

Dowry and Domestic Violence: An Evidence from Jammu Region of J&K India

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Abstract

Marriage is an important ceremony which unites two bodies and two souls. It's a lifelong bonding of a man and a woman but to the great extent, the major evil is of "dowry culture" in our society. Demand of dowry is a serious problem in Indian marriages; it is a deep and strong rooted social evil. As we are living in the 21st century but the truth still persists that the women in our society have been ill-treated since ages. After or before marriage a woman has bereft of her own identity and looked upon to her family members or on husband for basic requirements. This study defines the relation between dowry demands and domestic violence. At least, forty cases of dowry related domestic violence were studied here from Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir UT, India. Most of the women in this study experienced dowry related domestic violence faced early marriage(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 evil.

Introduction

India has a very rich and diverse culture. Marriage is asacred 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 most of the arranged marriages in Indian cultures. Dowry related Violence can occur soon or sometime after the marriage where the demand of dowry seems to be unacceptable to the grooms family. These types of

violence occur almost in all societies of India, it has no caste, class or the religion. As we are living in the 21st century, still women are ill-treated or harassed because of male dominating society. In this society, women loses her own identity and becomes dependent on others for their basic necessities. They are not only cheated for their nobility but also suffer from the corruption by men and become victims of cruelty within the boundaries of their own houses. However this pain does not stop here, it may cross its limits, force her to commit suicide. Many types of

tortures may be given to them like burning, beating, abusing etc.

The present paper attempts to review the culture dowry system in Jammu region of J&K UT and analyse the major factors due to which demand of dowry is increasing in our societies. Dowry is “goods given by the bride’s parents to the groom’s family”. It’s a social evil that keeps alive the torture on women and their. Over the last many years, obstructed laws have not brought a great change to this social practice. According to the National Crime Records Bureau of India total 8,618 female deaths related to dowry disputes recorded in 2013. In most of the reported cases, women are sufferers of great psychological torture, ill treatment, harassment, and a very common reason to this is low bride price or insufficient dowry so as to fulfil their greedy desires. In spite of great reforms and challenges taken towards educating a girl child, our society seems to be insensitive towards this evil.

This paper suggests a relation between domestic violence and dowry demands. Higher ill-treatment and abusing to female occurs when a groom and his family are not pleased with dowry payments. Domestic violence affects women in the society, gives birth to inferiority complex, low self esteem and low status to the parents of a girl. In this era of modernization, lower and middle class families and laws are generally against such types of crimes.

Dowry related domestic violence has been considered as, a major problem in the society, increasing day by day in India, this is a matter of deep thought about the death of females due to dowry. The latest literature review discloses 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 change in future.

The objective of this study was to understand the role of dowry demands in marital discord resulting in domestic violence as reported by women who sought help from different organisations. In present study forty cases of dowry related domestic violence were taken from Jammu region of J&K UT of India. The study sought to analyze the demographic characteristics of the women under study and to learn about the prevalence of dowry and its role in different marital problems faced by these victimized women including domestic violence.

Material and Methods

The samples of the study consist of the women who complained about domestic violence due to dowry demand. All the 40 women who comprised were personally contacted and administered a pre-designed, structural interview schedule. The subjects were fully 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, 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 (see table -1). 95% of women 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 as 5% had a love marriage. The education level of these women (table-1) indicates that only 8% females were highly educated like post graduates. A majority of them were living in joint family (85%) while 10% were living in nuclear

families and only 5% were living in extended joint families (table-1). The precise calculations showed that 85% females complained of domestic violence having female child whereas only 15% having male child. Majority of women who were included in this study were house wives. A majority of these women (approx. 55%) were from a lower income group. The time after marriage since when dowry demands were made is shown in Table 1. It shows that in majority of the cases (55%), the dowry demands were made very soon after the marriage, in 23% cases it was somewhere 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
01	Age	15-20	52.5
		21-25	40
		26-30	7.5
02	Religion	Hindu	95
		Muslim	3
		Sikh	2
03	Region	Rural	55
		Urban	45
04	Family	Nuclear	10
		Joint	85
		Extended	5
05	Status of Family	Lower	55
		Middle	32.5
		Upper middle	12.5
06	Child	Male	15
		Female	85
07	Type of Marriage	Arranged	95
		Love	5
08	Education	No formal	20
		Primary	21
		High school	20
		Secondary	20
		Graduation	11
		Post Graduation	8
09	Time since Marriage	Months – 2 years	55
		2 years – 3 years	23

		3 years – 5 years	17
		5 years – above	5

Conclusion

Dowry is any commodity or cash given by the bride’s family to the grooms’ family at the time of marriage. It is a serious problem with Indian marriages; dowry related violence can occur when the dowry or bride-price seems to be insufficient to the groom’s family. Dowry is bride-price that gives the position of daughter-in-law to any girl in groom’s family. It can be added that dowry is a social custom as well as an evil and it is very difficult to change customs all of a sudden among Indian societies. Practicing customs generate and strengthen solidarity and cohesiveness among people; many people give and take dowry only because their parents and grandparents had been practicing it. In spite of the fact that practice of dowry became illegal in 1961, it is still flourishing more or less among all social classes. The youth can definitely play a key role in eradicating this evil. Till the time, younger generation gathers courage to stop this practice and girls resist social pressure to take it, people will remain adhered to this custom. This research paper discussed 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 neighbours. In present study 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 seem to be failed to curb the giving and taking of cash and other materials in the form of dowry. This practice of giving gifts, cash, jewellery, household items and electrical appliances to bridegroom and his relatives continues even after marriage. The results of this study conclude that this demand for dowry is present in all types of marriage - love marriage, arranged marriage and love-cum-arranged marriage, but as per our findings the percentage is competitively higher in arranged marriages (95%). Unfortunately women education has not brought any major changes to this social evil. People from almost all economic status and educational background have demanded dowry and indulged in domestic violence when this demand has not been fulfilled as per their wishes. Here majority of cases were reported from people of lower economic status and also not having very good educational background.

In the present scenario dowry system as it is practiced in India, has become an instrument of torture for the bride and her parents and family. Majority of women reporting domestic violence expressed 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 concurrence 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 as per their desires. In this study, people of all economic background demanded 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 and needs to be addressed. Women experiencing marital violence have been depressed, and to have had low self-esteem. In this, 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 electrical appliances from her family. This problem becomes severe when girl child takes birth in the family. Out of forty cases reported here 85% females had girl child. Forty cases of dowry related domestic violence were studied here from Jammu region of J&K UT of India. Majority of women in the present study experiencing dowry related domestic violence got married in their early age (precisely 52.5%) and from rural background (55%). This paper 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 marriage /arranged marriage/love-cum-arranged marriage) and type of family (nuclear, joint, extended family). The result of this study indicates that Economic empowerment, together with higher education and modified cultural norms and customs may protect the women from such type of social evil.

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