

The Practices of Mahr in Muslim Marriage among Rural Areas: A Study on Chapai Nawabganj District in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to assess the practices of giving mahr in Muslim marriage in the study area, explore the perception towards mahr among both male and female respondents, and examine whether the practice of mahr provides rural women with economic security after the death of husbands or termination of marriage by divorce. The present study adopts a qualitative research approach. In-depth interviews are undertaken to collect data in this research work. Thirty-five in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data in this study (both from married male and female interviewees). The study findings show that in rural areas, both male (husband) and female (wife) have the idea of mahr, though some have misconceptions about the concept. Many interviewees mention that it is the right of a wife, but the majority of them have no zeal to give or demand this exigent issue. Though many female interviewees also mentioned that mahr is solely the wife's right, they also do not express seriousness about the demand for their mahr. There are some causes behind this attitude. The present findings denote that in rural areas, sometimes it is seen that the fixation of mahr is a susceptible matter, leading to marriage annulment. In the context of mahr's paying practices in rural areas, many husbands think that they bear all the necessities of their wives, so mahr is a less important issue than the maintenance of the wife. It becomes a trend that only a tiny amount of mahr is paid on the wedding day, while an ample rest remains unpaid for most of the couple's life. It becomes a closed chapter in the marital life. While any wife sought her mahr, it became a matter of discord in the family. In addition, many husbands become angry for demanding the mahr. One common question is trust, which arises when demanding mahr from their husband; on top of that, most husbands in the rural areas mentioned that what is urgent mahr is that they are not flying away anywhere from their wives; today or tomorrow, the mahr will be paid- it is a typical dialogue among the rural husbands. Though many husbands do not give or pay the total amount of mahr, those women get mahr; it might be a small amount of the total amount since the ownership pattern is disappointing. After giving money, land, or jewelry to the wife, the husband and mother-in-law offer strict surveillance on those things. In those cases, wives also give back to their husbands. In this situation, almost all wives give back to keep peace in the family. Some of them also use one common sentence, and that is "By asking mahr or without giving back the mahr money, will I create trouble in my own family, am I so stupid?" – this line indicates the image of mahr in rural society. Mahr gives socio-economic security, while in the rural area, the majority of wives do not think or are serious about it. Many of them think it is security money but practice only a few. On the other hand, husbands also think the same idea but are not eager to pay the mahr. However, some wives are using the money to increase their financial condition. Though someone pays his mahr, in the majority of cases, there is a scenario of unwillingness rather than free of mind, which is ordered by Islam. Divorce women demand their full mahr and try to collect the total amount but face some obstacles. Because, in most cases, at the time of marriage termination, the husband starts different types of dilly-dallying to pay mahr elsewhere all widow remission of their mahr after the death of their husband. They do not raise any voice for mahr due to the causes of obloquy and emotion towards their husbands.

Keywords: Mahr, Muslim marriage, Practices, Rural area.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage means a socially recognized and legally approved union between two individuals (male and female) as spouses, and it denotes an economic as well as sexual relationship. Marriage under Islam is a social contract; in

this contract, mahr is a compulsory issue that the bridegroom pays to the bride. According to many philosophers, marriage is a religious duty; in a Muslim marriage, mahr is an inviolable and vital issue. Any Muslim marriage is not completed without imposing mahr. It is a fundamental condition and right of a wife imposed by the Quran and Sunnah. In the light of the Quran and Hadith, it is an essential part of a Muslim marriage, and there is no way to ignore it. Mahr is solely the right of a wife, and there is no other shareholder of mahr; additionally, its possession should remain under a wife.

Mahr is any amount of money or any property given by the bridegroom to the bride. It may be a particular amount of money or jewelry or any properties or all of these things collectively or any other items with value. That means mahr should have some value. Without mahr, there cannot be a Muslim marriage according to the Muslim law in Bangladesh. Mahr is a monetary gift promised by the groom to the bride at the time of marriage, and the husband must pay mahr whenever his wife requests or demands it or when he initiates a divorce (Goodarzi, 2018). It is an exclusive right of a Muslim wife and a sign of respect for a wife (Ferdousi, 2019) and it also a pre-requisite to a marriage in Islamic law (Ishant, 2021). In addition, wife is the only owner of mahr (Ahammad, 2016). No one has the right to use or take the mahr without a wife's consent, even her father, mother, or husband (Dhar, 2018). However, if a wife rebates some amount of her mahr, then a husband can easily enjoy it. Islam gives the power of the ownership of mahr to the Muslim wives, and the evidence comes from the Holy Quran as Almighty Allah states, "And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a gift; but if they, of their good pleasure, remit any part of it, then take it and enjoy." (Surah al- Nisa 4:4)

