

Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy (JSSRP)



The Effect of High Bride Price on Marriage Postponement in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Muhammad Kamran¹, Muhammad Adnan², Lakhkar Khan³

1. PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Pakistan.

2. Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University Sheringal, Dir Upper, Pakistan.

3. Assistant Professor, Department of Statistics, Postgraduate College Mardan, Pakistan.

How to Cite This Article: Kamran, M., Adnan, M. & Khan, L. (2025). The Effect of High Bride Price on Marriage Postponement in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy*. 3 (04), 652-665.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.71327/jssrp.34.652.665>

ISSN: 3006-6557 (Online)

ISSN: 3006-6549 (Print)

Vol. 3, No. 4 (2025)

Pages: 652-665

Key Words:

Bride Price, Marriage Postponement,

Marriageability, Commercialization

Corresponding Author:

Muhammad Kamran

Email: muhammadkamransoc@gmail.com

License:



Abstract: The current pilot study aimed to analyze the effect of high bride price on marriage postponement in district Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study was carried out using quantitative research design in order to measure and explain the relation among variables. The sampling technique of the study was stratified random sampling which is based on heterogeneous population of different age, education and economic status. The sampling size of the study was 100. The data were collected through online questionnaires. The Survey Questionnaire was designed in such a way that it incorporated data pertaining to bride price, socio-economic factors, and personal opinions. The data were analyzed through Descriptive statistical technique (Frequency, mean, median, mode, standard deviation) and inferential statistical technique (Pearson correlation) were used to analyze the data using SPSS. The theoretical framework for research is rational choice theory. The results of the study revealed that high bride price, socio-economic constraints, and consumerist lifestyle expectations are positively associated with marriage postponement among unmarried men in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The majority of the respondents agreed with regard to delaying marriage due to economic reasons, and the results from both descriptive and correlation analyses revealed strong agreements with respect to the delay in marriage due to marriage costs, including the cost of bride price. The findings strongly justify the claim that the delay in marriage is not only due to individual preferences but is largely influenced by economic conditions surrounding marriage. Finally, majority of the respondents reported that financial constraints, unemployment, low income, and high marriage-related expenses prevent them from marrying on time.

Introduction

Payments at the moment of marriage have been a feature of most societies at some point in their history. These payments usually accompany marriages that are arranged by the parents of the spouses. These marriage-related payments can be divided into two main categories: transfers from the bride's family to the groom's, commonly referred to as "dowry," or from the groom's side to the bride's,

commonly referred to as "bride price." Bride prices have been a tradition since 3000 BCE. Bride prices were utilized by the ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Hebrew, Aztec, and Inca civilizations. The Germanic tribes, who date from 2000 BCE and ruled western Europe from the 600 to 1000 CE, required bride price for a marriage to be legal (Anderson, 2007).

Commercialization of bride prices or high bride wealth is a widespread practice among ethnic/tribal groupings or cultures in third-world countries. The bride price is now determined by socioeconomic considerations, such as the woman's educational attainment and the social standing of her family. The bride price usually increases when the bride is from the high class or has a high level of education. In certain situations, the groom or his family is expected to make a substantial payment. Additionally, the majority of ethnic groups view female children as highly valuable commodities that, if properly invested in, can yield significant financial or economic rewards. Consequently, the groom or his family is required to buy the commodity at the highest price so as to ensure or gain profit (Sambe et al., 2013)

In China, women face the situation where demand exceeds supply, such that females have a clear advantage in sexual and emotional resources, along with priority in choosing whom to marry as for women in rural areas, economic factors rank first among the factors they value in choosing a spouse. Males must pay a higher economic or sociopolitical price, the most significant of which is the bride price, in order to increase their chances of being married in the marriage market. The bride price increases as a result of male competition for the few available ladies (Jiang & Sánchez-Barricarte, 2012).

A number of studies have explored the issue from different perspectives.

According to Corno & Voena (2021), bride price customs are more prevalent than dowry customs. Approximately two-thirds of the ethnic groups pay the bride price, whereas less than 4% pay dowries. However, because dowry payments mostly took place in Europe and Asia, where over 70% of the world's population resides, they have received more attention in the literature on economics. In addition to encouraging forced and early marriages, the bride price practice enhances the incentive for parents to "sell off" their daughters to a husband in order to obtain a bride price.

