

PERCEIVED PROXIMATE AND UNDERLYING DIVORCE CAUSES IN HAZARA DIVISION, PAKISTAN

Kanwal Rubab

PhD Scholar, Department of Development Studies, COMSATS University Islamabad, Abbottabad Campus, Pakistan
kanwalrubab.k@gmail.com

Arif Alam*

Head of the Department, Department of Development Studies, COMSATS University Islamabad, Abbottabad Campus, Pakistan
arifalam@cuiatd.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Divorce remains one of the most severe social issues in any society because divorce is an integral component of an elementary social institution of the family. Besides, divorce rates are drastically increasing worldwide, including in Pakistan. Therefore, this study is to identify perceived proximate and underlying causes of divorce in the Hazara Division, Pakistan. The pragmatic research approach and snowball sampling were employed to recruit 75 male and female divorcees. Moreover, data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire and analysed using IBM SPSS 25 through descriptive statistics and logistic regression analysis. The divorcees recognised prominent proximate causes of divorce, including personality traits of spouses, poverty, spending or handling money carelessly by the spouse, and infertility. In comparison, media addiction, relationship traits, the role of families and friends, infidelity, and domestic violence were identified as distinguished underlying drivers behind the divorce. The logistic regression analysis results indicate that the age and work status of the divorcee or his/her spouse and the number of children significantly impact distinct foundations for divorce. The study concluded that among numerous other causes, media addiction is prominently giving rise to many inconsistencies in married life, leading to divorce.

Keywords: Proximate and underlying causes, Divorce, Gender, Hazara Pakistan, Socioeconomic factors, Pragmatic Approach

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a well-recognized turning point that bestows prestige and societal approval on the spouses. However, divorce becomes the ultimate option when the family fails to survive or continue functioning (Al-Bahrani, 2021). Divorce is the cancellation or reorganisation of legal responsibilities and duties that are part of marriage. It dissolves the bonds of matrimony between a couple under the rule of law in a particular country or state. Ironically, in the past few years, divorce has become a major social and ethical issue around the globe, and its rate is continuously climbing (Oldham, 2021).

Statista Research Department, United States, 2021 report revealed that, on average, around 42% of 100 marriages faced divorces in Europe during 2019. It further highlighted that the divorce rates had significantly increased, with Luxembourg leading the list of European countries with the highest percentage of 88.9% of 100 marriages, followed by Portugal, Finland, Spain, and France (Statista Research Department, 2021). Whereas, in Pakistan, the divorce rate has drastically increased by 700% in Sindh province as of 2020 because females filed up to 5,198 *khula*[†] (Judicial Divorce) cases in 2019. According to female divorcees, the rise in *khula* cases was mainly due to husbands' failure to fulfil their social duties and obligations of well-being (Sahoutara, 2021). Similarly, the divorce rate in Pakistan increased significantly in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, which raised domestic violence cases in the wake of economic and social adversity (Editorial, 2021).

* Corresponding Author

[†] *Khula* means 'untying the knot,' which is the dissolution of marriage initiated by the wife and is granted by the court.

Therefore, several causes of ending a marital relationship have been identified worldwide. Most reasons are associated with diverse economic, social, and cultural determinants. In western societies of America and Britain, divorce grounds are based on modern cultural traditions, incompatibility among spouses, weak family values, more individualised values, and less religious inclination (Mortelmans, 2021). Likewise, in European nations, marital satisfaction, having divorced parents, and a husband's unemployment are significant factors causing disagreements and marriages to end (Crabtree & Harris, 2020). Especially for men, unemployment negatively impacts relationship stability. In such a situation, females bear the entire financial burden, leading to frustration between husband and wife and eventually divorce (Solaz et al., 2020). Apart from economic causes, divorce happens in Australia due to physical and emotional abuse brought about by alcoholism (Featherstone, 2013).

Moreover, a cross-country comparison of marriage cohorts identified the 'Big Five' model based on five temperament traits that make up an individual's personality and influence their marriage stability differently across Britain, Flanders, and Germany. Spouses having high levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness tend to have stable marriages. While people having highly neurotic (challenging to live with) or extraverted (willing to consider new options) behaviour are more likely to divorce (Boertien & Mortelmans, 2018).

On the other hand, not all marriages in the Western nations end or collapse due to cultural, economic, and social issues. Still, divorce can also happen due to communication lack between spouses and infidelity (Mohlatole et al., 2018). Such as, in England and Netherlands, spouses separate their ways and choose divorce due to communication issues (Thadathil & Sriram, 2019). Similarly, the study in the Kerala State of India revealed that the divorce rate is increasing alarmingly due to the absence of communication and understanding between spouses, alcoholism, and the resultant violence and financial crisis further contribute to this social evil (Vasudevan et al., 2015).

In Pakistan, the critical divorce causes are associated with social, economic, cultural, psychological, political, and religious factors (Azhar et al., 2018). Because divorce is a multifaceted phenomenon in Pakistan; therefore, each divorcing couple has different divorce motives. A primary reason highlighting the divorce increase is love and early marriages. At an early age, spouses are not mature enough to make appropriate decisions that later result in divorce. They do not talk with each other due to several daily life issues or expectations, hesitations, and egos, which increase the divorce ratio (Atif et al., 2021). They do not understand each other properly; moreover, shouldering the economic responsibilities of earning and feeding could be another reality not to be overlooked (Ali et al., 2017).

