Inter-generational Differences in Partner Selection Criteria among Women in Pakistan

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Abstract
Partner selection and marriage choices have become interesting research topics in societies experiencing transition due to technological advancements and modernisation. This qualitative study was envisaged to identify differences in partner selection criteria among three generations of Pakistani women experiencing social and technological transition. The participants were recruited purposefully for semi-structured interviews; from six different families, three women of subsequent age groups (grandmothers, mothers and their marriageable grand/daughters) were chosen (N=18). The interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis. Line-by-line coding was done to extract the relevant and repetitive codes that comprised sub and main themes. Findings show that the social background and compatibility between potential families remained the most important aspects. Internal qualities such as religiousness, morality and external qualities i.e. good financial status, decent occupation and job, were considered significant partner selection criteria. Collectivism and dis-empowerment of women stood-out as factors, affecting their partner selection choices directly. Inter-generational differences and transitions in desirability of partner selection criteria were evident as an expected outcome of the inquisitions posed by the current study. The implications include extending knowledge for marriage and relationship counsellors.

Keywords: Partner-selection; Marriage; Inter-generational; Disempowerment; Transition

Introduction
Social relationships engross a significant place in the lives of individuals. One of these remarkable bonds is the marital relation. Two people come together and constitute a family; it is essentially a union of two people. However, in collectivist societies, it is considered a bond or a beginning of relations between two families. According to Alavi, Alahdad and Shafeq marriage remains to be most sought after relationship in almost all cultures for both men and women [1].

The process preceding a marriage is based upon selection of a suitable partner; it may include choosing and analysing one or more suitable persons. The suitability is weighed on the basis of individual traits, social and economic-status and other important aspects related to an individual and/or his/her family. In contemporary society, partner selection has become an increasingly interesting research subject due to the transition experienced by the developing societies [2]. Researchers have considered partner selection as one of the crucial and important decisions that a young adult or his/her family make for obvious long-term repercussions involved, investment of emotions and finances [3,4]. The family oriented collectivist culture and Muslim traditions in Malaysia make these findings pertinent in the indigenous context.

In a leading article on partner selection by Vangelisti and Daly and Ali, Jehangir, Hussain and Rizwan, they argue that while choosing a suitable partner, people have preconceptions about the contours of their relationships with their partner [5]. One of these preconceptions is about the desirability or undesirability of certain traits or characteristics in a potential partner. Previous research on partner selection choices indicate that people have different preferences for diverse traits that could be present in an individual [6-8]. This variability was found in terms of physical appearance, age and gender socio-cultural belonging and religion, education and ethnicity. Moreover, people from different socio-cultural backgrounds and age groups have differences in their expectations from their potential partners and marriages [1,9-11].

The socio-cultural differences in the partner selection process have been studied extensively in USA, in China and in Pakistan [8,6,11]. Blair and Madigan and O’Neil suggest that partner selection is a culturally defined process. Based on these researches it can also be concluded that traits that prominently feature in partner selection research include physical appearance, social, financial, religious, personal and educational factors; however, these factors are not exhaustive [8,12].

In a landmark study by Buss et al. conducted in thirty-seven different cultures including India and Iran but not Pakistan concluded that men were more likely to rate physical attractiveness higher as compared to women [10]. Some of the nonphysical partner selection criteria considered most desirable by men and women alike included “good companion, honest, considerate, affectionate, dependable, intelligent, kind, understanding, interesting to talk to and loyal.”. In thirty-four cultures the physical traits such as apparent beauty, physique, skin colour, body shape and size have been found as key factors in partner selection choices. However, in only three cultures India being one of them physical appearance was not considered as important.

Studies have supported that the financial status of a potential partner or his/her family is an important dealmaker in partner selection process [7,13-15]. According to Buss and Angleitner a stable financial position was valued highly in thirty-six out of thirty-seven cultures included in the study [14]. Furthermore, Maliki suggested that financial status was given a high rating by a majority of the university going adults [4]. He further observed that having similar financial
status is key factor in maintaining amicable relations between two families and/or the partners.

Several research studies assert that religion occupies a central position while making important life decisions [11,13]. Blair, Madigan while studying partner selection in China also found that people were rarely willing to look for a partner outside of their religion [8]. Coombs asserted that people mostly select partners and marry those of the same religion [16]. In Muslim tradition, marriage is considered as a socio-legal agreement with its roots in religious guidelines. Alavi, Alahdad and Shafeq found piety and religiosity as significant criteria to decide while choosing a partner in Muslim culture in Malaysia [1]. It is believed that an individual’s religious concepts not only define their values and beliefs but also the similarity of religious ideas is important to have long-lasting and happy marital relations [4].