Mahr may be specified before conducting the marriage, at the marriage time, or after the wedding. Mahr is classified into two parts- 1) Specified mahr and 2) unspecified mahr. In specified mahr, the amount of mahr is stated in the marriage contract; specified dower/ mahr may either be prompt (it is payable immediately after marriage or based on demand) or deferred (it is paid at the termination of marriage either by divorce or death of husband) (Sen, 2021); on the other hand, the mahr is not specified in unspecified mahr. In these cases, a husband can settle any amount of mahr but not less than three Dirhams according to Maliki law and ten Dirhams according to Hanafi law. If the husband is destitute and unable to pay ten Dirhams, then according to the Prophet, instead of any money or other materials, they are directed to teach the Quran to the wife as the payment method of mahr (Muid, 2022). The amount of mahr should depend upon the husband's status and must be given to the wife (Ishant, 2021). It may be more or less. Generally, the amount of mahr must be determined according to the financial capacity of the groom. The bride and groom should have the right to give an opinion about the amount of mahr. But in reality, in many Muslim marriages, it is seen that in our society, the amount of mahr is determined by the guardians; whether the groom has the capacity or not, nobody cares. Many arguments and negotiations occur on both sides to fix the amount of mahr. Sometimes marriages break up due to the arguments of the amount of mahr.

There are strict Islamic rules of mahr; nevertheless, many Muslim families do not maintain these rules, and even wives are not able to practice their legal rights of mahr (Karim, 2020). Nowadays, it is seen that dowry replaces the position of mahr; dowry has become essential, and on the other hand, it has become a usage not to pay a mahr to the wife (Zakaria, 2018). In our society, people are more aware of paying dowry; on top of that, dowry becomes a severe issue for marriage while mahr becomes a trivial matter. Seldom is it exercised in our country, and for this reason, women are deprived of their right (Begum, 1996). In extreme situations like divorce or the death of their husband, only can Muslim women demand or enjoy the rights of mahr, unless they do not demand this; if they demand the mahr, they identify as hampering social values (Nasir & Pervin, 1996).

In any Muslim marriage in Bangladesh, the right of mahr is unbreakable according to both Shariah and Muslim family law (Ahmed, 2004). Though mahr is a vital part of a Muslim marriage, in some cases, the amount of mahr becomes a fashion to show a high amount of mahr, even though the groom has no capacity. In many families' a high amount of mahr becomes a symbol of aristocracy (Nasir & Pervin, 1996). In fact, mahr is the financial security of a wife (Ferdousi, 2014) and many bride family members consider the mahr as an economic security in divorce cases. On the other hand, the groom and their family sometimes think that mahr is a simple matter, and on marriage night, the bride forgives it. However, in reality, it is not a despised issue because, in a Muslim marriage, mahr is the mandatory right of a wife; without paying mahr, a husband will be treated as an adulterer in the hereafter.

Objectives

1. To assess the practices of giving mahr in Muslim marriage in the study area;
2. To explore the perception towards mahr;
3. To examine whether the practice of mahr provides rural women with economic security after their husbands' death or marriage termination by divorce.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was based on primary data; in addition to this primary data, secondary data, e.g., books, journals, public documents, websites, etc., were used. It adopted a qualitative research approach. In-depth interviews were undertaken to collect data in this research work. Thirty-five in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data for this study. There are 11 males and 24 females among 35 respondents (married male or female, widows and divorcees). After conducting 35 in-depth interviews, it was seen that the same themes were coming out repeatedly, and no additional insights were identified. That's why the researcher stopped conducting more interviews, while it became redundant.

Study area, population and sampling

Chapai Nawabganj district was selected purposively as the study area, and two upazila were chosen from this district. According to the website of Chapai Nawabganj district, there are five upazila, and among these, Chapai Nawabganj Sadar and Shibganj Upazila were selected as the study areas. The respondents were both male and female (married/ divorced/ separated). 24 female and 11 male respondents were interviewed in the study area.

Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured interview guidelines were prepared to collect the necessary data to achieve the research objectives. During the conducting of in-depth interviews, with the permission of the respondents' interviews were audio recorded, and after that, recordings were transcribed and translated into English. After translating the interviews, the data were coded, tabulated, and thematically analyzed to explore the situation.

Ethical Issues

By the consent of every interviewee, the majority parts of those interviews were recorded over the phone, and they were given complete choice to withdraw their conversation at any time during the interviews and those who were not eager to participate to give information they were not interviewed. The researcher also informed the interviewees that those data were only used for academic research and would be kept confidential. The researcher will maintain confidentiality in every step of this study.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Conception, Awareness and Paying Practice of Mahr

The study findings show that in rural areas, both male (husband) and female (wife) have the idea of mahr, though some have misconceptions. Many interviewees mention that it is the right of a wife, but most of them are not serious about taking or giving the mahr. Among 24 female interviewees, the majority of them think that mahr is the protection of occurring divorce and it is the right of a wife. Some interviewees think that if the amount is very high, it helps to prohibit the divorce rate in our society. One of the interviewees mentions, "Mahr is the ritual of protecting the occurrence of divorce; that's why my parents fixed some high range of money in my marriage. It is conducive to the married life. In my perception, if the mahr is very high, I think for considering the amount of mahr majority husband will never think about divorce." (Res-9, Zebonnesa)

The majority of the respondents have an idea about the concept of mahr, but some of them are confused about the right of ownership of the mahr. One of the interviewees stated, "I think mahr is an important part of a Muslim

marriage, and it is the right of a wife; however, I do not have a clear idea who will be the owner of this mahr, maybe wife and her parents.” (Res- 21, Ayesha)

In the context of the paying practice of mahr, most interviewees mention that their mahr is partially (nominally) paid, but the most percent of mahr is unpaid till now. In addition, it was also noticed from the study that most husbands tend to ask their wives for forgiveness on wedding night. One of them said,

“My mahr was one lack 80 thousand takas, at the time of my marriage, they gave me 20 thousand 1 hundred 1 taka. On the wedding night my husband asked for forgiveness of rest mahr, I could not say anything against him forasmuch I was newly bride and for my modesty and shame at that night. At present our married life is near about 8 years. Till now mahr is unpaid. After marriage I want my money but he did not listen, on top of that, sometimes he made trouble. For thinking the family peace, I avoid the issue.” (Res-12, Amena)

In the study area, it is noticed that many wives mention that they do not demand their due portion of mahr to keep peace at home. One of them said, “If I bring up the topic of paying my mahr, it creates a discord situation. So, I always avoid this issue, and aside from that, I have no need of money. All responsibilities go to my husband.” (Res- 10, Sharmin)

In the study area, some interviewees denote that all cost of clothing and others for a bride at marriage is considered mahr. One of them mentions that "All necessities of bridal cost is considered as my mahr and my husband gives me a nose pin as a symbol of gold. He does not give me any money or any other gold without a nose pin." (Res-1, Bristy)

However, some of their tendency is alarming in the rural areas, those belonging to the middle-class or higher-class family in the rural area. Some of them think that the amount of mahr is a prestigious issue. A high range of mahr is much preferable for them; instead, they cannot protect their respect in society. Those who have a high amount of mahr feel proud, and it does not matter for most of them whether the mahr is paid or unpaid, but they become satisfied with the high amount of mahr. One of them mentions, "At my marriage my father announces that under 5 lack takas, he did not fix my marriage. Because my relatives are laughing to listen to lower range of mahr." (Res-6, Lima)

While most interviewees denote the unpaid mahr, only two interviewees among 24 interviewees demonstrate that their mahr is fully paid at the time of marriage. One of them mentions, "Since my mahr was very low, only 50 thousand takas, that's why my husband and my father-in-law paid the full amount of mahr with some taka and gold jewelry." (Res-15, Asma)

Many of them think mahr as a security money but do not demand due to keep the family peace. Another one mentioned,