According to Mubaiwa (2019), bride prices are linked to women's respect and dignity. This tradition benefits from having more female participants. The study's male participants saw the bride price as a financial burden on the husband, but generally speaking, this is the custom, and most participants supported lowering the bride price to make marriage easier.

According to Adjei & Mpiani (2018), a typically celebrated bride-priced marriage provides a woman and her children with a socially acknowledged husband and father, respectively, hence legitimizing marriage for both the woman and her unborn children. From a psychological standpoint, the custom is a must for the family to fulfill its role of giving both men and women in Ghanaian culture respectable social and cultural standing. However, it was discovered that the Chinese oppose bride prices but never outlaw them because they consider them as a barrier to marriage for men. A burgeoning "marriage crisis" has been sparked by the sharp rise in bride prices, making marriage unaffordable for surplus males. The official discourse has blamed women and their parents for being "materialistic" in marriage, arguing that their demand for high bride price creates a financial burden on families with sons (Wan, 2024).

In such populous and growing economies as China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Nigeria, high costs associated with marriage are prominent. But thus far, the government's response to the issue has been inconsistent, ranging from non-interference to national regulation (Sadigov, 2020). The main criterion for evaluating a man's eligibility as a husband should be his income. Men's suitability for marriage is determined by their level of financial stability (Bridges & Boyd, 2016).

According to Bhana & Pattman (2011), rural boys' distancing themselves from city ladies is a realistic

acknowledgement that they are not unable to offer telephones, money, or clothing, nor can they exhibit "flashy" haircuts or waves and trims. As a result, their poverty and incapacity to uphold provider masculinity damaged their reputation among township girls.

Extending the aforementioned conclusion, families are forced to adopt new, costly lifestyles since consumerism and consumption have become the religion of the late 20th century. In this situation, marriage has become extremely costly, which primarily affects middle-class men (Samarasinghe et al., 2014). Furthermore, men's suitability for marriage is primarily determined by the costly options available to women. For instance, Afzal (2020) discovered that precious jewelry is typically of interest to women. They favor jewelry made of metal and valuable stones like gold and diamonds. After researching the history of jewelry worldwide, I discovered that while jewelry was popular among women many years ago, it is today an integral part of every woman's life. The history of women's jewelry is unique and lovely in each continent. Men try to reach a financial level that their future spouse will accept, and marriage is turning into a business contract. For instance, Akhtar & Malik (2025) discovered that women encounter cultural constraints and problems, but men postpone marriage primarily because of financial constraints.

Yamaura (2020) discovered a connection between Black men's and women's successful marriages and marital satisfaction and their success in school and the workplace. Some have described a perceived paucity of Black "marriageable men" as a result of rising unemployment rates. The experiences of Black men who have attained higher education and mobility are very different. Due to the disproportionate numbers of Black males with formal education (low) compared to Black women (high), research has indicated that better-off Black men have negotiating power when it comes to dating and partner selection because of their mobility and status.