Furthermore, divorce is an unfortunate outcome of society's conservative and strict traditions and values in Pakistan. Mainly females are bound by a lack of knowledge and unawareness of their rights. Therefore, the significant causes of divorce for females include cultural differences between spouses, a vast difference in spouses' ages, and insufficient understanding of each other (Haq et al., 2020). However, the fundamental divorce reasons in Pakistan are short temperaments, a joint family system, and forced marriages. This research further identified divorce sources like unemployment, lack of trust, extramarital affairs, differences in spouses' social and cultural status, lack of communication, husband's second marriage, and lack of patience (Ramzan et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, some hidden reasons related to families also cause divorces. In Pakistan, marriages are not arranged between two people but with the whole family. Therefore, due to the patriarchal family system, in-laws are prone to interfere with the couple's matters. Consequently, spouses lack mutual understanding, and a harsh environment results in divorce (Qamar & Faizan, 2021). Similarly, domestic violence, sexual dysfunction, and temperamental incompatibility of spouses are the most common divorce foundations in significant Pakistani cities like Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, and Islamabad (Khan et al., 2019). Likewise, failure of marriage in Pakistan is specifically dependent on forced marriages where the bride or groom's willingness is not considered, and they are forced to marry against their preferences. These forced relationships create friction between spouses, trigger misunderstandings, and finally end in divorce (Ali et al., 2021).

Moreover, it has been observed that the significant chunks of society in Pakistan, particularly in Northern areas, are male-dominated, where a male earns and makes decisions for the whole family. In contrast, females usually do housework and stay home, validating their subordinate position. Therefore, the sacrifices and demands of unbalanced relationships make divorce inevitable (Ibrar & Naqvi, 2017). Similarly, the prolonged illness of one of the spouses is also why divorces occur in the

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, causing additional financial expenditure that results in frustration and, ultimately, divorce (Khattak et al., 2018). Religious conflicts, such as partners following different sects (Shia or Sunni), also contribute to divorce in Pakistan (Rizvi, 2015).

On the other hand, conflict and arguing behaviour of a spouse, infidelity, lack of commitment, societal demands, and economic pressures are significant divorce bases among Pakistani males (Khan et al., 2019). Correspondingly, approximately 60% of divorce cases pertain to dowry disputes from the groom's family in Pakistan (Ibrar & Naqvi, 2017) because dowry desire has become one of Pakistan's customs among different cultures (Critelli, 2012). However, the dowry concept does not prevail in Western countries, where divorces usually happen because of the cheating of a spouse (Alpaslan, 2018).

Furthermore, economic reasons for divorce, such as poverty or unemployment, are spiked in Pakistan. This happens when males cannot find jobs or remain unemployed for extended periods (Ramzan et al., 2018). The poverty aspect in Pakistan is the same as in Bangladesh and India. Feeding families is one of the males' roles, and if they fail to complete it, the resultant confusion, hunger, and conflicts originate in divorces (Rathi & Pachauri, 2018). Besides, in Pakistan, marital disputes due to differences in the demands of spouses from their marriages also lead to divorce. In the same way, divorce happens when marital well-being is compromised due to psychological factors such as dishonesty, infidelity, and differences in mindsets, values, and educational levels (Masood, 2019).

Equity theory posits that feelings of being over-benefitted or under-benefitted in a relationship foster inequality which evokes a sense of injustice, and spouses restore equity through altered behaviour like divorce (Ruppanner et al., 2018). Moreover, the economic model of marriage claims that the female's entry into the labour market lowers a couple's gains from specialisation and increases marital tension (Becker et al., 1977). Furthermore, Becker's theory of marital instability explains that marriage dissolves when the utility (satisfaction) expected from remaining married falls below the utility expected from the divorce. Individuals tend to maximise satisfaction from things they wish to consume from time to time; in the context of marriages, spouses aim to maximise their happiness through wealth (Schoen et al., 2002).

The prevalent rise in divorce cases and drivers in different areas of Pakistan has been widely reported in various studies (Fahad & Khan, 2020; Gul et al., 2021; Qamar & Faizan, 2021). However, the previously identified divorce causes in literature are intricate, dynamic, and time and region-specific. They depend on particular socioeconomic, cultural, psychological, religious, and political factors. It is impossible to generalise the divorce causes in a particular region. Notwithstanding, the high divorce ratio and its determinants in the Hazara Division of Pakistan have not been addressed in the literature. Therefore, it is pertinent to identify the proximate and underlying divorce causes, specifically for the Hazara Division, Pakistan. A profound understanding of the complex interdependence between divorce foundations is fundamental for strengthening the primary family institution and for decision-making by policymakers and other stakeholders. Additionally, examining concrete divorce motivations is necessary for resolving socioeconomic challenges and consequences for divorcees, particularly at the study area and national levels.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Due to the present study's sensitive and atypical topic and nature, the pragmatic approach was followed based on the experiences and perspectives of male and female divorcees. The significance of using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies is that they contribute complementary strengths and allow triangulation, ensuring an in-depth understanding of the divorcees' experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This merger was considered the most appropriate due to the aim and research nature and an attempt to not re-traumatize the participants.