The family background of the potential partner has been given due importance in the traditional societies. Studies conducted in traditional collectivist societies such as, Pakistan also found family background to play a significant role when two families choose a potential son or daughter-in-law [8,17-21]. While studying partner selection in the Pakistani context, Husain and Gulzar found that in traditional societies, the socio-economic background of the prospective family was considered as an important criterion to reach a decision about a suitable partner [17]. Similarly, in the traditional and collectivist societies of China and India, the origin of family is considered important while selecting a partner [8,20]. Coombs found the social-financial situation of a family to be an important aspect assessed while choosing a partner [16]. Parents are keen on finding socially and financially stable and suitable families.

Since marriage in South Asian community is considered a family affair, the role of parents and family elders in collectivist cultures is most perceptible during the partner selection or matrimonial affairs. The opinion of parents, family elders have more importance than the women/girl [22,23]. Girls have a subordinate position or little say in this process. In most instances, the girl is passive and her role is limited to accepting the decisions made by her parents and family elders. Collectivist cultures inadvertently foster obedience training of girls, hence leading to systematic disempowerment of women [24]. The standard upbringing of young people includes training to respect the decisions taken by family elders or parents. It is expected as a norm to prioritize and to accept the family/parental choices in almost all important decisions including education, occupation and especially when it comes to marriage decisions [25]. Likewise, in the Pakistani culture young people are expected to respect the major decisions taken by the family elders or parents. In Pakistan, marriage is celebrated as an event that joins two families, not the two individuals getting married, hence parental involvement and consent is seen as a necessary component.

Although partner selection has been studied in different cultures and it is a universal process, it varies from culture to culture. The cultural variation can be attributed to an array of factors that constitute a culture. Individualistic or collectivistic social values, patriarchal or equalitarian traditions, gender norms and hierarchy of relationships are just a few illustrations of these factors. Afore said constituents of culture not only guide our social, political and economic system, but - to a great extent - they also determine behaviour, choices and perceptions of people. Taking the cultural dissimilarity hypothesis into account Mughani, studied differences in partner selection choices [2,11,19]. They found that these differences were not only present in two different cultures but were also salient among successive generations in one culture. The studies conducted in Pakistan, have addressed the partner selection criteria of men and women in general [17,26,27]. However, the intergenerational differences in partner selection choices have not been studied in Pakistan as yet. Hence, the study aims to identifying the intergenerational differences in partner selection criteria of women in Pakistan.

The study becomes more pertinent when it is contextualised within the social and technological transition that the Pakistani society is experiencing. The aspect of transition is considerably understudied in relation to the Pakistani culture, which is undergoing both social and technological transition and modernisation.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This research is conceived as the confluence of three social science research streams which include social learning theory, technology theory and modernization theory.

Social learning theory studies the influence of dominant culture on behaviours of people living in it. Individual behaviour and social interactions are frequently studied in social learning perspective [28]. The partner-selection criteria are no exception to the influence of socially learned behaviour. Researchers following this tradition have investigated the socially learned behaviour from multiple dimensions. Culture is said to be an evolving entity; an argument to support this assertion is its transition from collectivism to individualism. According to Hamamura the cross temporal analysis of Individualism-collectivism theme is one of the most interesting themes to study culture in Psychology.

Modernization and technology theories put forth plausible explanations for change or transition in the family institution. Technology theory states that advancement in technology has the potential to change social behaviour. Ogburn wrote that one reason for the social change is the introduction of different inventions and gadgets; Technology changes our environment to which people, in turn, adapt [29]. The adaptation that we make in our social behaviours to become comfortable with the technological advancements also changes and modifies the way people live, the customs and the “social institutions”. Xu and Xia assert that modernization plays a major role in the transition of cultures [30]. Hence, both these theories provide grounds for an assertion that modern life styles and new technologies, which include communication devices like phones, TV screen etc. have the potential to modify social behaviour and they aid in adapting newer ways of behaving. This transition can also be attributed to the economic development, industrialisation and early economic independence of women (Figure 1).

