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### EMPOWERED OR MARGINALIZED? EXPLORING THE JOURNEY OF PAKISTANI WOMEN THROUGH KHULA IN MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

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#### ABSTRACT

This research analyzes how sociocultural and economic conditions affect woman's standing and marriage satisfaction levels in District Mandi Bahauddin City Pakistan through a study of gender roles, Khula initiatives and divorce stigma. A qualitative research design was used to collect data through in-depth interviews with 37 respondents: Research participants included women seeking or obtaining Khula in addition to related men and interviews conducted with their family members while components such as legal experts and religious authorities together with community leaders also contributed responses. The study deliberately chose specific data that showed diverse viewpoints followed by thematic analysis to understand these datasets. Research finds that emotional neglect along with financial problems and patriarchal systems leading to conservative gender role expectations are the main causes for women's marital dissatisfaction. In their decision to seek a Khula, women responded to domestic violence and economic and emotional abuse yet they maintained agency through societal stigma obstacles. Men supported traditional gender divisions yet they pressurized women more than necessary to work harder to sustain marital harmony. Research on women's resistance to oppressive relationships after divorce uses feminist theory together with symbolic interactionism and social exchange theory as its foundational theoretical framework. The study conducted about South Asia's gender relations within marriage demands both structural adjustment of gender inequalities and cultural progression to bolster women empowerment.

**Keywords:** Socio Culture, Khula, Economy, Women, Marital Relationship, Satisfaction

#### Introduction:

The concept that marriage being the essential of social and cultural order, is generally approved. This system acknowledges goodwill as well as financial support together

with the requirement of assignment reciprocity thus making Marriage institution relevant today. Moreover, in Pakistan, this institution has such a greater importance than in other Islamic countries which gives an extremely powerful role to it (Engineer, 1992; Mernissi, 1991). It discharges the powerful function well entrenched in an Islamic base, socially, culturally moving in an unimpeded manner. In most of the cases, marriage remain stable and intact in Pakistan, however, increased tendency of divorce from men side and Khula seeking from women side is witnessed in recent past, which is worrisome (Qureshi & Zahra, 2022; Yousaf & Hashmi, 2019). The husband and wife are always satisfied with how long the marriage is supposed to endure but certain friction in the smooth running of this relation is part of it, which, ultimately causing divorce or Khulla.

A happy marriage is where a husband and wife improve emotional bonds, are respectful to each other and communicate effectively (Amato, 2010; Ali & Sami, 2020). The obtained results confirmed this hypothesis (Amato, 2010), while culture and gender roles have considerable effects on marital satisfaction in that expectations to determine marital satisfaction. In Pakistan we have cultural expectations solely on women about smooth running of relationships, which ultimately, leads to her being less happy amongst both (Shaheed, 2010; Rasool, 2021). These gender imbalances lead to female dissatisfaction, (Ali & Sami, 2020), little support, (Sandy et al., 2005), economic fluctuations (Boeije et al., 2015) and limited self-mastery (MacIntosh et al., 2007) eventually strained relations and finally separation.

In Pakistan, Marriage and Gender roles are part of societal culture, while male partner is supposed to be the provider of bread and butter and head of the family. However, at the same time, the woman needs to be a mobilizer and caregiver for the family, while her roles are supposed to be inferior and of less importance which is negation of equal role of both the partners. Modern women seek equal standing alongside their male partners in contemporary relationships because both situations and information availability have transformed. Thus, any society that is tied down to fixed gender roles will soon find itself living in power struggle, discontent, and inevitably will fold up marital relationships. Women today understand their rights well and seek equal representation which creates strain while actively pursuing legal solutions. Under Shariah in Pakistan women devoted Khula rulings through court intervention gain more visibility. The main reasons women pursue Khula divorce cases include economic hardships together with emotional or physical abuse and fundamentally incompatible marriages according to research by Hassan et al. (2018). The research conducted by Fatima and Ali demonstrated women with urban-based education who pursue Khula to break from traditional patterns of thinking.

