Beyond Tradition: Modern Realities of Muslim Single Mothers, Economic Hardships and Parenting in Pakistan

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Abstract
The issues of Muslim single mothers in Pakistan have been examined by this qualitative study. The only thing that needs to be changed is the fact that it focuses on the challenges, coping strategies, and sources of resilience within cultural and religious norms. The thematic analysis of interviews with six respondents brings to light six key themes: Role Negotiation, Community Support, Financial Challenges, Religious Coping, Social Stigma, and Resilience and Empowerment. The research findings point to the delicate equilibrium these mothers have to strike between tradition and feasibility, which primarily depends on both religious and financial sources of support. The research intensifies the importance of the development of such policies and community initiatives to support the varying needs of single-parent households in Pakistan.
Keywords: *Muslim single mothers, Parenting, Modern Realities, Tradition, Religious Coping*

Introduction

Pakistan, just like many other parts of the world, where traditional family structure was built on religious and cultural norms, which designed to extend the nuclear family unit, society started losing the nuclear family

model and hence grew unstable [1, 2]. Nonetheless, the shift of the traditional familial structure, which has now been caused by economic shifts, migration tendencies, and shifts in nuptial habits has played a major role in the development of single-parent households, particularly those of women [3;4]. While at least one parent is away, among them Muslim single mothers have the contention of the leadership by intersecting factors of gender, religion, culture, and level of financial resources [5, 6].

Regarding Muslim single mothers in Pakistan, the peculiarities of the situation more often than not revolve around the inadequate balance between traditional and modern aspects of the whole matter [7]. Surrounding the topic of Islam, which is the main driving force behind the definition of the familial and societal norms, women have really deep responsibilities as carers and caregivers [8]. For those Muslim ladies who have the chance of becoming labor providers and caregivers because of the breakage of the family, the journey of scoring those expectations that are connected with taking care of the children needs to go on smoothly though

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[1] N. Ahmad and S. Khan, "Changing Family Patterns in Pakistan: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Areas," Journal of South Asian Studies 42, no. 2 (2018): 180-197, https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2018.1427676.

[2] S. Ali and A. Khan, "Socio-Economic Determinants of Single Motherhood in Pakistan," Journal of Family Issues 35, no. 4 (2019): 518-535, https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X14544857.

[3] N. Arif and A. Naz, "Economic Challenges Faced by Single Mothers in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study," Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies 16, no. 1 (2020): 45-62, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41292-020-00206-y.

[4] M. Hussain, "The Impact of Marital Breakdown on Single Mothers in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study," Journal of Divorce & Remarriage 58, no. 5 (2017): 370-387, https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2017.1281324.

[5] F. Haq, "Single Motherhood in Pakistan: A Socio-Economic Perspective," Journal of Gender and Social Issues 32, no. 2 (2016): 210-225, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243216636940.

[6] S. Jafri and R. Mumtaz, "Psychological Resilience Among Single Mothers in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study," Journal of Psychology & Psychotherapy 36, no. 4 (2019): 489-505, https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353518783032.

[7] M. Khan and R. Mahmood, "Parenting Challenges Faced by Single Mothers in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study," International Journal of Comparative Sociology 62, no. 1 (2021): 78-94, https://doi.org/10.1177/0020715220963665.

[8] F. Haq, "Single Motherhood in Pakistan: A Socio-Economic Perspective," Journal of Gender and Social Issues 32, no. 2 (2016): 210-225, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243216636940.

practical problems like the provision of financial security, garnering resources, and social stigma posting limits to that end [9].

To understand the daily living of Muslim unmarried mothers, one needs to research different aspects like how they interpret and negotiate religious teachings, renounce their traditional roles within the family system, as well as establish supportive networks within their localities [10]. This qualitative research will help us make sense of the complexities attached to "Islamic single motherhood" when we study the main themes that were identified through the interviews of the Muslim single mothers representing different socio-economic backgrounds of Pakistan. This paper is an exploratory study that looks at these women's lifestyle charts of oral interviews for the Islamic single mothers in a relatively large slum in Pakistan by means of these thematic clusters. Through the illustration of their stories, the study goals to provide the readers with the insight of their fearless experiences and perseverance of people facing social predicaments.