Current Study

This study was planned as a part of a doctoral dissertation with three major objectives. The study design was approved by the departmental board of studies. The first was to find the partner selection criteria beyond the specific traits and characteristics among the female population in Pakistan. Consistent with the previous studies it was predicted that the traits women desire in a partner in a transiting culture (i.e. Pakistan) would be peculiar due to religious and cultural reasons [9,10,12].

The second goal was to assess the intergenerational differences, if any, among women. In line with earlier studies, transition in partner selection behavior and choices were associated with the trajectories of socio-cultural and technological transitions and modernization [2,11,19,31]. It was expected that in every subsequent generation of
women, the individualistic trends/values would reflect significantly prominent in relation to their partner selection behavior.

Thirdly, it was assumed that old and middle-aged women would have experienced cultural change over the years. Hence, they might reflect some transition from collectivistic to individualistic values. But a greater emphasis was to tease out the individualistic values of younger women, engendered by socio-cultural change.

Method

Participants

Participants included three cohorts of women from urban Lahore, which included women who were grand-mothers (50 years old and above) and mothers (39-50 years old) of marriageable women (18-29 years old). This selection strategy is made in light of a research carried out by Buss et. al.'s suggesting that people living in a same culture may share similar partner selection criteria [10]. Huy, Jayakody, Knodel, and Loi, also studied three cohorts of women to study changes in partner selection and marriage [31].

The sample size was kept flexible following the qualitative traditions [32]. Therefore, N=18 participants were interviewed. In one set of interviews, three women from a family-one from each of the three age groups were interviewed. The families were selected based on the criteria of having three subsequent generations of women available for the interviews. Upon reaching saturation, i.e. when there was no new information, the interviews were stopped. The six young unmarried girls were university and college graduates. The middle age women participants were graduates (5 house-wives and one working-woman). The six participants from third cohort were educated between grades 7th to 10th. All the twelve participants from two older cohorts were married.

Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed to extend the understanding of the participants’ partner-selection criteria. Keeping in perspective the discovery oriented constructivist approach, semi-structured interview method was used. The interviews were conducted in a mix of daily conversation and storytelling style to aid in understanding the interviewee experiences and perspectives. The interview prompts relevant to participants’ responses; were reshaped simultaneously during the data collection. Each participant was interviewed on one occasion; an interview took approximately 40 minutes on average. The interviews were conducted in one-on-one setting, without any interruption.

Procedure

Purposive and criterion-based sampling was employed to select interviewees. The women (grandmothers and mothers) were selected since they had undergone a partner selection process for themselves, and now they were considering the same process for their grand-daughters or daughters respectively. Hence they could articulate their lived experiences.

Interviewees were approached through community referrals to find out criteria of partner selection in a family. The quality of data was assessed critically, in tandem with its collection, keeping the research questions in view. The study was conducted strictly along the lines of APA ethical guidelines; the consent for interviews was sought from all participants. The interviews were done by the researcher herself and recorded with the prior permission in private rooms. The recordings were transcribed following the interview conduction, and shared with the interviewees. Any information that could identify the participants was truncated to maintain anonymity of participants. All the names used in the discussion section are pseudo name to conceal the identity of the interviewees.

Data analysis

The transcribed interviews were analysed using a thorough and iterative process of thematic analysis to create codes form the data. Key words and concepts narrated were extracted as codes. After identifying all significant, relevant, repetitive, and overlapping codes, they were clustered into emerging themes. These themes reflect the experiences and criteria considered important by women while selecting partners. Lengthy quotes from verbatim and rich descriptions are presented in the results as the evidence of the research findings.

Results

Interview data was analysed using a selective coding technique. Similarly, repetitive codes were organized into categories to guide the analysis process of the data (Tables 1 and 2).

Results show that women interviewees possessed certain crystalized partner selection criteria are presented in illustrative (Figures 1 and 2).

The most significant set of findings involved subtle reflections of disempowerment of women illustrated in Figures 2 and 3.

The analysis also revealed specific patterns of partner selection for some generations, which are presented in the illustrative (Figures 4-6).