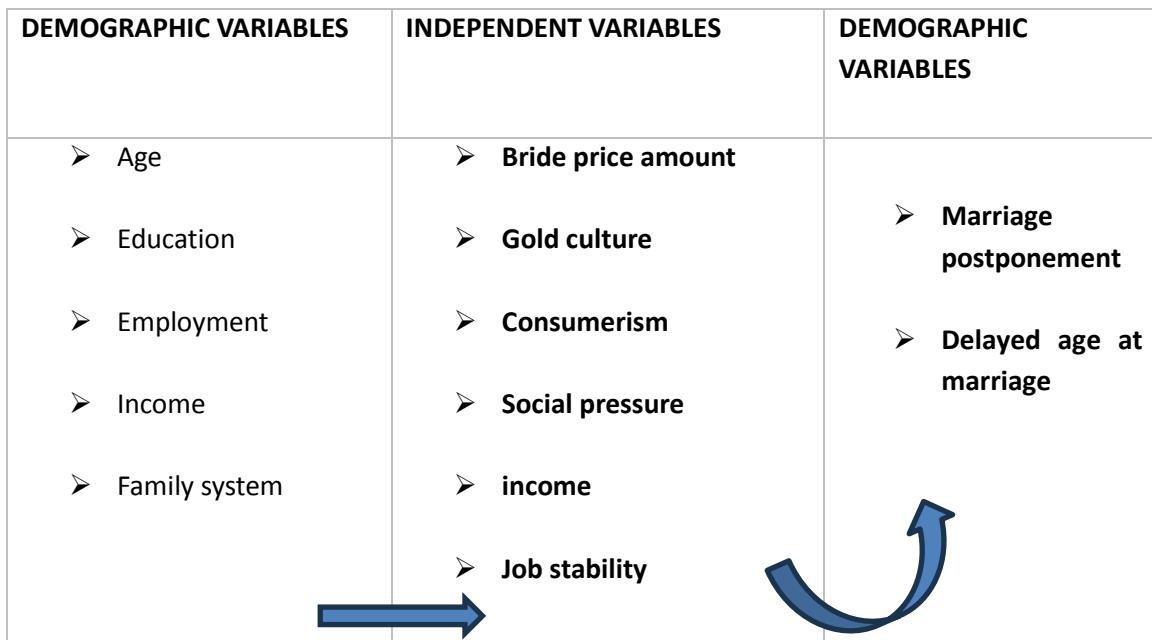
Moreover in Afghanistan, the father of the bride, or in his absence her oldest brother, specifies how much he would like to receive from the groom's family for his daughter. The amount is often based on family credentials, education, skills, age, beauty and the reputation of the girl, as well as recent bride prices within the community. It is the groom who is expected to raise the money for the wedding and the bride price, but the groom's family usually pitches in. As a consequence, the decision to accept or reject the wedding costs and the bride price becomes a family affair. The price tag for the wedding, especially in Kabul, can easily top 10,000 USD; a small fortune in a country where the gross domestic product per capita in 2015 was 623.90 US dollars (Muzhary, 2016)

Over time, the definition of marriage has changed to the point that it is now a crucial sign of one's own success and social position. The attitude held by many low-income parents that they shouldn't get married until they can afford to pay for a "real" wedding, held in a church rather than at city hall, and followed by a reception that wedding guests can attend, is a concrete example of these phenomena. Marriage is presumed to confer respectability only if a woman marries a man with a good job; marriage to a man who is not well-employed could in fact diminish her standing in the community. Moreover, marriage is inaccessible to a large share of the low-skilled male population, and the relationship between low-skilled men's labor market performance and their marital prospects may differ depending on where they fall in the earnings distribution (Thomas, 2012).

The above literature (Thomas, 2012; Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Adjei & Mpiani, 2011) discusses the bride price influence on men marriageability. But there are so many areas and context which are missing in the previous literature. For example, researches for example (Corno & Voenen 2021) discuss bride price in a sense of exchange of a girl for money due to poverty. Moreover, researches are from diverse cultural contexts but there are no such studies conducted in KhyberPukhtoonKhwa. Although researches

are available on dowry. Moreover, the studies for example (Bhana & pattman, 2011) also miss the gold culture, which a big challenge to the marriageability of men.

Conceptual Framework



Theoretical Framework

Rational Choice Theory

According to Macionis and Greber (2010), stigma is a strongly unfavorable designation that alters a person's sense of self and social identity. According to labeling theory, individuals acquire a label when they embrace it as a part of who they are. This hypothesis basically suggests that infertile pairs are branded as unproductive to society in order to illustrate this study. Fertility increases the number of ideas that are deposited in a community, and when a couple's major function—procreation—is absent (barrenness), they are deemed unproductive. Labeling theory looks at how society views a person, circumstance, or occurrence. It develops a concept of a marriage price that measures the excess services one spouse provides to the other. This price includes income, time allocation to household activities, and control over forms of intimacy and beauty styles (Cherry, 1998). Pushtun society marriage is become a big challenge for men due to high expenses including gold, expensive clothes, wedding hall expenses and guests service provision. On the other hand women demands from men all the above to impress others and fulfill the societal expectation. This is why the reason being unmarriageable is becoming very common in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Research Objectives

- To measure the relationship between the level of bride price and the age at marriage among young men in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- To statistically examine how socioeconomic factors—income, education level, and employment status—predict the amount of bride price.
- To compare men's quantitative ratings regarding the financial burden and social status associated with bride price.
- To assess the extent to which increased bride price amounts are associated with consumerist attitudes and modern lifestyle demands.