Within the culture women who divorce face failure labels which impact both themselves and their families (Jafar, 2021; Malik & Tariq, 2020). Society ostracizes women who pursue a Khula making it virtually impossible for them to remarry. The cultural traditions which prioritize relational value and worth create support for this particular label (Shaheed, 2010; Kandiyoti, 1988). Malik and Tariq's 2020 study (p. 132) highlighted the psychological and social consequences of stigma and influenced additional research which showed a tendency to recommend women not to exercise their rights (Malik & Tariq, 2020).

The current study seeks to discover how various themes merge to shape women's marital experiences throughout Pakistan. The roles assigned in society form masculine and feminine constructs that lead unmarried couples to experience marriage dissatisfaction which drives them toward Khula while their divorces remain universally stigmatized. This research investigated which factors either empowered women positively or restricted their status as social role models in marriage settings.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Pakistani society views marriage as an inviolable institution and deals with it through sacred estimation. So-called sacred marriages show severe relational imbalances leading to unhappy relations that end in separation from one another. Women's relationship choices become poisonous when cultural restrictions deny their job selection rights alongside abuse from unequal marital roles that remove autonomy. The paper examines the important sociocultural issue that 'Khula' addresses for women who wish to exit their marriages even though it remains their primary legal recourse. Social prejudices together with economic limitations restrict Khula practice. Research on women's rights continues to grow but theoretical analysis and experimental studies about sociocultural and economic determinants shaping women's married lives remain minimal. The research addresses this research gap through independent analysis of these components while studying their interrelationship.

### **Research Gap:**

Despite being examined through the lenses of legal structures (Mernissi, 1991; Engineer, 1992) and religious viewpoints (Shaheed, 2010) marital satisfaction alongside khula remains unexplored concerning socio-cultural factors that affect women's choices in marital dissolution. Rasool (2021) investigates the legal legitimacy of khula but omits a study of socio-cultural triggers local women face when opting for khula. Following their examination of post-khula stigma Shaheed (2010) and Kandiyoti (1988) analyzed women's social isolation and stigmatization after divorce yet they did not examine psychological impact factors and economic dependency as well as remarriage problems in rural environments like Mandi Baha ud Din. The study by Faizi et al. (2024)

examines economic vulnerabilities but fails to explain how cultural norms and feelings about family honor create both dependence and discrimination against divorced women hindering their societal reintegration.

There is a lack of research performing intersectional analyses concerning women's post-divorce agency in relation to class, education and religious factors (Kabeer 1999). Researchers rarely engage with qualitative methods that document subjects' experiences because legal and quantitative methods tend to ignore both personal narratives and emotional conflicts, according to Abu-Lughod (1993).

The study introduces narrative based methods to bridge research gaps by investigating why marriages fail women opt for khula and face stigmatization after divorce. The study examines women's experiences after divorce through the blinders of local traditions of Mandi Baha ud Din while evaluating social views as well as psychological and economic implications. The research study combines personal testimony analysis to enhance feminist and anthropological concepts regarding empowerment and human agency. This work explores both women's marital satisfaction levels and post-khula experiences which combine gender economic considerations with policy changes to guide Pakistan toward policy reforms reducing structural inequalities.

**Research Objectives:**

- a. To examine to major causes that compel women to obtain khula'
- b. To explore societal response towards women who go for the dissolution of marriage
- c. To gauge the effects as post-Khula' stigmatized women being execrative

**Theoretical Framework:**

Theoretical Approach: Post-Structural Feminism

Gender performativity theory developed by Judith Butler (1990) along with post structural feminism functions to definitively challenge deterministic gender concepts. As Butler explains gender formation occurs through performative acts alongside discourses that are foundational to and established within gendered societies. Because they understand their rights better modern women actively pursue fair representation thus causing relationship tension yet they will approach courts readily when dissatisfaction arises. Through language and symbolic interactions women losing their power to choose happens as Butler argues patriarchal practices create gender as natural. The theory overcomes its limitations through analysis of resistance and positioning thereby showing how women subvert dominant discourses as they articulate their personal stories. A convincing foundation exists for using this framework when researchers study women's agency in mis.extern contexts.

