
Elopers may Burden the Community Health

Khair Muhammad^{1*}**Keywords:** Burden, Community Health, Elopers, Marriage, Pakistan^{1*}Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Government Degree College, Balakot, Mansehra, KPK, Pakistan.***Corresponding Author Email:**

khairo.wazir@gmail.com

Females in patriarchal society of Pakistan have minimum or no rights of making decisions and choices related to their familial aspects and living conditions (Ali et al., 2022). One of the many strategies practiced by adolescent girls to resist male dominated societal norms is elopement or running away from home for love (Allendorf & Ghimire, 2013). About 561 females eloped and contracted their marriages in courts in Rawalpindi, Pakistan since 30 June, 2024 (Shirazi, 2024). Early and forced marriages, circumvent customary marriage payments, and cultural taboos surrounding premarital sex cause an adolescent female to elope (Ali et al, 2022). Beside social stigmatization and neglect, eloped females are viewed as deviant, having higher risk of labor exploitation, unwanted pregnancies, transactional sexual relationships, and dropping out of school (Stoebenau et al., 2016). Elopers are often taunted, oppressed and kidnapped by the family members of the female. They are subjected to murder in the name of honor. The unfulfillment of basic physiological and safety needs drives them to divorce. Furthermore, society boycott them and does not want to develop any relationship with their siblings because of the fear that they will elope too.

Divorced elopers who did not return to their families, often have unmet basic needs. They

take advantage of Dar ul Amman, the government institutes providing food and shelter for such affected population. Furthermore, elopers are more likely to establish transactional sexual relationships to meet their financial needs. Transactional sex is more strongly associated with sexually transmitted infections and HIV (Menza et al., 2020). An individual's lifetime treatment cost of HIV infection is assumed as \$420,285 (Bingham et al., 2021), in 2019. Elopers who adopted transactional sex as a source of generating income, serve as a carrier of infectious diseases which threatens the community health.

There is a need of preventing elopement in order to preserve the health of a community. Preventive measures of elopement may include education, providing females with a right of exercising their will and choice to marry, abandoning forced and early marriages, and flexibility in marriage payments. Adolescence is the most vulnerable period where adolescents are more at risks for engaging in crimes and drugs. Therefore, educational institutes and communities must have funds to provide best possible character education to direct teenagers to socially acceptable behaviors (Ramlah et al., 2024). Parents and society must allow their females to exercise their will while choosing a partner. Females who are allowed to choose a partner of their own choice are more likely to be happy in their marital life. Furthermore, there is a need of proposing and implementing policies on national level which addresses the abandonment of forced and early marriages. The social norms related to bride and dowry must be flexible in order to facilitate the

This guest editorial is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial 4.0 International License (<https://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-Commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified.

© Copyright: The Author (2024)

marriage. Since marriage is a social declaration of uniting male and female, therefore, payments related to marriages must be arranged in a way that could facilitate the marriage process. Social workers should adopt a proactive approach to advocate problems of elopers in marriage and family courts.

Culturally specific research to address the causes and prevention of elopement must be carried out. Research studies must also strive to establish factors facilitating re-social inclusion of elopers after divorce, to prevent community from economic and health burdens. Feminist activists must play their role in order to prevent the child and forced marriages, by passing certain laws addressing the aforementioned issue.

Contribution of Author

Khair Muhammad: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – Original Draft, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the author.

Source of Funding

The author declared no source of funding.

Data Availability Statement

The data sharing is not applicable to this guest editorial as no dataset was used in the current study.

References

- Ali, T. S., Ali, S. S., Nadeem, S., Memon, Z., Soofi, S., Madhani, F., Karim, Y., Mohammad, S., & Bhutta, Z. A. (2022). Perpetuation of gender discrimination in Pakistani society: results from a scoping review and qualitative study conducted in three provinces of Pakistan. *BMC Women's Health*, 22(1), 540. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-022-02011-6>
- Allendorf, K., & Ghimire, D. J. (2013). Determinants of marital quality in an

arranged marriage society. *Social Science Research*, 42(1), 59–70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.09.002>

- Bingham, A., Shrestha, R. K., Khurana, N., Jacobson, E. U., & Farnham, P. G. (2021). Estimated Lifetime HIV-Related Medical Costs in the United States. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 48(4), 299–304. <https://doi.org/10.1097/OLQ.0000000000001366>
- Menza, T. W., Lipira, L., Bhattarai, A., Leon, V. C., & Orellana, E. R. (2020). Prevalence and correlates of transactional sex among women of low socioeconomic status in Portland, OR. *BMC Women's Health*, 20(1), 219. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-020-01088-1>
- Ramlah, R., Rozelin, D., Maryani, M., & Huseini, A. (2024, July). Elopement Culture and Its Impact on Youth Education (Case Study in Rantau Panjang Village, Jambi Province). In *Proceedings of the 7th International Colloquium on Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies (ICIIS) in conjunction with the 6th Annual Postgraduate Conference on Muslim Society (APCoMS), ICIIS and APCoMS 2024, Banjarmasin, Indonesia*.
- Shirazi, Q. (2024, July 03). Pindi Sees Surge in Runaway Marriages. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2476104/pindi-sees-surge-in-runaway-marriages>
- Stoebenau, K., Heise, L., Wamoyi, J., Bobrova, N. (2016). Revisiting the understanding of "transactional sex" in sub-Saharan Africa: A review and synthesis of the literature. *Social Science Medicine*, 168, 186-197. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.09.023