Research Hypotheses

1. H1: A higher bride price is positively associated with delayed marriage among young men in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
2. H2: Socio-economic status (income, education, and employment) influences the capacity to pay a high bride price.
3. H3: High bride price is perceived mainly as a financial burden by men, but for women, it is a form of social status and family honor.
4. H4: Increased modern lifestyle expectations coupled with consumerist culture are responsible for escalating bride price, which, in turn, delays marriage.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative approach. Quantitative study is scientific, independent and neutral. The current is a pilot study. A pilot study is a small-scale study that is conducted to inform, predict, and direct an intended future full-scale study. The research will divert the attentions of other researchers to work on the similar phenomenon.

Sampling Frame

The study focused on unmarried men aged 25 to 38 who were living in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Sample Size

A total of 100 unmarried men were included in the study to provide insights on the topic.

Sampling Technique

Respondents in the study were selected using stratified random sampling. Furthermore, the study population was divided into groups based on their age, education, and socio-economic status to make it sure that every segment was fairly represented.

Data Collection

The Survey Questionnaire was designed in such a way that it incorporated data pertaining to bride price, socio-economic factors, and personal opinions.

Data Analysis

SPSS was used to analyze quantitative data into meaningful statistical outcomes. Descriptive statistical technique (Frequency, mean, median, mode, standard deviation) and inferential statistical technique (Pearson co-relation) were used to analyze the data.

Result and Discussion

On the basis of nature of the research data has been collected using questionnaire and interview guide. The results and findings are given below

Age Distribution of the respondents

Age group of respondents	Frequency	Percent
25-28	19	57.6
29-32	5	15.2
33-35	6	18.2
36-38	3	9.1
Total	33	100.0

This table depicts the age of respondents belonging to District Mardan. The table shows that a significant Majority of the respondents, 57.6 %, were in the age of 25-28 while 18.2 % were in the age of

33-35 years. 15.2 % was in the age of 29-32 and 36-38 age group were 3%. Maximum respondents belong to 25-28 age groups as shown in the table.

Highest education level

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Bachelor	11	33.3
	Intermediate (FA/FSc)	4	12.1
	Master or above	14	42.4
	Primary	3	9.1
	Secondary (Matric)	1	3.0
	Total	33	100.0

This table explains the distribution of completed years of education of the respondents. The majority, 42.4%, of the respondents completed their masters. Apart from that, the lowest literate people were 9.1 % which were belong to primary schooling level

Current employment status

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Daily-wage labor	3	9.1
	Government job	11	33.3
	Private job	5	15.2
	Self-employed/business	2	6.1
	Unemployed	12	36.4
	Total	33	100.0

The above table represents the employment status of the respondents. Among them Majority were unemployed which were 36.4 %. Moreover from the above table it is clear that majority of the respondents were jobless or belong to lower status jobs which is difficult for them to afford marriage expenses.

Monthly personal income (PKR)

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	25,000–40,000	7	21.2
	41,000–70,000	13	39.4
	71,000–100,000	1	3.0
	Above 100,000	1	3.0
	Below 25,000	11	33.3
	Total	33	100.0

Although 39.4 % people earn from 42,000 to 70,000 and very few respondents earn 1 lac or above. But majority also earn below 25 thousand. In a nutshell, majority of the respondents has not enough earning to bear the marriage expenses.

Family system

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Joint family	31	93.9
	Nuclear family	2	6.1
	Total	33	100.0

Family system also has a key role in the person's marriageability. Joint family system is not acceptable to

many female spouses due to domestic conflicts due to which males postponed their marriages until they build a separate house.

Marriage postponed due to finances

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No	12	36.4
	Yes	21	63.6
	Total	33	100.0

The above table clarify that majority of male respondents delay their marriages due to financial constraints. They do not have enough money to bear the expenses according to the cultural expectations.