In the framework of post-structural feminist approaches to marriage women perform repetitive patterns of submission alongside their care duties to maintain systems of patriarchal power. This objective analyzes women's creation of dissatisfaction through their inability to conform to patriarchal roles which generates emotional, psychological and economic struggle evidence.

Butler established a position about countering gender norms and demonstrated through an evaluation of Pakistani legal responses towards domestic violence and financial reliance how women move against traditional gender roles by pursuing khula. The purpose here examines tradition deviation which bridges traditional values with personal freedom using khula.

Post-structuralism insists that stigmatization is one of the main mechanisms of power. In post-structuralist frameworks women who divorce are labelled as aberrations to uphold patriarchal control. This research examines community responses to show the ways stigma creates social isolation together with restricting remarriage opportunities and generating economic uncertainties.

According to Butler's disciplinary power framework post-divorce stigma functions as socially controlled equipment to dominate Women. Through survivor accounts and stigma experiences this objective explores its influence over personal identity as well as health outcomes and social reintegration.

#### **Theoretical connections with Research Gap:**

The post-structural feminist approach addresses existing research deficiencies by investigating discourse and identity which concentrates on actions beyond legal framework analysis. Through this investigation scholars evaluate marital cultural constructs concerning women to reveal how these individuals bypass traditional masculine authority via khula. This research examines forms of social stigma and exclusion while presenting new methods to explore divorce-related difficulties absent from existing scientific investigation.

The present framework adopts both narrative and thematic strategies which honor female narratives voices while tracing how newly formed self-concepts emerge after khula without neglecting psychological outcomes. This work supports legislation which removes stigmatization barriers alongside helping women progress by changing both economic systems and legal structures.

#### **Locale of the Study:**

The research identifies district Mandi Bahauddin in Punjab province of Pakistan as its focal area. The district consists of three tehsils which include Phalia, Malakwal and Mandi Bahauddin and includes three municipal committees together with eighty union councils and four hundred thirty-three villages spanning 2673 Km<sup>2</sup> in area. This district

reports 68% literacy but most residents work in civil and armed services along with overseas employment and agriculture.

The Mandi Bahauddin cultural patterns exemplify male chauvinism because both community influence and family members exercise significant control over married males (Qureshi & Zahra, 2022). According to 2020 research by Ali and Sami social values maintain female oppression to homekeeping duties while men must go outside to fight and lead while society honors family units over single individuals.

### **Divorce Rate in Mandi Bahauddin:**

Mandi Bahauddin district lacks official data about divorce rates though analysis of informal communication with minimal court records shows dissolved marriages (including Khula cases) which are rising. Further research indicates that rural Pakistan experiences divorce due to poverty conditions and domestic violence and unease with patriarchal marriage roles which has been seen in other regions which includes the district (Jamkot District) (Fatima & Ali, 2019). Current divorce frequencies remain lower than average even though they show a mounting trend because of multiple socio-cultural and financial causes while high social costs persist with Khula (Malik & Tariq, 2020). The family protection provider who brings financial income holds mastery of decision making within Pakistan's patriarchal setup. y (80) union councils, and four hundred thirty-three (433) villages while its total area is 2673 Km<sup>2</sup>. The literacy rate of the district is 68%, however, the significant occupations are civil, armed services, overseas, and farming.

There is, however, a paucity of official data regarding the prevalence of divorce in the Mandi Bahauddin district, but on the basis of informal conversations and a scant information of records of the courts, it can be stated that the cases of dissolved marriage (including Khula) are gradually pressing up. Some further research shows that poverty, wife beating as well as dissatisfaction with patriarchal roles are some of the common causes of divorce in rural Pakistan, similar trends observed in the district too (Fatima & Ali, 2019). Today divorce rates remain relatively low but are showing steady growth because of multiple economic and cultural conditions including the significant costs linked to ending marriages (Malik & Tariq, 2020).