"My mahr is fully paid. One or two years after marriage, our couple's relationship became very degraded day by day. Marital discord is occurred almost a day. At that time, my husband decided to get a divorce, that's why suddenly, one day, he gave me 50 thousand takas for my mahr, but I did not get a divorce. After getting money, I use it as my financial support. By using this money, I buy some goat and enlarge my farm day by day. For this I think it is a security for every wife." (Res-7, Rojoni)

This study conducted 11 male interviews, apart from 24 female interviews. It is noticed that except for a few interviewees, they all have the same attitude towards the mahr. Though all accept mahr as the right of a wife (but only for showing off, not in mind. If they feel in mind, they must pay their mahr) and say that it is to be paid. In reality, most of them say it's a matter of discord if any wife demands her mahr. While the husband sustains her wife, demanding mahr becomes an extravagance matter; on top of that, the husband is not running away anywhere. Today or tomorrow, he must give mahr if his wife does not forgive. They also hint at a bit of payment of mahr on the marriage day. The following excerpt denotes the situation. One of the male respondents mentions, "At the time of marriage I paid some portion of mahr. I bear the cost of my wife so, what can she do with the money of mahr." (Res- 3, Dulal)

Another denotes that, “I agree towards the mahr, but if wife wants, she can easily forgive that, because husband

has many responsibilities in a family, while a wife has no responsibility. Apart from, since she has no cost, even I bring what is needed when, then what is needed to give mahr separately.” (Res- 1, Anish)

Among eleven (11) respondents, one mentions that “Mahr is the solely of a wife and I paid the full amount of my wife’s mahr.” (Res-5, Habibur)

Though most respondents give on the slip about the payment of mahr, they are not serious towards the mahr. But at the same time, they also said that it is to be paid.

Majority of them think that their wife forgives it. So, majority have no concern towards paying for it.

Some male interviewees think that their wives have no cost, so if they give their wives some money, they may give them to their parent’s house. That’s why they think paying them the mahr money is unnecessary. One of them stated, “I agree that it is the only right of a wife, but I think that my wife has no economic responsibilities in my family, if I give any amount of money in the purpose of mahr, she gives it to her parents or sister. For this reason, I do not give her.” (Res-8, Moshlem)

Some interviewees mention that a high amount of mahr becomes a fashion in many families, while the paying capability of a husband is not considered. Instead, the majority emphasized the high amount of mahr, which becomes a burden for a husband. One interviewee mentioned that,

“During my marriage, the bride parents and relatives announce that their daughter is not cheap. In that moment some argument was created but because of new groom, I could not talk against their opinion. I conceded their fixation of mahr amount and think that the amount will not pay in my life. In addition, I also think that I ask forgive for the mahr to my wife and I have a confidence that she will forgive me and did so.” (Res-6, Mobarak)

In the case of divorce, majority women face difficulties to collect their mahr. They need the help of others and in majority cases, husbands show dilly-dallying to pay mahr elsewhere all widow remission of their mahr after the death of their husband. They do not raise any voice for mahr due to the causes of obloquy and emotion towards their husbands.

Ownership Pattern of Mahr

The study shows that most married women did not get their total mahr; among 35 interviewees, only three mentioned that their mahr is fully paid. Other interviewees get or give a small amount of money or some money and jewelry as their payment of mahr. However, it is denoted that only two interviewees have completed control over their mahr, while others have no strong controlling power towards their mahr.

One interviewee mentioned,

“During my marriage time my husband gave me earrings and some money (501 takas). But after my marriage I want to make a ring instead of earrings. So, I decided to broke those earrings but my mother-in-law forbidden me and told that it is the sign of marriage. For this reason, I cannot break it. I think I only use it but main right is going to my mother-in-law and my husband is acquiescent of his mother.” (Res-5, Shorifa)

Another denoted, “My mahr was 50 thousand takas, and during my marriage program, they paid the full amount of mahr with jewelry and 40 thousand takas. But after my marriage, my husband told me to give some money to help him to carry his business. So, I gave all of those money.” (Res- 13, Moriom)

One interviewee mentioned, “My husband gives me a small paddy land as my mahr, but I have no right over that land. I do not talk about this because in my previous experience, I see that when I want to talk about my mahr, in that time, discord is created. So, for the peace of my family, I ignore it. Rather my mahr, I want peace in my family.” (Res-17, Shufia)

However, many women are not serious and aware of the mahr ownership. One of them denoted, “What should I do with the mahr, because family is both the husbands and wives.” (Res- 18, Liza)