The study scope was restricted to the Hazara Division of Pakistan; thus, the study analysis cannot be applied to any other context. This region is known to have multiple racial groups, including diverse social, economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. This was a perk in conducting this research because of the dynamic demographic attributes of respondents. As per the commonly accepted view, a population that exhibits any social stigma like divorce is considered socially marginalised, atypical, and hard to reach. Therefore, the snowball sampling technique was the most suitable approach to reach out to the target respondents. Moreover, from a sample size of 75, the breakup of the number of divorcees is 25 divorced males and 50 divorced females who were divorced less than ten years ago. Finally, divorcees who remarried after divorce were excluded.

The required primary data were collected through a pre-defined questionnaire covering all the critical variables related to divorce's cultural, psychological, social, and economic rationales. Moreover, data was collected through the face-to-face interview method, considering the sensitivity of the research topic. While secondary data were collected from District Population Offices, Dispute Resolution Committees, Women Shelter Homes (*Darul Aman*) in Haripur, Abbottabad, and Mansehra, and the Bureau of Statistics Planning & Development Department Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, informed consent of participants was ensured verbally after explaining the purpose, extent, and limitations of the study before conducting detailed interviews.

Moreover, the quantitative data were analysed through descriptive statistics and logistic regression analysis. At the first point, proximate and underlying divorce causes perceived by divorcees in the Hazara Division, Pakistan, were ranked. Proximate causes are human activities or immediate actions at the relationship level among spouses or at the household level, such as domestic violence and failure to provide basic survival needs. While underlying driving forces are fundamental social processes, such as patriarchy and poverty, that underpin the proximate causes and either operate at the relationship level among spouses, at the household level or have an indirect impact from the national or global levels. The ranking of divorce drivers was computed with the principle of weighted average using the ranking index adopted by Munthali et al. (2019):

$$\text{Index} = \frac{R_n C_1 + R_{n-1} C_2 \dots + R_1 C_n}{\sum R_n C_1 + R_{n-1} C_2 \dots + R_1 C_n} \quad (1)$$

where R_n = value given for the least-ranked level (for example, if the minor rank is the 5th, then $R_n = 5$, $R_{n-1} = 4$, ... $R_1 = 1$; C_n = counts of the least ranked level.

Moreover, among diverse regression forms, logistic regression is considered appropriate to be carried out when the dependent variable is deemed binary (Connelly, 2020). Likewise, logistic regression was used to predict categorical causes of marriage instability from a set of predictor divorce causes (Brammah et al., 2014). Therefore, this study also performed a logistic regression analysis to identify the divorce reasons. It estimated the probability of the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables:

$$\text{Logit}(\gamma) = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \dots + \beta_n X_n \quad (2)$$

where γ = dependent variable indicating the likelihood that $\gamma = 1$, α = the intercept, $\beta_1 \dots \beta_n$ = coefficients of associated independent variables, and $X_1 \dots X_n$ = independent variables. The dependent variables were the divorcee's perception of proximate and underlying divorce causes. In contrast, independent variables included socioeconomic characteristics of divorcees, such as age, gender, education level, the number of children, and divorce history in the family.

The phenomenology approach was considered more appropriate for qualitative analysis to know in-depth about the study subject. Phenomenological research is a qualitative research model that describes one or more persons' experiences of a phenomenon. It focuses on unique ways of interacting with the world of phenomena. The phenomenon can be a practical experience defined by a person (Novita et al., 2019). Therefore, the collected secondary data were first transcribed and divided into themes such as economic, social, psychological, and cultural determinants to avoid data loss. However, the most relevant and specific responses were analysed to ensure quality control.

RESULTS

Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics of Divorcees

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of divorcees. The sample consisted of 25 divorced males and 50 divorced females. The maximum number of divorcees has a zero to five years of age difference between the spouses. About 95% of divorcees were divorced after their first marriage; however, four respondents were divorced after a second marriage. Around 25% of divorcees were graduates and degree holders. Half of the divorcees were inclined towards divorce, and the other half were not. A maximum of divorcees had no children, characterised their marriages as complex or challenging, and did not have a divorce history in their families. Moreover, maximum divorces occur during the first five years of marriage, while the number of divorces decreases with an increase in married years.

