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## ANALYZING GENDERED PRE-MARITAL EXPECTATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY MARRIAGE PRACTICES IN BALOCHISTAN: FROM DOWRY TO SECURITY

<sup>\*1</sup>Shah Khalid Baloch, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Nasreen Samar

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer, Gender and Development Studies Department, University of Balochistan,  
Quetta

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Gender and Development Studies Department, University of  
Balochistan, Quetta

<sup>\*1</sup>[khldbaloch@gmail.com](mailto:khldbaloch@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[samarnasreen@yahoo.com](mailto:samarnasreen@yahoo.com)

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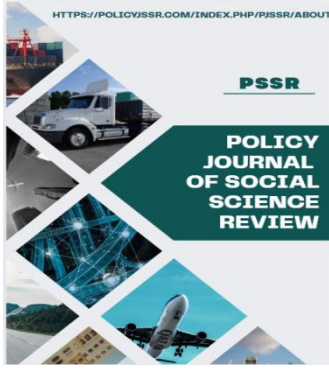
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Shah Khalid Baloch\*

### ABSTRACT

Marriage in South Asian societies, particularly in Balochistan, Pakistan, has long been shaped by gendered economic practices such as dowry and bride price. Traditionally, marital arrangements involved financial transfers that reinforced patriarchal norms and gender inequality. However, contemporary trends in Balochistan indicate a shift in pre-marital expectations, emphasizing financial stability, housing and economic security often demanded from the groom by the bride's family. This study explores the sociological transformation from dowry and bride price-based expectations to security-oriented negotiations, analyzing its implications for gender relations, marriage timing and social structures in Balochistan. Drawing on empirical studies, regional data and sociological theories, the paper argues that this shift reflects both changing gender roles and the persistence of patriarchal norms in tribal and urban contexts. The study also proposes SPSS-ready quantitative variables for empirical research. **Keywords:** Bride Price (Walver), Dowry, Economic Security, Female Autonomy, Gender Relations, Patriarchal Norms, Pre-Marital Expectations, Women's Empowerment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a central social institution in Balochistan, deeply embedded in cultural, economic and gendered norms. Historically, the province has practiced bride price (*walver*), where the groom's family pays the bride's family, rather than dowry transfers typical in other regions of Pakistan (Pakistan Press Foundation, 2025). These practices reinforced patriarchal control and economic dependence of women.

In recent years, a notable shift has emerged in Balochistan: pre-marital expectations now increasingly focus on security-oriented conditions, including:

- Ownership of a house
- Stable employment/ permission of employment
- Financial independence
- Marital exclusivity

This transformation reflects broader changes in gender expectations and marital negotiations particularly in most urban areas of Balochistan, where education and exposure to national norms influence marital arrangements. This study examines these evolving dynamics in the Balochistan context.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Traditional Economic Practices in Balochistan

Marriage in Balochistan has historically been influenced by tribal and familial norms. Research indicates:

- 81.5% of marriages involve bride price (*walver*) (Pakistan Press Foundation, 2025)

- Practices such as watta satta and swara/vanni are still observed (PubMed, 2017)

- Family elders largely control marital decisions, limiting women's decision-making power (ResearchGate, 2021)

These practices differ from dowry traditions in Punjab and Sindh, highlighting the need to study Balochistan-specific dynamics.

### 2.2 Early Marriage and Gender Inequality

Balochistan exhibits high rates of early marriage:

45% of girls are married before age 18 (Dialogue Pakistan, 2025)

Early marriages reduce negotiation space for women and reinforce patriarchal norms

Economic and tribal pressures often dictate marital arrangements

### 2.3 Changing Pre-Marital Expectations

Recent urban and educated families in Balochistan increasingly demand:

House ownership by the groom

Stable employment or government/private sector job

Financial savings or independence

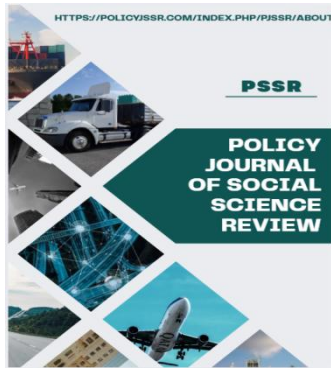
Monogamy enforcement

This signals a shift from traditional bride price toward security-oriented pre-marital expectations, reflecting changing gender roles, socio-economic awareness and urban influence (Malik et al., 2020).

## 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Social Exchange Theory

Marriage is conceptualized as a negotiation process, balancing costs and benefits. In Balochistan, the shift from



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bride price to security demands reflects a re-calibration of these exchanges.

### 3.2 Feminist Theory

Feminist perspectives highlight that while traditional practices limited women's empowerment the emerging focus on security allows women and families to exercise conditional agency within patriarchal constraints.

### 3.3 Bourdieu's Theory of Capital

Marriage negotiations in Balochistan involve:

- **Economic capital:** House, income, savings
- **Social capital:** Family and tribal status
- **Cultural capital:** Education and literacy

The shift reflects a revaluation of these capitals in contemporary Baloch society (Makino, 2019).