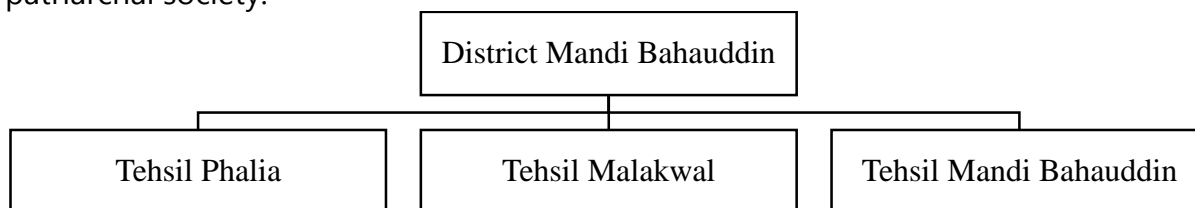
### **Sociocultural Environment:**

Sociocultural patterns of Mandi Bahauddin show the apparent discriminative power of male chauvinism, where family and community share a strong command of the married life of males (Qureshi & Zahra, 2022). With women being oppressed in particular, their place is primarily in the home; man's place is outside in conquering, protecting, and ruling; while social values symbolize more honouring the family than the individual (Ali and Sami, 2020). Recent observations indicate male dominance is gradually decreasing because socio-cultural advances combine with women partner awareness to create

positive change. In Pakistan women everywhere and Mandi Bahauddin specifically demand equal positions in household decision-making but dominant male family figures do not accept these demands. Mandi Bahauddin maintains deeply traditional cultural systems regarding marital decisions which forces spouses to experience husbandly opposition that produces tense marital relationships and leads towards divorce or Khula. Both young women and educated women from this current generation of gender rights activists have taken drastic actions to debate traditional standards although these conventions receive endorsement from Islamic courts according to Hassan and colleagues (2018).

**District and Family Courts:**

Family Courts in Mandi Bahauddin settle matrimonial discord involving both khula dissolutions and claims for maintenance payment. Women looking to legally separate from their spouse and gain support through maintenance lawsuits find legal solutions with these courts. Women of the district Mandi Baha ud Din who aim to obtain Khula or court solutions face multiple barriers resulting from family pressure and gender bias along with financial problems and travel constraints because they live in Pakistan's patriarchal society.



The Khula legal process produces delays that spark financial problems and limits women to few female advocates which joins social pressures that prevent many women from seeking Khula (Fatima & Ali, 2019). Rural women face an unfair situation due to their financial problems combined with their insufficient understanding of their legal entitlements in accordance with Malik & Tariq 2020.

**Limitations of the Study**

The analysis was carried out on a small sample of 37 respondents spread in distant areas of the district having different sociocultural contexts. Lack of answers to the topic may have to do with fear of judgment on the side of respondents, especially men, who feared explaining themselves contrary to societal expectations. The interviews conducted in Punjabi and Urdu underwent conversion into English yet translation reduced potential cultural nuances. These limitations include a rural focus that splits-ups the results from the urban–rural differences in Pakistani women's patterns of marriage, gender roles, and stigma surrounding divorce. Although thematic analysis is rigorous, it is subjective and its results will vary by the interpretation of the researcher to the data.

The factors that led women to seek Khula (divorce), the study identified, were domestic violence, emotional neglect and financial hardship. The interviews show how women's ability to challenge oppressive systems faces dual barriers from social discrimination against divorce initiation which impairs their legal and property rights. Moreover, the anthropological study examined ways in which cultural norms, economic structures and personal experience of work together to create travails for women in asserting their marital and social identity. In addition, the research filled a gap regarding how rural women negotiate marital dissatisfaction and divorce by blending narratives with available theory.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The study was delimited to only one district of central Punjab, namely Mandi Bahauddin. It was further delimited to the accessible population involved in divorce and Khula matters.