“My husband died for two years ago, my mahr was 50 thousand takas, it was unpaid and after his death, I forgive him. Where, that man was not alive, what can I do with mahr. However, sometime I think that if I get the money of my mahr, at present time I can utilize that amount, I may do something with that.” (Res-24, Asra)

Like many wives, the majority of the husbands are not serious about giving control over the mahr. One of them said, “Wives remain at home, they have no responsibilities towards the economic side of a family, so, ownership of money or land as mahr is remain under the husband control, the family become very well.” (Res- 10, Hasib)

Some are serious about giving control over the mahr, but its number is low. Among ten male interviewees, only one mentioned that “Mahr is the solely the right of a wife and for this, I give mahr to my wife. Apart from she has full right of this mahr.” (Res- 7, Lokman)

Mahr Consider as a Socio-economic Security

The study shows that most married women thought mahr as a financial security but they did not get their total mahr; for keeping peace in family they remained mute in the right of mahr. However, it was common in this study that mahr can play a vital role to ensure socio-economic security in a woman life and this was the thinking of woman; on the other hand, majority husband was not agreed about this concept. They thought that husband is enough for wife's security, because husband provides everything for a wife's in a couple life. It was revealed that though husbands were thought this but they said that absence of husband, mahr can contribute for ensuring wife's financial security. “After my divorce I feel insecure and could not think of re-marriage with my daughter, in that time the money of my mahr played a vital role and by using those money I could started my business and can contribute for my daughter. So, I think mahr is very important to ensure financial security of a woman's life.” (Res-16, Muslima)

“My mahr is 3 lacks, but it is unpaid. If I get those money I can contribute to my parent's family as well as fulfill my personal necessities. My husband wants explanation if I demand any amount of money for needs, it is very disrespectful for me.” (Res- 11, Akhi)

DISCUSSION

Knowledge, Awareness and Paying Practices of Mahr

The present study elicits that the majority of the rural people, both male and female, have the idea that the mahr is a momentous part of a Muslim marriage and it is the right of a wife, notwithstanding the majority (male and female) have no zeal to give or demand to this exigent issue. Though many female interviewees mentioned that mahr is solely the wife's right, they also did not express seriousness to the demand of their mahr. There are some causes behind this attitude- 1) rural wives became silent in demanding mahr to keep peace in the family. 2) many wives are unaware of their right to mahr, and they think that they have no economic responsibilities, which is why they don't need the mahr; a majority of rural husbands also think the same. 3) some wives think that mahr is only paid at the time of the divorce.

In the rural area in Bangladesh, there is a common conception towards mahr that it offers protection against divorce. Many people contemplate that though mahr is the wife's right, it is a ritual and connected to the divorce. Study findings indicate mahr is a wife's right, and the amount of mahr works as a protection against divorce. A high amount of mahr can protect against divorce, and for this high range, it becomes a matter of fright for the husband to give talaq. Some studies contiguous to this also indicate that the main object of mahr is to protect against the use of divorce (Ferdousi, 2019) and apart from divorce, it indicates the protection of arbitrary use of divorce. (Hussain, 2013), (Chowdhury, 2010).

The present findings denote that in rural areas, sometimes it is seen that the fixation of mahr is a compassionate matter. In some cases, a dispute arises to fix the amount of mahr, leading to marriage annulment. It is also supported by one previous study coherent to this, where it was revealed that some marriages are void and, in many cases, conflict is a common scenario for the time of mahr fixation (Islam & Hoque, 2006).

Some wives are unaware towards their right to mahr. Since women have no economic responsibilities in our

society, women consider that the main owner of all things in the family is the husband. So mahr money is not so important for them, while they have no cost. Many husbands in the study area also support this issue. They also think they bear all the necessities of their wives, so there is less important thing is mahr besides this maintenance of the wife. One research adjacent to this also reported the same scenario of husband's deservs (Hussain, 2013).

The present study demonstrates that in rural areas, a high amount of mahr becomes a fashion in middle-class families, while some husbands and wives thought that mahr amount was a prestigious issue. If the amount is meager, many wives do not agree to conduct a marriage. One study shows that this trend is much more available in the urban area than in the rural area (Islam & Hoque, 2006). However, this trend is also seen in rural areas, while middle-class families consider the high amount of mahr as a prestigious issue. It also reveals that low-range mahr is instantly paid on the marriage day in the rural area. Some families willingly fixed a low-range mahr for the purpose of being fully paid.