## 4. METHODOLOGY

This paper proposes a quantitative approach using SPSS-ready variables, combined with secondary data and literature review. Future empirical research may include:

### 5.3 Contradictions: Continuity and Change

Traditional System	Emerging System
Bride price (walver)	House & job expectations
Tribal decision-making	Partial negotiation by couple
Early marriages	Delayed marriages in urban areas
Female dependency	Conditional female agency

## 6. SPSS-READY QUANTITATIVE VARIABLES

### 6.1 Demographics

Variable Name	Type	Coding
Age	Numeric	18-60

Surveys with urban and rural respondents in Balochistan

Measurement of pre-marital expectations, gender dynamics and marital outcomes

Comparative analysis of traditional vs. modern expectations

## 5. BALOCHISTAN CONTEXT: FROM BRIDE PRICE TO SECURITY

### 5.1 Traditional Practices

Bride price (walver) is common: 81.5% of marriages (Pakistan Press Foundation, 2025)

Tribal elders dominate decision-making, with women largely excluded

Practices like watta satta and swara/vanni still exist (PubMed, 2017)

### 5.2 Emerging Security-Based Expectations

Urban and educated families increasingly demand:

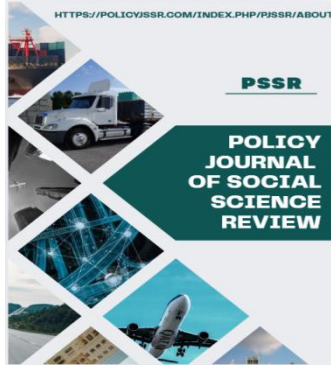
House ownership

Stable or permission for employment

Financial savings

Marital exclusivity

Reflects urbanization, education and exposure to national/global norms



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Variable Name	Type	Coding
Gender	Nominal	1 = Male, 2 = Female
Education	Ordinal	1-6
Occupation	Nominal	1-6
Location	Nominal	1 = Urban, 2 = Rural
Income	Ordinal	1-5

## 6.2 Pre-Marital Expectation Variables

Variable Name	Type	Example Question
Demand_House	Ordinal	"I expect the groom to provide a house before marriage."
Demand_Job	Ordinal	"The groom must have stable employment before marriage."
Demand_Savings	Ordinal	"It is important that the groom has personal savings."
Dowry_Need	Ordinal	"Providing dowry is still necessary."
Security_Over_Dowry	Ordinal	"I prefer financial security over traditional dowry."
Delayed_Marriage	Ordinal	"Marriage is often delayed due to financial expectations."
Family_Influence	Ordinal	"Family strongly influences pre-marital expectations."
Female_Agency	Ordinal	"Women can negotiate marital conditions independently."

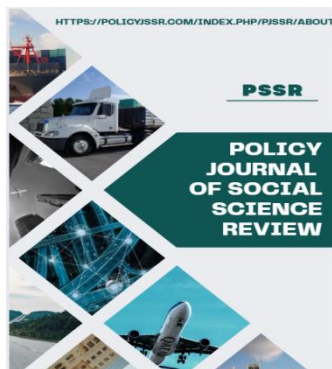
## 6.3 Outcome Variables

Variable Name	Type	Purpose
Marriage_Decision	Ordinal	Timing of marriage relative to expectations
Satisfaction_Expectations	Ordinal	Satisfaction with pre-marital conditions
Conflict_Family	Ordinal	Family conflicts due to expectations
Stress_Groom	Ordinal	Groom stress due to expectations

## 7. DISCUSSION

### 7.1 Gendered Transformations

- Traditional: Bride's family → bride price; Groom → provider
- Contemporary: Bride's family → house/job demands; Groom → meets new financial standards



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## 7.2 Empowerment vs. Pressure

- Women gain conditional bargaining power
- Men face increased economic expectations
- Urban-rural differences influence outcomes

## 7.3 Implications for Balochistan

- Delayed marriages in urban areas
- Persistence of tribal and patriarchal norms in rural areas
- Hybrid system combining tradition with emerging security demands

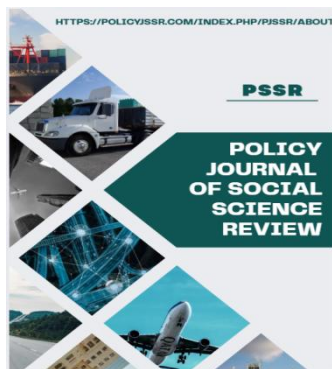
## 8. CONCLUSION

Marriage in Balochistan reflects a complex interplay between tradition and modernity. The shift from bride price and dowry to security-based expectations illustrates evolving gender dynamics, urban-rural disparities and the increasing role of economic security in marital negotiations. While women exercise more agency in demanding security, traditional patriarchal structures still shape outcomes. This study provides SPSS-ready variables for empirical

research to quantitatively measure these trends in Balochistan.

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