### **Methods:**

The study was designed qualitatively. Considering the characteristics of the community, a purposive and nonprobability sampling technique was used to recruit respondents seeking Khula within the premises of the district Mandi Bahauddin across the gender and locale. Case-based samples were also collected, court and union council records were analyzed, and the area was chosen for cases of higher expected divorce rates.

Due to the topic's sensitivity, ethical considerations were primarily focused by the research. Preliminary details of the research purposes were given to every respondent to be interviewed. Informed consent was taken for more profound interviews, interview notes, and voice recordings. Face-to-face interviews took place in secured settings, for example, at respondents' homes, otherwise determined offices or rooms. Respondents' anonymity and confidentiality were protected. Through in-depth interviews, a guide has been developed. In-depth interviews were taken in Punjabi and Urdu languages(s) and transcribed into English.

### **Sampling Methodology**

Overall, 37 respondents were interviewed who were taken across the fabric of the society. The details are as follows:

#### a. Legal Professionals

From the same court where they were involved as legal counsel in previous khula cases, three lawyers were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. I received consent from participants to proceed with the interviews.

#### b. Women Participants

A sample of ten women aged between 20 and 50 years was selected. This group was divided into two subcategories:



- I. Five women currently seeking khula in the courts.
- II. Five women who had successfully obtained a divorce through the courts within the past two years.

c. Men Participants

Ten men aged between 20 and 50 years were included in the sample, categorized as:

- I. Five men currently serving as defendants in khula cases.
- II. Five men had finalized divorces through the courts in the past two years.

d. Family and Friends

Researchers included divorced individuals and their close familial circles to evaluate community social interactions. The sample comprised eight respondents:

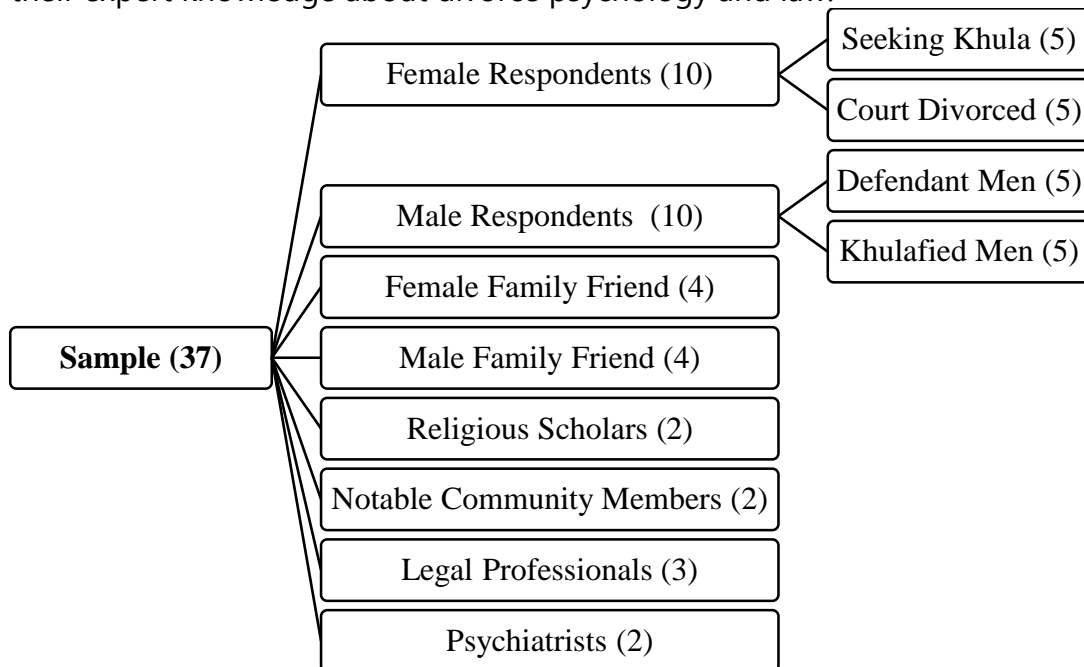
- I. Four represent women’s families or friends.
- II. Four represent men’s families or friends.

e. Religious Personalities and Social workers

The research included interviews with two religious scholars alongside two notable members providing cultural and religious insights.