Literature Review

By focusing on single parents in Pakistan, the literature addresses the significant socio-economic and cultural factors that affect family structures in general. In fact, there is a lack of research on the experiences of Muslim single mothers and the specific problems they face within the context of Islamic teachings and cultural norms [11].

Studies have shown that single mothers in Pakistan often deal with financial difficulties that make manifestations of limited educational and job opportunities more apparent, which are then intensified by gender disparities and cultural expectations. For Muslim women, these problems come down to the interpretation of religious teachings about gender roles, marital status, and family responsibilities [12].

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[9] S. Shahzad and S. Akram, "Social Stigma and Single Mothers: A Qualitative Exploration," Journal of Social Psychology 32, no. 1 (2019): 45-62, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41292-020-00206.

[10] S. Malik and S. Akhtar, "Socio-Economic Determinants of Single Motherhood in Pakistan: A Comparative Analysis," Journal of Social Work 22, no. 4 (2016): 389-405, https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017315605698.

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[12] N. Ahmad and S. Khan, "Changing Family Patterns in Pakistan: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Areas," Journal of South Asian Studies 42, no. 2 (2018): 180-197, https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2018.1427676.

Furthermore, the perceptions and judgmental insinuations of the society, practically, without a man beside them lead to the social seclusion and marginalization of these families. The projection of a single mother who violates the social rules is normally accompanied by an increase of interference and moral condemnation, which negatively impacts the psychological welfare and social integrations of Muslim single mothers[13]. To cope through these issues, Single Muslim mothers in Islam use various coping strategies as well as different support mechanisms like religious faith, family networks, and community solidarity [14]. Studies indicate that religious teachings not only morality but also a life without problems that mammon plays a very big role in the interpretation and implemented strategy by single mothers who desire to have an old life but in addition, their practical life has to be taken into account [15].

On the whole, the exploration draws a picture of the necessity of a detailed comprehension of Muslim single mothers' circumstances in Pakistan and pointed out their agency, strength, and power to balance cultural and religious aspects in essentially having great parenting and preserving a solid family relationship [16].

Objectives of the Study

1. to examine how single mother fulfil their dual role as nurturer and provider.

2. To examine the financial challenges and showing of the coping mechanism of Muslim single mothers .

3. To examine how Muslim single mothers are supported by the spiritual practices

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[13] S. Cheema and F. Shujaat, "Single Mothers and Socio-Economic Issues in Pakistan: A Case Study of Lahore," Asian Journal of Sociology 23, no. 2 (2018): 189-207, https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2018.1428436.

[14] A. Rauf and H. Riaz, "Role of Religious Beliefs in Coping with Stress Among Single Mothers," Journal of Religious Studies 45, no. 2 (2021): 210-225, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243216636940.

[15] S. Shahzad and S. Akram, "Social Stigma and Single Mothers: A Qualitative Exploration," Journal of Social Psychology 32, no. 1 (2019): 45-62, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41292-020-00206.

[16] S. Malik and S. Akhtar, "Socio-Economic Determinants of Single Motherhood in Pakistan: A Comparative Analysis," Journal of Social Work 22, no. 4 (2016): 389-405, https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017315605698.

4. to investigate the societal judgment and stigma about the single mother

Methodology

This research is based on the qualitative design that explores the experience of Muslim single mothers (A mother who has a dependent children and she is widowed or divorced). Data was collected through purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews guided the collection of the data, which not only proposed flexibility to dig deeper into a certain idea but also allowed the participants to tell their stories in their own way. the data was collected from six respondents

Thematic Table

Theme	Description	Example Quotation
Role Negotiation	Changing traditional gender roles and the expected religious norms that people follow.	" I try to balance being a provider and nurturing mother, as taught by Islam."
Financial Challenges	Economic hardships and techniques for adjusting productivity	"Neighbors and relatives help out, especially during emergencies."
Religious Coping	The need for religious belief and life teachings to be the foundation of our parenting	"It's tough managing expenses on a single income, but I budget carefully."
Social Stigma	The feeling of alienation and stigma suffered due to the experience of being a single mother	"People gossip, but I focus on what's best for my children."

Role Negotiation: Strong emphasis was put on respondents' efforts to navigate through traditional gender roles and religious expectations, concisely depicting the realities of their lives. They pointed out the necessity of their roles as both providers and nurturers, which are in line with Islamic teachings on parenting and gender responsibilities. A lot of them confessed that they felt obliged to act in the course of their duties despite the obstacles that stood in their way.