Table No. 1 Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics of Divorcees

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Male	25	33
	Female	50	67
Age (years)	<- 20	1	1
	21 - 30	22	29
	31 - 40	40	54
	41 - 50	12	16
Age difference between spouses (years)	0 - 5	47	63
	6 - 10	23	30
	11 - 15	3	4
	>- 16	2	3
Education level	Illiterate	15	20
	Primary	14	18
	Secondary	13	17
	Higher Secondary	14	18
	Graduation & above	19	25
First marriage	Yes	71	95
	No	4	5
Length of marriage (years)	Up to 1	5	6
	1 - 5	42	56
	6 - 10	15	20
	11 - 15	11	15
	>-16	2	3
Number of children	0	29	39
	1	19	25
	2	13	17
	3	7	9
	4	5	7
	5	2	3
Marriage characteristics	Normal	13	17
	Difficult	40	53
	One-Sided	22	30
Inclined towards divorce	No	37	49
	Yes	37	49
	Do not know	1	2
Divorce history in the family	Yes	29	39
	No	46	61

Furthermore, table 2 indicates that females' employment ratio doubled after marriage primarily to meet the ends. 26% of divorcees said they started work after getting married, while 52% of female divorcees work to manage expenses. Adequately fulfilling basic needs has become a common reason for divorce, and in post-divorce life, it becomes the survival need for females.

Table No. 2. Employment Status of Divorcees (Unit: Percentage)

Employment	Before Marriage		During Marriage		After Divorce	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Employed	92	18	84	26	88	52
Unemployed	8	82	16	74	12	48

Figure 1 explains the distribution of divorcees according to their ages at the time of marriage and divorce. The mean age of divorcees at the interview was 34 years for males and 33 years for females, and at the time of marriage was 27 years for males and 23 years for female divorcees. In contrast, the mean age of divorcees at the time of divorce was 32 years for males and 30 years for females.

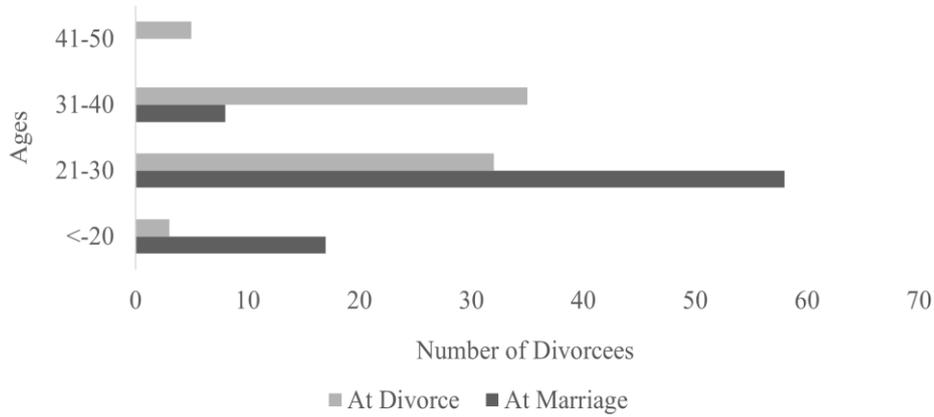


Figure 1. Distribution of Divorcees Based on Age at Marriage and Divorce

Also, receiving parental approval for marriage is most necessary and desirable in Pakistani society. Therefore, as illustrated by figure 2, a maximum (44%) of marriages were arranged with the consent of spouses and families. Moreover, 14% of marriages were set without respondents' consent, and 12% of marriages were placed without the permission of their spouses. Besides, 8% of male and 4% of female divorcees were in Wata Sata[‡] marriage.

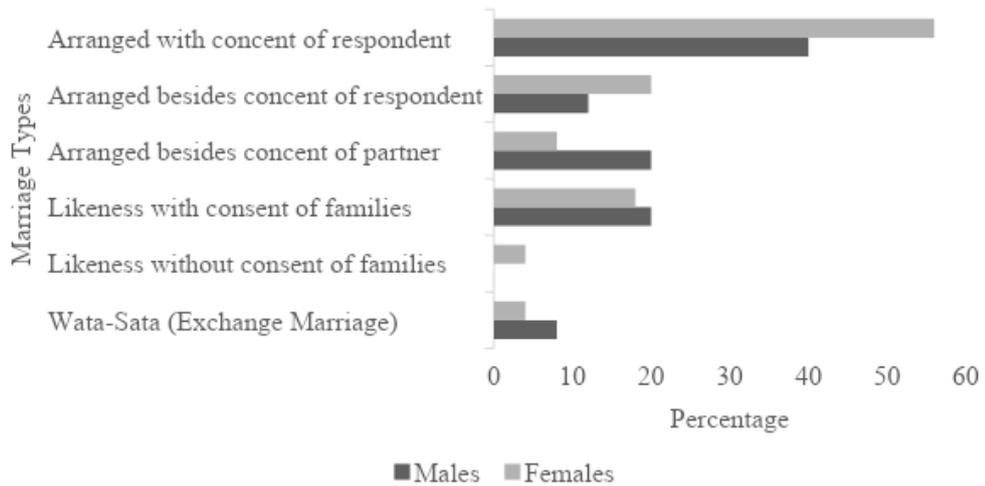


Figure 2. Distribution of Divorcees Based on Marriage Types

Ranking of Proximate and Underlying Divorce Causes

The divorcees identified 41 factors (23 proximate and 18 underlying) as fundamental divorce reasons in the study area. They ranked personality traits as the number one proximate divorce cause. In India, most divorces occur due to personal problems like frustration and behavioural issues (Ghosh, 2018). Moreover, divorcees identified the role of families and friends, domestic violence, demands and expectations, failure to provide basic needs, conflict and arguing, spending or handling money carelessly, problems with in-laws, different ways of thinking, conflicts due to employment, families' disagreement with marriage, spouse's over-involvement with his/her family, ignoring responsibilities or marital obligations, gender role conflicts, resources demand by the spouse or his/her family, marriage amount, dowry, blaming, economic coercion, substance abuse, no boy child, parenting inconsistencies and child-rearing issues as the distinguished proximate divorce causes (Table 3).