Discussion

Role of women in marriage decision and partner choice

This study provides an insight into the forms of disempowerment, that women experience and yet fail to register and comprehend. A main theme that emerged in the interview narratives of the first and second generations was that the interviewees expressed very few particular

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Themes</th>
<th>Sub Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Individual Qualities</td>
<td>1. Physical Appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Moral Virtues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Social Identity</td>
<td>1. Family background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Social Status of the probable partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Financial and/or Economic Aspects</td>
<td>1. Decent profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Capability to earn and support wife and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Disempowerment of Women</td>
<td>1. Young-age marriages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. No say in partner choice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Ancestral Family decisions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Collectivist and Patriarchal values</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Codes Common Codes among all 3 generations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generations</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Generations</td>
<td>(1) Family and Social-standing of the Partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Virtuous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Individual/Personality traits i.e. patience, consultative, cooperative etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Generations</td>
<td>(4) Family and Social-standing of the Partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5) Individual/Personality traits i.e. patience, consultative, cooperative.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(6) Economic standing of the Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Generations</td>
<td>(7) Compatibility/equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8) Individual/Personality traits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9) Economic standing of the Partner</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 2: Generation specific themes and sub-themes.
possible cause of such strong foundation of these myths could be the Indenisation of culture in subcontinent. The year’s long influence of Indian culture on Islam has influenced the thought process of people [33]. It is argued that culture and religion both aid in shaping the worldview and perspectives of people adhering to them and influence their perceptions, thinking and concepts [34].

Another interviewee said that “I was in grade 8th when marriage preparation started in my home; I wasn’t that sensible at that time.”

In collectivist cultures, it is a common practice that girls are not allowed the agency and participation in their partner selection process or marriage decisions. This can be taken as an evidence of women disempowerment. It is usually observed that in patriarchal societies, women have lived for long with low autonomy and a minimal say in decision-making in general. Disempowerment or more appropriately limited empowerment of women also reflects the amount of their say in marriage decision and partner choice. Jejeebhoy and Sathar found similar evidence in Punjab, Pakistan [24]. It can be asserted that women do not have a lot of agency to make decisions related to their marriage and selecting the appropriate life partners. In arranged marriage setups, a woman’s disempowerment continues, as post marriage, most of her life’s decisions are made by her husband or in-laws.

Another argument to support this discussion was put forth by

Figure 1: Visual representation of theoretical framework.

Figure 2: Major themes discussed by interviewees.

or crystalized choices about their probable partner. It is significant to note that six of the interviewees from the first age-cohort were married at a considerably young age (between 10 years to 15 years). Given the young age at marriage and lack of exposure to the larger society, it is not surprising to find that women in this cohort did not have any preconceived expectations for their intended partners.

Secondly, eleven interviewees from the first and second cohorts stated that they were married according to the decisions of family elders and had no say in decision making, being young and naïve. Some illustrative responses of interviewees are given below:

“I was not sensible enough at that time, I was only 6 months old when I got really sick, my grandmother said that commit her to someone she will get well, so my aunt said that she would marry her son to me if I survived, so that’s how I got married.”

This response highlights a number of elements that come into play in a traditional and collectivist society. One of these factors that may contribute is the myths and irrational beliefs that define the specific cultural practices and mores. These myths are so strongly ingrained in the minds of people that at times the unrealistic or even anti-religious/anti-Islamic nature of these practices does not deter them. One
Triandis he states that socialization in collectivist cultures is based upon obedience rather than fostering independent thinking [35]. Thus obedience to follow orders and instructions is inculcated at a very young age in girls, which primarily becomes a behavioral trait. The girl is asked about her opinion of the person or marriage on the whole; but her impressions do not have an impact on the decisions taken by her family. Thus, she is usually given just one option: to accept the proposal and give her consent showing highest standards of obedience. If the girl does not agree and asserts her own opinion, she is considered disobedient and disrespectful and a stigma on the family’s social reputation.

Family background and social-standing of the partner

The participants from the first and second age-cohorts narrated that the socio-familial background played a major role in the partner selection process and marriage decision. The socio-familial background may comprise any combination of several factors including caste, kinship, biradri (Biradari can be defined as “an association, attachment, emotional linkage and sharing common characteristics by an individual being a part of a particular group descended of the same ancestor”) and close blood relationships with the prospective partner. It was observed that in most cases the family and kinship of the prospective partner was the sole criteria to finalize the marriage decision. It is interesting to note that five out of six interviewees in the first cohort and three out of six in second cohort were married to their first cousins.

Abida recalled that “my elder brother said how will we find such pious and beautiful man for our sister” and Durdana mentioned that she was married to her paternal cousin “I had not seen him much, my mother went by herself and agreed to proposal and in a matter of 5 to 6 months I was married”.