It also reveals from this current study that in rural areas, some husbands are worried about the thinking of keeping mahr money to the parents or sisters of the wives. For this, they do not give any money for mahr.

However, some husbands are aware of the mahr and pay their wives the total amount of mahr, though the rate is very ignorable. On top of that, only a few rural wives are aware of their rights and raise their voices despite the turmoil. They are very mindful of the concept of mahr and its practice. However, the awareness rate is meager, and this is also shown among educated women (Karim, 2020).

This study revealed that in the study area, some families consider the marriage gift, including shari and cosmetics, as a payment of mahr. All costs of buying the dress for the bride are also included in the amount of mahr, which contradicts the Islamic concept of mahr. Marriage gift or cost is different from the mahr, and it is defined in a research work (Quraishi-Landes, 2016).

The present study denotes the same scenario towards the paying practices of mahr in the rural area. It becomes a trend that only a tiny amount of mahr is paid on the wedding day, while an ample rest remains unpaid for most of the couple's life. It becomes a closed chapter in the marital life. While any wife sought her mahr, it became a matter of discord in the family. In addition, many husbands become angry for demanding the mahr. One common question is trust, which arises when demanding mahr from the husband; on top of that, the majority of husbands in the rural area mentioned that what is urgent of mahr, they are not fly away anywhere from their wives. Today or tomorrow, the mahr will be paid- it is a typical dialogue among the rural husband. Besides husbands, most wives also think they do not need to provoke their husbands to create unhealthy situations to start the discussion of mahr. Rural women do not want to spoil their marital life by presenting the mahr issue to their husbands. One study also supported this and added women's more vulnerable situation to demand the mahr. In that research, it is reported that many women face impendence of divorce for demanding mahr from their husband (Hussain, 2013). Some women demand their mahr after marriage but do not stay firm on their demand to keep peace in the family. In the time of demanding mahr, it is found that in most cases, either husbands avoid the issue or get angry. Achieving this worse experience of demanding mahr, many wives intentionally avoid the context of mahr. They think family peace is the main priority and then something else.

In the context of the husband's opinion, it is denoted many husbands are careless towards paying mahr. One study also marked this uneagerness of husbands (Quraishi-Landes, 2016), while some of them mention that they give and bear all the responsibilities of their wives, so it is unnecessary to reopen the topic of marital life. Otherwise, different types of discord arise. In addition, wives give pardon to mahr.

On the wedding night, the newly married bride cannot talk or demand to her due mahr to the obloquy of relatives or others. By using this situation of fear of obloquy and emotion, many husbands sought to waive mahr to their wives on the wedding night. As a result, only a few amounts of mahr are paid with some money or ornaments or other accessories. Coherent to this research, one study's findings also demonstrate a similar picture. While mahr is a compulsory issue, the majority of mahr remains unpaid, and husbands usually become used to seeking waive from their wives during wedding night (Ferdousi, 2019).

Mahr is the gift from a husband to a wife (Schawlowski, 2011), however, only a few amounts are paid during

the wedding; interestingly, some husbands assume that mahr is the formality of marriage, while the wife will forgive the rest of the mahr. They think that the fixation of the high amount of mahr, without the consideration of the capability of a husband, becomes a burden for a husband. Despite this thinking, they cannot rise their voice during the fixation of mahr because of the fear of breaking up a marriage, public embarrassment, and pre-thinking of not paying the total amount.

In the case of divorced women, they demand their full mahr and try to collect the total amount but face some obstacles. Because, in most cases, at the time of marriage termination, the husband starts different types of dilly-dallying to pay mahr elsewhere all widow remission of their mahr after the death of their husband. They do not raise any voice for mahr due to the causes of obloquy and emotion towards their husbands, even though there is a rare case that after the father's death, any children take the initiative to pay their father's debt of mahr.