Table No. 3 Perceived Proximate Divorce Causes

Proximate Causes of Divorce	Number of Divorcees per Rank					Weight	Index	Rank
	1	2	3	4	5			
Personality traits	68	2	2	2	1	359	0.059	1

[‡] *Wata Sata* means exchange marriage, which implies that a sister or brother is married in exchange with his sister's brother-in-law or brother's sister-in-law.

Perceived Proximate and Underlying Divorce Causes in Hazara Division, Pakistan

Role of families and friends	63	2	4	3	3	344	0.056	2
Domestic violence	59	5	2	4	5	333	0.055	3
Demands and expectations	56	4	6	2	7	325	0.053	4
Failure to provide basic needs	54	7	2	4	8	320	0.052	5
Conflict and arguing	53	6	2	4	10	313	0.051	6
Spending or handling money carelessly	47	9	5	4	10	304	0.050	7
Problems with in-laws	43	8	7	9	8	294	0.048	8
Different ways of thinking	40	9	8	11	7	289	0.047	9
Conflict due to employment	38	10	9	8	10	283	0.046	10
Gender role conflicts	37	8	8	9	13	272	0.045	11
Families' disagreement with marriage	36	6	8	12	13	265	0.043	12
Spouse's over-involvement with his/her family	35	7	6	9	18	257	0.042	13
Ignoring responsibilities or marital obligations	33	5	6	16	15	250	0.041	14
Blaming	31	7	3	16	18	242	0.040	15
Economic coercion	27	12	13	11	12	236	0.039	16
Marriage amount	24	12	7	10	22	231	0.038	17
Dowry	29	7	5	13	21	225	0.037	18
No boy child	21	8	10	16	20	209	0.034	19
Resources demand	16	11	9	14	25	204	0.033	20
Parenting inconsistencies	10	14	12	12	27	193	0.032	21
Substance abuse	7	15	10	11	32	179	0.029	22
Child-rearing issues	3	18	10	11	33	172	0.028	23

Furthermore, divorcees identified media addiction as the top-ranked underlying reason leading to divorce. The same results were discovered in a European study (Mortelmans, 2021). Subsequently, the divorcees identified the most critical underlying causes contributing to divorces in the study area: relationship traits, infidelity, unemployment, patriarchy, low educational level, poverty, polygamy, masculinity, high age difference, infertility, cultural pessimism, religious conflicts, social strictness, depression, differences in the social or economic position of families of origin and physical appearance (Table 4).

Table No. 4 Perceived Underlying Divorce Causes

Underlying Causes of Divorce	Number of Divorcees per Rank					Weight	Index	Rank
	1	2	3	4	5			
Media addiction	70	2	1	2	0	365	0.071	1
Relationship traits	67	2	2	2	2	355	0.069	2
Infidelity	61	5	3	3	3	343	0.067	3
Poverty	56	10	6	5	2	338	0.066	4
Patriarchy	49	12	4	2	8	321	0.063	5
Unemployment	52	6	3	8	6	315	0.061	6
Low educational level	47	7	8	7	6	307	0.060	7
Infertility	46	8	5	8	8	301	0.059	8
Polygamy	35	11	9	10	10	296	0.058	9
Social strictness	40	15	4	3	13	291	0.057	10
High age difference	26	14	14	16	13	273	0.053	11
Cultural pessimism	31	11	12	10	11	266	0.052	12
Religious conflicts	28	13	12	11	11	261	0.051	13
Differences in social position of families of origin	25	11	13	15	11	249	0.049	14
Differences in economic status of families of origin	23	10	15	17	10	244	0.048	15
Masculinity	20	13	12	15	15	233	0.045	16

Depression	16	10	8	11	31	197	0.038	17
Physical appearance	11	8	8	13	35	172	0.034	18

Logistic Regression

Table 5 shows the logistic regression analysis results, which were carried out to identify the association between demographic characteristics of divorcees and perceived proximate and underlying fundamental reasons behind divorce in the study area. The threshold of the significant value was 0.05. Any value higher than 0.05 was considered not applicable, while any value below 0.05 was seen to have a considerable impact. According to the results, the gender of spouses significantly impacts media addiction, relationship traits, the role of families and friends, infidelity, demands and expectations, poverty, and unemployment as divorce foundations, except for domestic violence. Similarly, spouses' ages significantly impact relationship traits, the role of families and friends, demands and expectations, poverty, domestic violence, and unemployment as the divorce basis, except for media addiction and infidelity. Moreover, the education level of spouses significantly impacts media addiction, relationship traits, demands and expectations, domestic violence, and poverty as divorce reasons, except for the role of family and friends, infidelity, and unemployment. Likewise, divorce history in spouses' families significantly impacts the role of families and friends, infidelity, poverty, unemployment, and domestic violence as divorce foundations, except media addiction, demands and expectations, and relationship traits. Likewise, the number of children significantly impacts the multiple divorce reasons, like relationship traits, the role of families and friends, media addiction, demands and expectations, poverty, and unemployment, as divorce causes, except for domestic violence and infidelity.