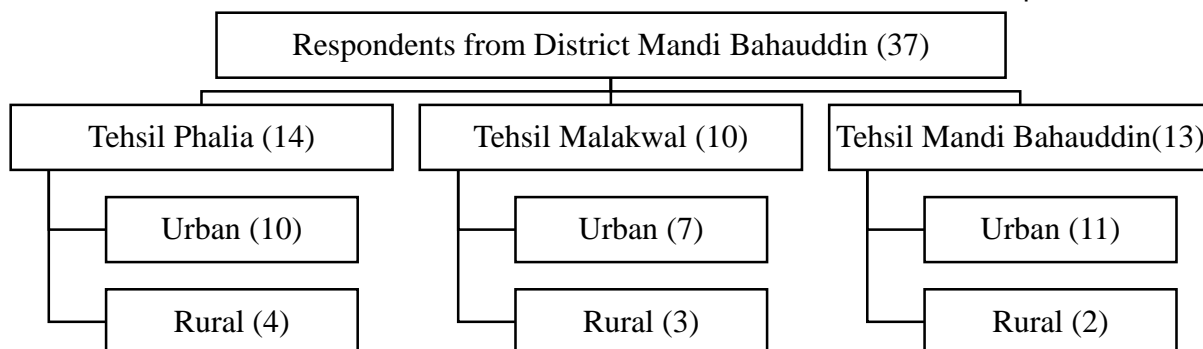
f. Additional Experts

The research sample included two psychiatrists who joined with three legal experts to share their expert knowledge about divorce psychology and law.



The research examined four central aspects of Khula divorce: (i) marital satisfaction levels and gender roles in marriage, (ii) the purposes for seeking Khula and the social stigma associated with divorce, (iii) reasons for seeking Khula and (iv) the social stigma

surrounding divorce. The interviews were documented then analyzed through thematic analysis which yielded six unique themes. The research data appeared in the major thematic domains with embedded insights from data collection. Thirty-seven (37) participants included women who sought Khula as well as their husbands and their families and both legal and religious experts and community leaders and mental health professionals.



Scientists wanted to establish Pakistani women's marital fulfillment while ascertaining their Khula intent reasons and social treatment after marital dissolution.

**Discussion:**

Research done in rural Pakistan investigates how several socioeconomic patterns together with traditional cultural elements affect female marital experiences. The current study shows how enduring patriarchal norms and supporting structural inequalities affect both marital satisfaction and gender roles and reasons for khula requests and social stigma by focusing on these four elements. The bulk of participants maintain that women confront the current patriarchal system to restore their denied rights. The survey findings indicate that women use their agency power as an active tool to confront traditional systems mainly during khula proceedings. The survey although documenting society's developing awareness around social inequalities shows that divorce still spawns negative societal perceptions. The survey revealed that just over 31 respondents shared the belief that women will initiate khula procedures mainly for future needs. She dismisses the judgment along with social discrimination which society imposes upon her. The study results improve marital insight while indicating that multiple societal and governmental changes are needed. The majority of women who sought khula because of marital dissatisfaction shared their insights with the researchers. These women stated they received no attention from their husbands any time after their first few months together. People understood their positions in marriage before starting wedlock yet daily survival needs linked to economic challenges overshadowed gender considerations. The majority of women found divorce's stigma acceptable because they hoped to find a second husband who

would care about them. Social stigma represents an issue which shows connections to the divorce process.

### **Marital Satisfaction Levels**

The analysis of current study data revealed emotional neglect and economic security together with power balance as primary significant factors affecting marital happiness of Mandi Bhauddin women. Various women stated their voices and desires experienced neglect in the context of their marital relationships. One participant bemoaned: Someone never sought to understand my needs and personal wants. I placed my needs after the demands of others. The data shows how patriarchal social standards control marital relationships when it focuses on distinctions between authority between men and women.

