in the society failed to curb the giving and taking of cash and other materials in the form of dowry⁸. This practice of giving gifts, cash, jewellery, household items and appliances to bridegroom and his relatives continues even after marriage⁹. The results of this study conclude that this demand for dowry is present in all types of marriage (Love /Arranged/Love-cum-arranged) but as per our findings the percentage is exceptionally higher in arranged marriages (95%). Unfortunately women education has not produced a reformative effect on this social evil. People of all economic status and educational background have demanded

dowry and indulged in domestic violence when this demand has not been fulfilled. Here majority of cases were reported from lower economic status and also not having very good educational background.

In the present scenario dowry system as it is practiced in India, it has become an instrument of torture for the bride and her parents and family¹⁰. Majority of women reporting domestic violence gave dowry demands as the primary cause of violence against them and also they have faced all kinds of violence i.e. physical, psychological/emotional and verbal. The results of the present study are in line with these findings. People of all economic status and educational background have demanded dowry and indulged in domestic violence when this demand has not been fulfilled. In this study also people of all economic background demand dowry and indulged in domestic violence however majority of cases were reported from lower and middle class families (55% and 33%) which is quite alarming. Women experiencing marital violence were more likely to have been depressed, and to have had low self-esteem. In the study by Ranjana Kumari¹¹ it was revealed that one out of every four dowry victims was driven to suicide due to extreme mental and physical torture. The torture begins when the in-laws harass the women for more gifts, cash, jewellery, household items and appliances from her family¹² this problem becomes severe when girl child born in the family as out of forty cases reported here 85% females had girl child. Forty cases of dowry related domestic violence were studied here from western UP, India. Majority of women in the present study experiencing dowry related domestic violence got married in their early age 52.5%, from rural background (55%). Present study suggests a link between domestic violence and dowry demands, it also indicates that there are some contributory factors for this like lower household income, lower educational background, having girl child, type of marriage (Love /Arranged/Love-cum-arranged) and type of family (nuclear, joint, extended). The result of this study indicates that Economic empowerment, together with higher education and modified cultural norms may protect the women from such type of social evil.

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