However, in Bushra’s case she only got to know just a week or ten days before her marriage, “I was 15 years old, the marriage preparation was under way, I asked my mother whose marriage is it, she said your elder (girl) cousin is getting married, 8 days before the marriage my aunty came and I got to know that it was my marriage with my paternal cousin who was 10 years elder to me”.

It was also observed that the marriage decisions are taken during the childhood years of the girl and marriage bonds are solemnized by family elders. Kinship, caste and family background have been found to be of a remarkable importance in Pakistan. Past research has found kinship and caste as major dealmakers in both marital choice and marriage decision making. The caste of prospective partner, which can be taken as the equivalent of kinship in the subcontinent (Pakistan and India) is one of the most important and prominently featuring criteria of partner selection. Strong evidence in favour of kinship and caste for shortlisting prospective partners has also been found [20].

Virtuousness and moral character

As earlier research by Park, Petersen and Seligman and Nakatani, H. et al. found, that the preference to be in a relationship with a person does depend on his/her morality, virtuousness and piety [36,37]. One important factor determining the continuity of the relationship is the perceived morality of the prospective partners. People evaluate the relational outcomes based on whether the other person is fair or unfair, morally upright and religiously similar [38]. The virtuousness of the prospective partner was considered important by the interviewees in the first cohort alone. The majority of interviewees stated that they would like their husband to be a godly man who followed religious injunctions, prayed, who was pious, righteous, respecting, and was virtuous with high moral standard in general. Abida said that she wanted to marry someone who was “patient, pious, abstentious and religiously aware”. And Farhana added to it by saying that “they were nice and decent people, my parents in law were religious had a decent family background like proper people”.

It is interesting to note that virtuousness does not feature prominently as a desirable partner trait in most research on partner selection. Although virtuousness happens to be a set of traits which benefits the individual him/herself, it is also related to relationship quality. Park, Petersen and Seligman stated that virtuousness strengthens and builds relationships [36]. In the light of the research evidence, it can be asserted that the interviewees’ preference for virtuousness and high moral standards is an important factor that remains underexplored in collectivist cultures and needs to be studied in detail in terms of partner selection choices.

Individual/personality traits

In traditional societies like Pakistan, marriage is seen not just as an agreement between two persons but as an arrangement of extending family ties and biradri [39]. Marriage is a social event, and partner selection is done with much deliberation and consultation between family elders and it involves long discussion of the deal making or breaking factors [40]. The three cohorts interviewed for the current research have given a detailed account of their preferred characteristics that they would want in a prospective partner. However, there is a clear difference in the desirable traits indicated by the three groups of women. Similar evidence was also presented by South, Trent and Bose that modernization has led to a more vocal and opinionated generation of young women who have more crystallised notions of desired traits in a partner and are more vocal about their expectations from a marriage, as compared to older cohorts [41]. The traits desired by the three cohorts are given in Table 3.

Based upon the choices indicated by the three cohorts of women the differences are quite visible. These differences can be attributed to a socio-cultural transition due to better education of women, economic independence modernization, urbanization and technological advancement [41-43]. Transition from the skewed traditional values to
more contemporary and balanced practices is evident in the narratives of
the mother and the grandmother interviewees. The transition in
prevailing traditional, collectivist trend is evident; the parents support
their daughters to have a say in marriage matters, unlike the preceding
generation.

One of the interviewee Naveen said that "it is religiously prescribed
to ask girls before their marriage, I did inform my daughters about their
marriage proposals". However, it is also important to note that this
information sharing with daughters was merely to inform them, and
not to ask for their active participation or consent.

**Economic standing of the partner**

Economic status of the prospective partner featured in detail
only in the narratives of the second and third cohorts (Table 4). The
difference of choices between the 2nd and 3rd cohorts can be reflective
of the outcomes of the successive educational advancement, early
economic independence and ease of access to technology. The era of
1990-2000s when the third cohort was born and growing up has seen
spindles of education, economic and technological advancements.
However, these advancements gained momentum and have become
part of livelihood in recent years in developing countries. These factors
- besides many other aspects - have also led to a leap of differences
in choices or desirable traits of partners. The older cohort of women
considers economic stability more important, while the recent born
cohort wants economic affluence and a comfortable life style.