Estimated total bride price

		Frequency	Percent
Valid		1	3.0
	300,000-600,000	10	30.3
	600,000-900,000	2	6.1
	900,000-12000,00	4	12.1
	Above 1200,000	9	27.3
	Less than 300,000	7	21.2
	Total	33	100.0

Majority of the respondents belonged to lower class. Among them majority were expected the bride price or all marriage expenses less than 3 lacks and they still were waiting to save money for the estimated bride price. Even then above 27.3 percent were estimated above 12 lac.

Gold jewelry expected

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not selected	2	6.1
	Selected	31	93.9
	Total	33	100.0

Although Gold jewelry is a part of Pashtun culture. Making gold jewelries are our mores and refusing it, brings serious stigma for men. From above table it is very clear that about 93 percent respondents were feeling social pressure regarding gold jewelries

Cash / Mahr expected

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not selected	28	84.8
	Selected	5	15.2
	Total	33	100.0

Mahr is compulsory in Islam. But giving cash for an exchange of bride is not famous tradition.

Expensive dresses expected

		Frequency	Percent
Not selected	16	48.5	
	17	51.5	
	Total	33	100.0

The table shows that expectations regarding expensive dresses are fairly divided among respondents.

Slightly more than half of the participants (51.5%) reported that expensive dresses are expected as part of marriage arrangements, while 48.5% indicated that such expectations do not exist. This suggests that costly clothing has become a common, though not universal, component of marriage-related demands, adding to the financial pressure faced by prospective grooms

Furniture expected

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not selected	22	66.7
	Selected	11	33.3
	Total	33	100.0

Table shows that the expectation of furniture in marriage arrangements is not a universal practice. Two-thirds (66.7%) of the respondents said that furniture is not expected in the bride price, while a third (33.3%) said that furniture is expected. While furniture is not expected in most instances, the fact that it is expected in a considerable section of the population still adds to the financial burden that comes with marriage.

Home accessories expected

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not selected	25	75.8
	Selected	8	24.2
	Total	33	100.0

The table shows that most respondents (75.8%) reported that home accessories were not expected as part of marriage-related demands. Only about one-quarter of the participants (24.2%) indicated that such items were expected. This suggests that while home accessories are not commonly required, they still add to marriage expenses for a smaller group of respondents

Wedding events costs expected

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not selected	16	48.5
	Selected	17	51.5
	Total	33	100.0

The table shows that the expectations on the cost of the wedding event appear almost balanced among the respondents. More than half of the respondents (51.5%) answered that the cost of the wedding event is part of the marriage arrangements, while 48.5% believe that the cost of the wedding event is not part of marriage arrangements. The implication of the result is that the celebration of the wedding event represents an important part of the marriage cost that weighs the total expense of marriage.

Gifts for bride/relatives

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not selected	26	78.8
	Selected	7	21.2
	Total	33	100.0

The above table indicates that a high percentage of respondents (78.8%) stated that gifts for the bride or her relatives are not required, whereas only 21.2% said gifts for the bride or her relatives are required. The implication of this is that gift giving is not a common practice in the marriage negotiations of most respondents, but this is an extra cost for some respondents anyway

Other items expected

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not selected	27	81.8
Missing	System	6	18.2
Total		33	100.0

The data from the table reveals that the greatest number of the population (81.8%) stated that other miscellaneous items were not expected within marriage arrangements. However, the 18.2% data was incomplete, meaning that some people did not complete that question. It can be concluded that miscellaneous items are not often required but a small number of people expected them or failed to complete that question.

Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Median, Mode and Standard Deviation) of Respondents' Perceptions on Bride Price and Marriage Postponement

		Descriptive Statistics						
		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
High bride price delayed my marriage	33	1	5	3.00	4.00	4	1.323	
Cannot marry until enough savings	33	1	5	3.12	4.00	4	1.386	
Marriage expenses delay marriage	33	1	5	2.94	3.00	4	1.368	
Social pressure for expensive marriage	33	1	5	3.30	4.00	4	1.212	
Income not enough for bride price	33	1	5	3.36	4.00	4	1.270	
Lower bride price → earlier marriage	33	1	5	3.18	4.00	4	1.310	
Higher education raises bride price	33	1	5	3.58	4.00	4	1.300	
Unemployment worsens negotiation	33	1	5	3.55	4.00	4	1.201	
Family cannot financially support	33	1	5	3.00	3.00	4	1.346	
Bride price is financial burden	33	1	5	3.76	4.00	4	1.251	
High bride price = status symbol	33	1	5	3.61	4.00	4	1.116	
Stable job → higher demand	33	1	5	3.76	4.00	4	1.251	
Paying high bride price gives respect	33	1	5	3.73	4.00	4	1.126	
Community judges	33	1	5	3.82	4.00	4	1.074	

marriage by spending							
Modern lifestyle raises costs	33	1	5	4.00	4.00	4	1.146
Bride price like business transaction	33	1	5	3.79	4.00	4	1.111
Branded items increase cost	34	1	5	3.85	4.00	4	1.132
Gold culture raises costs	33	1	5	3.94	4.00	4	1.273
Social media increases expectations	33	1	5	3.97	4.00	4	1.262
Consumerism pressures men	33	1	5	4.88	5.00	5	.696
Valid N (listwise)	33						

The above table illustrates the descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, and standard deviation) for respondents' perceptions on bride price payments and marriage postponement. Generally, the average for most statements ranges from 3.0 to 4.0 on a five-scale Likert scale, providing a leaning on respondents agreeing on the statements.

There was moderate agreement on the onset of marriage being delayed due to high bride price (Mean = 3.00) and not being able to marry due to the need to save money (Mean = 3.12). Also, high marriage expenses (Mean = 2.94) and economic support from family being limited (Mean = 3.00) being factors that caused onset of marriage delay.

Social and cultural pressure perceptions score relatively higher. Social pressure to have costly marriages (Mean = 3.30), social perception according to expenditure incurred during wedding ceremonies (Mean = 3.82), and perception that bride price is a matter of prestige (Mean = 3.61) indicate that social expectations influence marriage practices to some extent.

Economic/employment considerations were also supported. The respondents agreed that insufficient income (Mean = 3.36), unemployment (Mean = 3.55), and stability of employment leading to an increased demand for the bride price (Mean = 3.76) have negative effects on marriage negotiations.

Modern lifestyle and consumerism-related factors achieved the highest mean score for factors contributing to the rise in the cost of marriage. Modern lifestyle practices that escalate the cost of marriage (Mean = 4.00), gold culture that escalates the cost of marriage (Mean = 3.94), the influence of social media (Mean = 3.97), and the effect of branded items that escalate the cost of marriage (Mean = 3.85) reflect the rising influence of consumerist culture among the factors that escalate the cost of marriage. "Consumerism pressures men" had the overall highest mean score of 4.88.

The value of standard deviations for variables varies between 0.696 and 1.386, indicating moderate variation in responses, and the median and mode values of 4 for most statements support the results in confirming general consensus on agreement.

Correlations

		Cannot marry	Marriage until expenses	Stable Income not job enough for higher bride price	→ Consumer m pressures expensive earlier men	Social pressure for marriage	Lower bride price → earlier marriage			
High bride price	Pearson Correlation	1	.092	.434*	.611**	.869**	.419*	.669**	.478**	
= status symbol	Sig. (2-tailed)			.609	.012	.000	.000	.015	.000	.005
	N	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	
Cannot marry	Pearson Correlation	.092	1	.696**	.382*	.180	-.114	.145	.521**	
until enough savings	Sig. (2-tailed)	.609		.000	.028	.317	.528	.421	.002	
	N	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	
Marriage expenses	Pearson Correlation	.434*	.696**	1	.625**	.503**	.255	.483**	.843**	
marriage	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.000		.000	.003	.153	.004	.000	
	N	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	
Income enough bride price	Pearson Correlation	.611**	.382*	.625**	1	.785**	.193	.677**	.635**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.028	.000		.000	.283	.000	.000	
	N	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	
Stable job higher demand	Pearson Correlation	.869**	.180	.503**	.785**	1	.396*	.772**	.638**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.317	.003	.000		.023	.000	.000	
	N	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	
Consumerism pressures men	Pearson Correlation	.419*	-.114	.255	.193	.396*	1	.341	.299	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.528	.153	.283	.023		.052	.091	
	N	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	
Social pressure for expensive marriage	Pearson Correlation	.669**	.145	.483**	.677**	.772**	.341	1	.476**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.421	.004	.000	.000	.052		.005	
	N	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	
Lower bride price → earlier marriage	Pearson Correlation	.478**	.521**	.843**	.635**	.638**	.299	.476**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.002	.000	.000	.000	.091	.005		
	N	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	

- Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
- . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Through the correlation analysis, it is evident that a high bride price is a significant factor in delaying marriage among young males in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In support of Hypothesis 1, it is evident that if the marriage costs are high, young males tend to marry late. Those respondents who favored the idea that marriage costs cause a delay in marriage strongly favored the idea that if the bride price is low, marriage can take place early. It is evident that young males are not averse to marriage but feel hindered by the costs, which in many ways are related to the high bride price. The results also confirm Hypothesis 2. The significance of socioeconomic status was asserted by Hypothesis 2. Men who were employed and reported a rigid working schedule and poor remuneration were expected to pay a higher bride price. Men who lacked enough money were also expected to have difficulty in meeting these expectations. The questionnaire indicated that stable employment sometimes raises the bride's expectations rather than relieving financial burdens, thereby confirming that income and employment status have a direct effect on the ability to pay the bride price.

Hypothesis 3 is also validated by the results because the duality of the practice of bride price is revealed in the data sets. While the reality is that the practice of bride price is quite stressful for men in terms of financial requirements that may not be met by their income, the practice of bride price is predominantly associated with status recognition in relation to family honor because there is a strong correlation between status recognition in terms of bride price and the pressure of costly marriages in society. The findings further provide partial support for Hypothesis 4, linking modern lifestyle expectations and consumerism to rising bride price. Consumerist pressure is closely associated with the idea that bride price represents social status and men with stable jobs should pay more. Although consumerism might not cause delays in marriage directly in each case, it does add indirectly to the cost of marriage by encouraging expensive standards and status competition. This adds to the pressure on males and makes marriage economically hard to achieve or often delayed.

The findings in general indicate that delayed marriage in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is not a personal decision alone but rather one facilitated by strong social expectations, economic compulsion, and status-based marriage practices. A high bride price, further influenced by consumerism and social scrutiny, has transformed marriage into an economic burden rather than a social contract, and thus many young men prefer to delay marriage until they are economically secure.

Overall, the findings of this quantitative pilot study provide exploratory support for Hypotheses H1, H2, and H4, indicating that high bride price, socio-economic constraints, and consumerist lifestyle expectations are positively associated with marriage postponement among unmarried men in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Hypothesis H3 was partially supported, as men clearly perceived bride price as a financial burden; however, women's perceptions could not be directly examined due to the male-only sample. Given the pilot nature and small sample size, these findings are indicative rather than conclusive and provide a basis for future large-scale research

Conclusion

This research aimed at exploring the impact of high bride price on marriage postponement among unmarried males in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, specifically with regard to District Mardan. A quantitative pilot study has been employed to assess the way in which economic realities, societal pressures, and the lifestyle of consumerism shape the marriage decisions of males. This study yields crucial insights into a socially delicate and culturally embedded but largely unexplored reality concerning Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The findings closely suggest that high bride price is one of the major delaying factors for marriage. The majority of the respondents agreed with regard to delaying marriage due to economic reasons, and the

results from both descriptive and correlation analyses revealed strong agreements with respect to the delay in marriage due to marriage costs, including the cost of bride price. The findings strongly justify the claim that the delay in marriage is not only due to individual preferences but is largely influenced by economic conditions surrounding marriage.

Socioeconomic status was also identified as an important determinant of marriageability among men. The lack of earnings, unemployment, and unsteady employment were discovered to impact men's marriageability negatively. The interesting point brought out in the study is that job security does not make the marriage negotiation process any simpler; rather, it increases the expectations of the bride price and marriage expenditures. This throws some interesting light upon the paradox of marriage practices, which create greater pressure with financial security.