The identification matches the essential claim of feminist anthropological researchers studying how family systems solidify societal imbalances (Ortner, 1974). According to feminist scholars patriarchal systems maintain control of women's reproductive abilities and labor functions thereby resulting in female oppression and dissatisfaction in marriage. Findings presented in this research validate this theoretical view. The examine investigates female residents of Mandi Bhauddin who experience exclusion due to patriarchal pressure while marital happiness relates to how women execute assigned traditional gender roles.

The majority of female interviewees explained their khula choices based on life's one-time value given by God before declaring their lives should not suffer through persistent marital issues or financial instability and relationship dissatisfaction. The research supports dynamics of marital satisfaction through the exchange theory as defined by Blau (1964). A cost-benefit misalignment interpreted from female dissatisfaction about marriage stands as an example of weak feminine perspective but does not dispute their real feelings. The total price that numerous women pay because of emotionless relationships and house management alongside a shortage of independence consistently exceeds these advantages. The cultural socialization of silencing others during communication is exacerbating an already imbalanced relationship according to societal standards.

Marital satisfaction depends on the extent women can achieve limited independence while living in male-dominant family systems under traditional gender roles according to Ali and Sami (2020). The researcher extends this research by analyzing the arranged marriage situation within rural cultural settings where strict local traditions force women into economic dependency.

### **Gender Roles in Marriage**

Data revealed that Mandi Bhauddin marriages conform to national patterns of Pakistani patriarchal systems through entrenched gender role traditions. Each woman

had two main expectations: managing household responsibilities alongside their roles in child raising according to masculine preferences which typically interfered with their personal interests. A woman who had obtained Khula, or divorce through release by a husband who has not yet taken any of his wife's wealth, at 35, summed up her experiences: At that time I couldn't recognize the person living my life since it seemed like somebody else had control of my existence. All things existed without purpose which included my thinking along with my actions and none of them mattered.

Male survey participants showed support for traditional gender roles stating that such conceptions formed essential elements of a peaceful husband-and-wife partnership. The male participant stated that 'A husband must provide both shelter and money for food but his wife is responsible for household maintenance.' The traditional power structure which makes men responsibility providers but women responsible caretakers continues to remain dominant therefore it sustains the gendered allocation of work tasks.

From the structural-functionalist standpoint in anthropology society operates through male activity that creates societal stability and female roles which unite different men socially. The study results show how this viewpoint fails to explain situations where role boundaries create tension throughout the relationship. As women embrace greater consciousness about their rights their expectation for equal rights continues to rise. The marriage failure stems from traditional expectations blocking the hopes between partners.

The researchers (Qureshi & Zahra, 2022) argue that better understanding gender roles within Pakistani marriages remains relevant because discontented women want equal decision-making authority. The investigation builds upon previous studies by examining rural areas where traditional rules about expectation enforcement produce sharper results.

### **Reasons for Seeking Khula**

According to the study's findings women sought Khula primarily because of domestic abuse and financial challenges and emotional mistreatment. Apart from abuse the women endured throughout their marriages they decided to end these relationships after extended mistreatment. Memories brought forward, "He punished me whenever I did something minor without anyone in his family coming to intervene." One night I realized my current situation was no longer bearable so I chose to stay for my children. The discovery supports feminist theory when it demonstrates how structural violence within patriarchy suppresses women's capabilities to make independent choices so these women stay in permanent childlike states (Butler, 1990). The goal of a khula divorce is to fight against controlling systems which allows women to reclaim control

of their lives. While the process presents obstacles with both emotional and social barriers it simultaneously displays signs of active control together with limitations. Decode of anecdotal data suggests Khula cases frequently occurred because the women experienced financial problems. These women explain their husbands' financial struggles made them depend on their families for survival. One woman said: I walked my children to the corner food stand to buy food that I paid for with money my parents gave me. Through those words she wanted to know what value remained in marriage against separation. According to Fatima and Ali (2019) investigation economic instability functions as a principal motivating cause behind Khula cases in Pakistan. The study produces anthropologically beneficial results according to the cultural materialist perspective. Harris (1979) established this method. From this theoretical lens a person's available economic capital serves as the force that enables social relationship building. The financial instability between the spouses makes them have reduced confidence in marriage benefits.