Young women seek an "educated and professionally strong man",
while earlier born cohorts sought "property and land ownership"
in addition to the "education of partner". The desirability of older
cohort to marry a land and/or property owner reflects a traditional,
collectivist, agrarian mind-set, that considered business and ownership
as a status symbol, while employment was not as attractive as it seems
to the young generation. It is pertinent to mention that in traditional
or collectivist cultures strong lineage and inheritance is given much
importance. The land and property inheritance plays a major role in
deciding about the partner selection, so the family land and property
may remain in the family. Hence, most of the marriage decisions
are made in family deliberately without considering the parity of
the prospective couple. However, the educationally and technologically
equipped and economically independent young women have moved
ahead and they desire and express different choices and more
individualistic standards of partner selection. Jejeebhoy and Sathar also
found that landownership is closely related to economic status in India
and Pakistan (Table 4) [24].

**Desire for equality and compatibility**

Another theme that stood out in the accounts of the youngest
generation of interviewees was their desire to have autonomy and
compatibility/equality with the prospective partner. We define
autonomy as freedom to choose a partner, give assent to or disagree
to a marriage proposal. These young women expressed that they
would want to be familiar with the prospective partner. Young
women want the freedom to assess their compatibility and ability to
have a long-term relationship. They wish to have a sense of equity in
the married relationship. This desire for greater autonomy and role
equality has spawned from the education, economic and technological
advancements. Better educated, economically independent and
technologically equipped women of the most recent cohort demand
the freedom that their predecessors (i.e. mothers and grandmother)
could not enjoy. Education and active working life that give economic
independence to young women not only fosters freedom of speech but
when young people from diverse social backgrounds come together,
they exchange ideas. Social exposure and increased networks enhance
their choices, and the pool of prospective partners from which they
can select a partner expands extensively. Stouffer advocated that
education serves as agent of modernisation by fostering diffusion of
cultural values of equality and freedom [44]. Bengston and Bidjari and
Zahmatkesh have also found a strong relationship between educational
attainment and individualistic values [19,45].

**Implications**

The research findings are important in terms of the contribution
to the expansion of the understanding of successive transition and
resultant cultural change. By examining these changes from the
perspective of Pakistani women within the context of partner selection
choices, it provided a deeper understanding to family and marriage
counselors to resolve partner conflicts. It also provides insight as to
how systematic disempowerment can influence women and their
relationships before and after a marriage. Furthermore, it provided a
potential to enhance the appraisal of relationship stress-coping options,
in case of forced marriages.

The findings of this study would help the relationship and marriage
counselors significantly when it comes to working with their married
and soon-to-be-married women and men clients. Since the implications
for a professional-client relationship would indeed be favorable, Sue et
al have stated that a critical goal of counseling remains the development
of a deep personal relationship between a helping professional and
client that involves appropriate interpersonal interactions [46-50].

However, caution needs to be exercised while interpreting the
findings of this study as the participants were selected purposively.
Since it is assumed that the inclusion of selected groups represent some,
but not all, strata of socio-cultural groups. Nevertheless, the findings
from this study do contribute to the existing limited literature on pre-
marriage partner selection choices and criteria and extend knowledge
that can be beneficial for marriage, relationship and family councilors.

**Conclusion**

The findings of the current study showed that women consider
several aspects important while choosing partners. The obtained
criteria can be seen as validating previous studies in general but certain
preferences were cohort specific. The first and second cohorts of women
preferred traits as family ties, piousness, educated and economic
stability. While the young women seek educational, economic and
social compatibility, the first and second cohorts of grandmothers and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Generation</th>
<th>2nd Generation</th>
<th>3rd Generation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good looking</td>
<td>Handsome</td>
<td>Good looking, Tall, clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tall</td>
<td>Good looking</td>
<td>independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>Sharing of workload/cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Caring, loving</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward looking</td>
<td></td>
<td>Compatible, communicative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Intergenerational comparative partner selection criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd Generation Specific Economic Status of the Partner</th>
<th>3rd Generation Specific Economic Status of the Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education Enabling To Earn a Comfortable Living</td>
<td>Educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decent Job or Business</td>
<td>Decent Profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>Affluent Family Background</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: 2nd and 3rd generation specific criteria of economic status of the partner.
mothers respectively were found to have a compliant, yielding and accepting behaviour for the decisions made about their marriages. The youngest cohort was found to be more assertive, vocal, precise and clear about their preferences while choosing a partner or making a marriage decision. The reason behind the difference in choice, between the three cohorts could be the impact of cultural transition. One of the critical finding is the subtle discernment of systematic disempowerment of women. It was also seen that the basic criteria to choose a partner either overlap or are similar across the generations yet their dimensions were different across the three subsequent generations of women.

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