Mahr Ownership Patterns

Mahr is a token of respect and a gift to a wife from a husband; its ownership control must be given to a wife (Wani, 2001). It is denoted from this study that though many husbands do not give or pay the total amount of mahr, those women get mahr; it might be a small amount or the full since the ownership pattern is disappointing. After giving money, land or jewelry to the wife, the husband and mother-in-law give strict surveillance on those things. Sometimes, the husband demands to know or take the mahr. Of those who have paid their mahr to their wife as cash money during marriage day, most of them seek that money after giving it to their wives. In those cases, wives also give back to their husbands. In this situation, almost all wives give back to keep peace in the family. Some of them also use one typical sentence: "By asking mahr or without give back the mahr money, will I cause trouble in my own family, am I so stupid?" – this line indicates the image of mahr in rural society.

Those who give land, as to the mahr, also do not provide control over the land. Above that, they keep up those things instead of giving their wife in the study area. Only the husband gives mahr nominally, but the central control remains under them rather than a wife (Hussain, 2013).

Further, in the rural areas, many wives are not sincere; they also give up their rights with their own wish. It is not possible to seek mahr from a husband in a typical couple's life; if anyone raises her voice about mahr, the family becomes a place of discord, or husbands become offended, and it unfolds either silently or boldly, which is upheld by one study coherent to this. It indicated that the husband is fully aware of their demand, but when it is the turn of the wife, he forgets religion (Hussain, 2013).

Mahr Ensures Socio-economic Security: Unbreakable Right in a Muslim Marriage

Mahr is the husband's gift to her wife on the wedding day and is the rule of Islam. Mahr gives socio-economic security, while most wives are not thinking or serious about it in rural areas. Many think it is security money, but only a few practices. On the other hand, the husband also presumes the same idea but is not eager to pay the mahr. However, some wives are using the money to increase their financial condition.

Mahr is a financial security for a wife (Quraishi-Landes, 2016) and this is supported by the majority of rural women, while only a few males are thought so. Despite the majority of wives in the rural area supposing so, however, they do not demand mahr. But they want if their husbands give them willingly. Some wives who get their mahr use it as their financial security, but to keep the peace, they return the money to their husband and think that they should return this; otherwise, the husband becomes angry with her.

Divorcee women use their mahr as their security and majority start a new step of their life by ensuring the proper utilizing that mahr, but face difficulties to gather mahr after divorce and it also supported by one study (Islam, Romel, & Bari, 2022).

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In a Muslim marriage, mahr is a compulsory issue; no one can deny it in the light of Islam. It is a sign of respect and love of a husband to his wife, and it is ordained by Islam. However, in the rural area, it becomes just a matter

of formality during marriage. Husbands are not aware of the payment of mahr, and many wives are also aloof from demanding their right to mahr. However, wives are also avoiding this issue on account of the fear of family discord. They give priority to family peace rather than their right. Husbands become dissatisfied with demanding mahr of wives; owing to this, wives prefer to avoid the issue of mahr consciously. Some wives are unaware of the mahr; they think, how could I do with that money, while the family belongs to both husband and wife. On the contrary, many husbands in rural areas tend not to pay the mahr, whether it is less or more.

In the scenario of ownership pattern, it is revealed that most wives in the rural area have no control over their mahr money, jewelry or others. Again, most rural women consider the mahr as a socio-economic security for them, but they avoid it due to keeping the peace. In the present era, women are sufficiently aware of their rights in the fields of politics, economics and social sector in the society; rather, despite their participation, they are less mindful towards the enjoyment of mahr. To avoid violent marital life, most wives in rural areas ignore their right to mahr. Some are also not aware of their mahr. On top of that, almost all husbands are reluctant to pay their wives their debts. Though someone pays his mahr, in most cases, there is a scenario of unwillingness rather than free of mind, which is ordered by Islam. Both men and women have to be more conscious about the mahr issue.

Education is very much important to create awareness among rural women about Islamic Law and concept of mahr as a women's right. Empowering women economically can improve the practices of mahr. Religious leaders like Imam of Mosque should engage to preach about mahr and its importance in Islamic marriage as well as kazi has some duties during marriage to the bride and groom to inspire them to practice paying the total amount of mahr. Media engagement can promote the giving and receiving practices of mahr legally. Establishing fair and appropriate mahr spiritual guidance can be given to the rural couples. Local Government should provide access to legal aid for women who are southing to claim their mahr. The concept of mahr should be inserted in the curriculum. Overall, government, NGOs and civil society have the responsibility to ensure the legal practices of mahr.

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