### **Social Stigma and Divorce**

Research results demonstrated families and communities treated women who selected Khula with social stigmatization. The women suffered from public criticism and exclusion and also faced social condemnation as failing marriages. Another participant said: The social events my divorced friends skipped because of my single status became a regular occurrence throughout my life. From their actions you would think I committed some offense against myself which proved me worthless. Multiple people whispered behind my back to imply rebellion through whispers that conveyed shame to others he explained.

In Pakistani society women lose their identity if they remain unmarried. Men who discussed harassment seemed unaffected by social judgment even though they experienced these situations. The research subject explained how individuals believe men need to have flaws if their partners choose to leave them. Society fails to grasp that he isn't at fault every time since people persist in saying 'he can't help it.' 'It's not his fault,' they explain.

According to Jafar (2021) social attitudes deter women from seeking divorce in South Asia because of powerful societal stigma against it. From the anthropological viewpoint Symbol interactionism explores the social dimension of how labels influence personal experiences in life. Divorce isolated the wife from usual society with.getSimpleName Annotation or Leaving the woman from inside the human race while silencing any attempt of communication. The countrywide structural gender inequalities determine how society treats these social groups in a similar manner as both Pakistan and the United States do. These case studies address a significant

research void in the academic literature while helping scholars gain better knowledge about institutionalized inequality and social norms supporting these inequities.

Dr Amrita Rai noted during her studies in Lahore that research focusing on marital satisfaction across all dimensions and gender dynamics coupled with Khula causes and stigma in rural Pakistan represents a rare research area. A narrow perspective emerges from this study alongside an incomplete understanding of the subject matter. Earlier academic work investigated each theme as standalone topics while this study brings them together to explain how characteristics affect a woman's marital experiences beyond normal expectations.

This paper demonstrates through feminist anthropology that women actively disrupt patriarchal marital restrictions when they apply for Khula which shows their active opposition to such norms. Social exchange theory allows me to study how women weigh the costs and benefits before pursuing a marriage dissolution. Through a combination of cultural materialism and symbolic interactionism we see further connections between environmental factors and social evaluation elements within marital relationships.

### **Conclusion**

Through analytical investigations the researchers explored the cultural and financial factors underlying District Mandi Bahauddin women's marriages while analyzing their marital happiness levels as well as husband-wife relationships and divorce/Khula motivations alongside public perceptions of divorce. The research team collected data through open-ended interviews with both Khula-seeking and Khula-obtained women along with men who engaged with Khula proceedings and family members and friends and legal practitioners and local community representatives. Researchers used purposive sampling which focused on collecting input from people with different marital dissolution experiences in a rural setting.

Emotional abandonment combined with financial strain and restrictive gender roles which force women to shoulder family peacekeeping duties show direct negative effects on marital contentment according to research findings. Traditional masculinity confronted modern feminist tendencies when men upheld conventional marital measures yet women started opposing these standards which both genders developed under patriarchal rule. Women utilized Khula due to multiple reasons including abuse within the marriage along with funding problems and emotional mistreatment and various forms of marital suppression. The process of requesting a Khula divorce faces major social rejection because divorced women typically experience rejection from public groups.

The research explores cultural influences and power structures alongside individual choice points as it operates from an anthropological perspective. Through a feminist

approach researchers study how women experience societal exclusions whereas symbolic interactionism helps explain how social categorization maintains divorce stigmas. Within the study's framework of social exchange theory researchers examine the decision-making process of rural women in Pakistan who consider marriage against divorce while showing improving self-awareness about rights and personal autonomy

This research examines District Mandi Bahauddin as a specific study site to investigate local marriage patterns and divorce while addressing current scholarly gaps. The research shows that despite new laws the enduring social inequalities highlight both cultural and legislative requirements coupled with increased public backing to achieve gender equality in Pakistan.

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