Table No. 5 Socioeconomic Determinants Influencing Perceived Divorce Causes

Perceived Causes of Divorce	Determinants	Coefficient	Standard Error	Wald	p-value	Exp β
Media addiction	Gender	-4.53	24.92	0.03	0.01	0.00
	Age	0.49	15.02	0.00	0.07	0.99
	Education level	22.10	72.98	0.09	0.01	1.22
	Divorce history in family	9.94	94.27	0.011	0.07	0.00
	Number of children	7.13	69.14	0.011	0.03	0.00
Relationship traits	Gender	2.14	67.33	0.001	0.01	0.40
	Age	-22.33	223.54	0.010	0.01	0.70
	Education level	-12.22	415.06	0.001	0.05	0.00
	Divorce history in family	-9.10	79.86	0.013	0.07	0.00
	Number of children	12.31	83.21	0.022	0.01	0.00
Role of families and friends	Gender	-0.58	39.17	0.000	0.01	0.00
	Age	3.56	43.08	0.007	0.04	0.00
	Education level	4.76	58.03	0.007	0.26	1.20
	Divorce history in family	-3.28	38.17	0.007	0.01	0.00
	Number of children	11.07	295.02	0.001	0.01	0.01
Infidelity	Gender	-9.54	110.73	0.007	0.00	0.00
	Age	-4.03	88.27	0.002	0.07	0.00
	Education level	9.81	57.98	0.029	0.26	1.75
	Divorce history in family	-2.15	140.50	0.000	0.01	2.20
	Number of children	-5.81	86.80	0.004	0.07	3.00
Domestic violence	Gender	2.07	57.91	0.001	0.26	3.27
	Age	-7.28	169.74	0.002	0.00	3.49
	Education level	-4.95	136.75	0.001	0.01	3.72
	Divorce history in family	-14.57	294.14	0.002	0.01	2.33
	Number of children	4.13	81.05	0.003	0.07	2.69
Demands and expectations	Gender	10.05	83.82	0.014	0.01	3.14
	Age	-4.17	40.84	0.010	0.02	3.36
	Education level	3.97	44.20	0.008	0.01	3.58

	Divorce history in family	-11.10	119.70	0.009	0.07	1.75
	Number of children	8.00	42.21	0.036	0.01	1.98
	Gender	16.51	286.60	0.003	0.04	2.06
	Age	-10.20	114.61	0.008	0.01	2.29
Poverty	Education level	-6.64	87.47	0.006	0.01	2.24
	Divorce history in family	1.63	260.02	0.000	0.01	1.93
	Number of children	-11.15	137.35	0.007	0.03	1.66
	Gender	-6.39	167.26	0.001	0.01	1.44
Unemployment	Age	2.09	79.29	0.001	0.02	3.76
	Education level	8.80	17.12	0.26	0.07	3.67
	Divorce history in family	-0.90	55.70	0.00	0.03	2.20
	Number of children	11.01	113.17	0.01	0.03	1.98

DISCUSSION

Divorce damages the overall social life of marital partners, children, and their families. Divorce is not anyone's desirable act in any part of the world, but it is a harsh reality. This study revealed that gender and the divorcee's inclination towards divorce significantly impact the different possible divorce simulators. Besides, the marital life quality, such as normal (usual, regular, or standard), complicated, or one-sided, also affects the divorce probability. Uniformly, responses of divorcees indicated that marriage type alters the divorce ratio because most marriages in Pakistan are between cousins or friends of the family or caste. The percentage of out-of-family marriages is relatively low. Therefore, most divorcees mentioned that marriages arranged by parents or elders or against the willingness and consent of spouses escalate marital incompatibility.

In the same way, love marriage is still a taboo and honour issue in Pakistani society. Therefore, spouses in love marriages fail to balance society and family responses and marital obligations and get divorced (Ali et al., 2017). Furthermore, an increase in the divorce rate is expected after increasing the marriage rate, population growth, and changes in socioeconomic status. This study revealed that primarily young and educated couples seek divorce due to unpleasant married life, as demonstrated in the research conducted in Nicaragua, Central America (Winking & Koster, 2021).