Further, this research also shows that another meaning of the bride price, in addition to being an economic burden to men, is being a source of status. Even if the majority of this research's respondents believed that it was a source of economic burden to men, it was also recognized as a source of respect, prestige, and honor to families. Nevertheless, since this research only targeted men, it cannot be empirically verified whether women associate the meaning of honor or status with the bride price.

The most evident result in this research concerns the impact of consumer culture and lifestyle expectations. Variables representing consumer culture, such as gold jewelry, labeled products, social influence, and high-end wedding requirements, have shown the highest level of response from participants in this survey. The high degree to which participants associate forces of consumer culture in men contributes to the fact that, to a large degree, marriage has become an economic transaction in a modern setup. Even if marriage postponement is not caused directly by consumer culture alone, it certainly increases the cost of marriages and hence impacts postponement indirectly.

The results, in general, indicate that the postponement of marriage in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the result of a complex interplay of various elements, namely the high bride price, socio-economic limitations, social pressure, and consumerist ideology. The conception of marriage has gradually metamorphosed from a social venture in the spirit of companionship to an economic burden in the realm of public display and consumerist indulgence. It is in view of these reasons that youths are now opting for marriage past the ideal age.

It is worth noting that this research is conducted as pilot research with a relatively small sample size. Thus, it is difficult to consider the results conclusive in terms of the research aims but more as explorative research instead. However, these results will provide a very solid basis for future research with a larger sample size, mixed methods, and possibly a longitudinal design focusing on policies.

In light of the above, it can be concluded that this research is significant within the existing body of literature since it allows for the empirical illumination of the impact that high bride price, driven by socio-economic inequalities and a culture of consumerism, has on marriage postponement among men within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

References

Adjei, S. B., & Mpiani, A. (2018). Bride price, cultural and gender identity, and husband-to-wife abuse in Ghana. *Victims & Offenders*, 13(7), 921–937.

Afzal, S. S. (2020). Importance of jewelry in women: Case study in Pakistan. *Journal La Sociale*, 1(2), 27–32.

Akhtar, F., & Malik, R. A. (2025). The socio-economic matrix of marriage: An empirical study of delay in marriage patterns in Punjab. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, 6(4), 148–165.

Anderson, S. (2007). The economics of dowry and bride price. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21(4),

151–174.

Bhana, D., & Pattman, R. (2011). Girls want money, boys want virgins: The materiality of love amongst South African township youth in the context of HIV and AIDS. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 13(8), 961–972.

Bridges, T., & Boyd, M. L. (2016). On the marriageability of men. *Sociology Compass*, 10(1), 48–64.

Cherry, R. (1998). Rational choice and the price of marriage. *Feminist Economics*, 4(1), 27–49.

Jiang, Q., & Sánchez-Barricarte, J. J. (2012). Bride price in China: The obstacle to 'bare branches' seeking marriage. *The History of the Family*, 17(1), 2–15.

Krstić, M. (2022). Rational choice theory – alternatives and criticisms. *Socijalna ekologija: Časopis za ekološku misao i sociologijska istraživanja okoline*, (31), 1.

Mubaiwa, O. (2019). The dynamics of bride price in Zimbabwe.

Muzhary, F. (2016). The bride price: The Afghan tradition of paying for wives. *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 25, 1–6.

Sadigov, T. (2020). Household overspending on marriage: The scale of the problem and government reactions around the world. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 40(11/12), 1509–1532.

Samarasinghe, P. H., Perera, K. N., & Wijethunga, D. (2014). Grooming and status consumption: How the groomed body is used as an object in projecting status. *Sri Lankan Journal of Management*, 19(3–4), 27–52.

Sambe, N., Avanger, M. Y., & Agba, S. A. (2013). The effects of high bride-price on marital stability. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 17(5), 65–70.

Thomas, A. (2012). Crossing the threshold: Assessing the financial barrier to male marriageability. *Journal of Economic and Social Measurement*, 37(1–2), 119–144.

Wan, Y. (2024). Between money and intimacy: Bride price, marriage, and women's position in contemporary China. *Demographic Research*, 50, 1353–1386.

Yamaura, C. (2020). Marriage and marriageability: Marriage and marriageability.