Proximate Divorce Causes

The ranking of perceived proximate divorce causes in the study represents that marital conflict is more likely when spouses face financial difficulties. In other words, financial strain suggests that any event that leads to income loss, either from the husband or wife, increases the divorce risk (Killewald, 2016). As an exemplary case from this study, a father of two who is 34 years old and completed his graduate study, explained his divorce cause *"after four years of marriage, I lost my job, and my ex-wife started working as a teacher to manage living expenses. We had passed through a difficult situation. After some time, she started disrespecting me and demanded a divorce. Then the marriage ceased with elders' assistance, and she returned to her family, leaving children with me."*

Equally, conflict due to the employment nature of a spouse also increases marital instability. As an illustration, the frequent absence from the home of an uneducated truck driver male respondent made her ex-wife having secondary education, use social media applications. This implies that a single factor could influence several other complex factors that lead to divorce. He explained his divorce determinant, *"I frequently visit other cities, usually taking a few days to return home. After my marriage, I made an extra effort to keep my ex-wife happy and satisfied with living. After one year of marriage, she started to avoid me and did not care for me. Then I learned through my mother that she is involved with someone else on Facebook. Upon confirming from her, I divorced her."*

Besides, this research identified incompatible personality traits as a significant perceived proximate divorce reason in the study area, such as dominant, patriarchal, untruthful, irregular, nitpicking, superstitious, immature, rude, short-tempered, abusive, and sarcastic behaviour of the spouse. A study conducted in the Brazilian State of Rio Grande do Sul indicated that incompatible personality traits predict marital instability (Costa & Mosmann, 2021). Similarly, short temper, lack of resilience and trust, extramarital affairs, and polygamy are leading divorce factors in Pakistani society (Masood, 2019). For instance, a female divorcee responded, *"my ex-husband was very nitpicking. Over*

time, this trait made me short-tempered. Our arguments never got better but worse. We argued about something straightforward, which turned into a huge fight every time."

Moreover, domestic violence is one of the distinguishing divorce factors which compel the partners to separate forever. Like, in Pakistan-based research, about half of the respondents unfolded that they were constantly facing domestic violence (Khan et al., 2019). Nevertheless, divorcees in the study area ranked domestic violence among the top proximate divorce bases. They faced domestic violence in multiple ways: social strictness, physical abuse, molestation, emotional torture, isolation, using male privilege, verbal abuse or threats, blame, and economic coercion. A single mother who started working after divorce opined, *"since marriage, I was living in a joint family system. My ex-husband was working in the other city and was earning more than his brothers. Whenever he came home, his sisters-in-law always commented negatively about me. The eldest sister-in-law was very dominant; she used to beat me on minor issues. I was not allowed to use my phone because they did not want my ex-husband to become closer to me and spend money on my children and me. Finally, I demanded a separate home. My ex-husband did not accept this idea and was unwilling to understand my position. Then after a painful conflict, the marriage ceased."*

Apart from that, Pakistan is a collectivist-oriented country, implying that people share a strong connection with their families and take responsibility for one another. The ranking of perceived proximate divorce foundations in this study also depicts that the in-laws' interference in matters of the couple is one of the most prevailing divorce contributors. Likewise, Khan et al. (2019) concluded that unnecessary involvement and undesired interference from in-laws manifest conflicts between the spouses who ultimately part ways. A female participant in this research having two children, shared her experience, *"unwanted and unnecessary involvement of both side families directed the circumstances towards misunderstandings, and eventually divorce happened. However, I still miss him; he was a caring husband."*

Underlying Divorce Causes

The ranking of underlying causes of divorce by divorcees in the study confirmed many relationship traits as the main divorce contributors. The troublesome relationship traits include conflict and arguing behaviour of a spouse and lack of commitment, trust, intimacy, communication, and tolerance between spouses. The positive existence of these traits in a marital relationship plays a vital role in strengthening matrimonial bonds. In addition, research in Jordan showed a negative statistical relationship between relationship traits and divorce occurrence (Jarwan & Al-frehat, 2020). Similarly, marriage dissolution in Pakistan mainly occurs due to negative relationship traits and domestic violence (Ibrar & Naqvi, 2017). As an illustration, a divorced female shared her divorce causes as *"we were like poles apart. He had his ideas and arguments, for which he could never accept any negation. He used to call me illiterate and ignorant who could never reach his level of intellect."*

Furthermore, many divorcees in the current study mentioned the manifestation of patriarchal traits by their spouse or family as a divorce simulator. They want to subjugate them by having complete control of their lives and not giving them a choice of self-determination for matters concerning their personal lives. Divorcees indicated it as unbalanced power relationships in households because technological modernisation and advancement are replacing the rigid boundaries of traditional life with a new outlook and lifestyle. A highly educated and employed female divorcee narrated her divorce reason: *"during our engagement period, my ex-husband seemed supportive socially, economically, and psychologically. However, his behaviour changed altogether after marriage. He and his mother became dominant; they snatched my bank debit card, all-day house chores were left for me to do after office hours, I was not allowed to speak a word in front of his mother, and he refused to give me the money I earned for my expense. His mother used to tell her son that husband has the right over everything of his wife, which escalated my frustration. Then with great difficulty, I filed for khula and got divorced."*

Equivalently, the indulgence of social and electronic media in family lives has made people more aware of the attractions of a nuclear family and their rights. It triggers inconsistencies between spouses and causes breakage of the marital bonds in the study area. Similarly, in Indian society, divorces are happening due to the modern view of living an independent life rather than keeping marriages in terms of personal welfare (Vincent & D'Mello, 2018). Like a divorcee with custody of children narrated his experience, *"my ex-wife had multiple issues with the joint family system, and she never considered our home hers. From the beginning, she dreamed of a separate house. I guess this was her right, but I*

have many other responsibilities as the family's only son. She left no chance when she did not fight over this. At last, she left children and our home, demanding a divorce."

Additionally, humans are social by nature and crave bonding within relationships. However, media addiction breaks down communication within the household, especially between spouses; therefore, the desire to spend quality time and interact leads to divorce. In the United States, active social media usage by spouses leads to more significant disputes among spouses, giving way to infidelity, breakup, and divorce (Clayton, 2014). Additionally, as discussed earlier, in the Western world, communication issues between partners lead to divorce (Mikucka, 2020), while this study revealed that trust issues engender divorce in the study area. To cite an instance, a female participant with children, living with parents, and working as a lady guard shared her experience, *"my ex-husband was a graduate, and he could find a reasonable job or perform better in his small business. However, he was addicted to social media to the extent that he never realised his responsibilities. My parents supported me financially. Then he got involved with another woman. I found his explicit conversation on his mobile and confronted him. He already lost interest in me, and upon forcing by her, he divorced me and left children."*

Moreover, infidelity is one of the leading causes of married life failure. Rates of infidelity differ due to their types across the world, sexual or emotional infidelity. According to traditional estimates, infidelity is present in 20–25% of all marriages and is more common in younger couples (Azhar et al., 2018). Likewise, divorcees in this study highly ranked infidelity as an underlying divorce foundation. Such as, a divorced female explained, *"divorce was never an option for me until my ex-husband refused me, although I was aware of his relationships with other women. He told me I did not deserve him, and he regretted spending the time and money on my daughter and me. I struggled to sustain the marriage, but he increased his activities and invited women to our home. Finally, the marriage ended in divorce. Now he is unwilling to pay child support for my daughter."*

Likewise, the ranking of perceived underlying causes of divorce also revealed infertility as a prominent reason behind marriage breakup. These findings coincide with the results of research, which concluded that infertility, prolonged illness, and physical or mental disability are distinguished simulators for divorce in South Asian societies like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (Ramzan et al., 2018). As a precedent, a female participant working as a nurse expressed her experience, *"I was living with him in perpetual fear because my mother-in-law used to cast daily innuendoes against me to bewitch my husband and force him to do second marriage. Her consistent forcing convinced him, so he divorced me and married again"*.

Besides, marital satisfaction and stability for both males and females depend on the age gap between the spouses. Analysis of the interaction between marital satisfaction and the marital age gap suggests that marital satisfaction declines more rapidly over time for spouses in differently aged couples than same-age couples (Lee & McKinnish, 2018). Again, this study found high age gap is a vital divorce simulator in the study area. The high age differences between spouses can engender many issues, such as criticism and rumours about the relationship, stepchildren, compatibility issues, differences in priorities, health, and socialisation issues. A single mother of three, working and living alone, said, *"I was 20 years old at marriage to my ex-husband, 55 years of age. My marriage was never easy. Due to his age and physical and psychological needs, I had many issues. He was dominant, and with time, he became stricter. Once, he attempted to meet his urge from my daughter. Then I, with the children, left his house and went to my brother's home. However, my brothers were not accepting the truth and were of the view that I had constructed a story to get rid of him. Finally, a significant conflict arose, and I went to court for a divorce on my own."*

CONCLUSION

Divorce is a social problem that not only devastates a family as a basic social unit but gradually destroys society. Multiple causes disturb the matrimonial bonds created among the spouses by the rule of law in the country. It was pertinent to figure out the reasons for cutting the divorce rate. Therefore, this study identified perceived proximate and underlying divorce causes in the Hazara Division, Pakistan and extensively discussed various social and cultural elements associated with these causes.

The well-known factor behind the raised divorce ratio is media addiction, including electronic and social media. The penetration of the internet and the rise of social media have led to enormous benefits, but it has turned out otherwise for many. The presence of the devices impacts the relationship

quality and weakens the emotional connection between spouses. The involvement of electronic media in daily life has sown the seeds of many issues between spouses, such as domestic violence, economic hardships, infidelity, and polygamy. It has altered societal and relationship priorities and gives way to distrust and misunderstanding among spouses. It undermines the core values of the family institution. It has marvellously increased the demands and expectations of spouses. It increases the vicious cycle of envy feelings, and dissatisfaction in a marital relationship and leads to divorce. Besides, spouses do not realise their matrimonial responsibilities, and media distractions diminish their ability to handle marital challenges. Even if one knows that the content they are viewing on social media is manipulated, they still feel insecure by comparing themselves unfavourably with others. These factors triggered by media addiction ultimately escalate divorce by weakening the family institution.

Based on the findings, the study recommends a need to curb the false attractions of social and electronic media through awareness. Secondly, it is a well-established fact that divorce is a social evil that devastates the survival of family life and gradually destroys society. This problem is severe in the urban areas of Pakistan, but nowadays, rural areas are also not an exception. Therefore, the government should amend the Family Law of 1961 regarding marriage and divorce conditions and procedures. It is imperative to provide moral education to students by updating the curriculum and familiarising them with human ethical essentials for happy family life.

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