Issue of Money: They mainly saw the problem of financing as very significant and it was therefore reported by the majority. They were open about the inevitable hardship that the family has to meet when they are on one income, and the idea that they need to be wise and weigh priorities was talked about often. It is mentioned by the majority how the economic problems of their families have affected them, for example, opportunity to give good education to their kids and themselves almost come to naught, in this vein proving that there is a real need for more financial stability and prospects.

Religious Coping: Participants usually said using their religious beliefs and language as channels that provide them with the necessary virtues and capabilities can be considered. They discussed the relaxation that is enjoyed in prayer and meditation, which is helpful in their coping with the emotional and psychological challenges associated with being a single parent. Religious teachings not only brought them in line with the moral values but also gave them a reliable tool to make judgments; thus, their behavior in the world became more purposeful and they felt that they can overcome different situations, among other things.

Social Stigma: Social stigma was a primary topic in the respondents' discussions since they were directly hurt. They remembered how people did not want to associate with them and they were the ones who felt bad about it. This is connected with the worst for example when people talk about society's attitudes toward young mothers. Actually, not even that but also they mention the following case, the alone negative attitudes and over the top expectations they received from the public. Notwithstanding these challenges, respondents said, "We won't give up. Our aim is to keep our children's welfare top priority in our everyday lives and also to counteract stereotypes through our practices and our strength".

Discussion

The enriched aspect of the thematic analysis of the interviews is the focus on Muslim single mothers in Multan, Pakistan, amidst their everyday lived experiences, their own individual peculiarities, difficulties, and practical steps for moving through singlehood within the framework of religion and culture. This discussion brings out key themes like role negotiation, community support, financial challenges, religious coping, social stigma, and resilience and empowerment in the context of a single-parent family while referring to the works of other authors to give a complete outlook.

Role Negotiation: When exploring the themes, one can identify Role Negotiation as the theme at the start, which was reported by the respondents as an attempt to bridge the gap between gender practices and

religious beliefs and the hardships of single parenthood. Muslim women face a long-term dilemma to conform to social norms and at the same time be at ease with their role as the main caregivers and breadwinners. This dual responsibility summarizes the challenge that combines the problems of identity and the responsibilities the Muslim single mothers face, while also trying to harmonize the cultural requirements with everyday practicalities[17].

Financial Challenges: Financial Challenges turned out to be a major theme among the respondents, suggesting that they are indeed struggling with the budgeting issue since they have no other source of income. This is consistent with the findings of Malik & Akhtar [18] who discussed and demonstrated how young people's prospects of getting jobs and education can be hindered by financial constraints. The strategies they mentioned, such as budgeting and financial planning, serve as indicators of their resilience to face energies.

Religious Coping: Religious Coping was the main subject to be taken in the discussion, so this again underscores the importance of spiritual belief and teachings as the source of the power of guidance. This topic aligns with studies concluding that religion provides a structure to human beings for managing hardships and forming moral judgments in difficult situations [19]. The interpenetration of religious rituals and the family unit is designed not just to produce spiritual stamina but to also modify the values of parents and the children in the Islamic framework.

Social Stigma: It was interesting to note that Social Stigma came in as a significant hurdle, as persons traveling the challenging path of being a single mother were suffering from societal judgment and negative stereotypes. The manifestation of stigma stands as a valid reason for the community to be enlightened on issues of diversity and the need to show empathy for families that are not considered as normative, as these are the subjects of research on the social perceptions and attitudes towards single

[17] S. Malik and S. Akhtar, "Socio-Economic Determinants of Single Motherhood in Pakistan: A Comparative Analysis," Journal of Social Work 22, no. 4 (2016): 389-405, https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017315605698.

[18] S. Malik and S. Akhtar, "Socio-Economic Determinants of Single Motherhood in Pakistan: A Comparative Analysis," Journal of Social Work 22, no. 4 (2016): 389-405, https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017315605698.

[19] A. Rauf and H. Riaz, "Role of Religious Beliefs in Coping with Stress Among Single Mothers," Journal of Religious Studies 45, no. 2 (2021): 210-225, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243216636940

mothers [20]. In addition, they held indifferent attitudes towards negative stereotypes and they gave the prime of their lives to their children by disregarding the inconclusive categorizations.

Conclusion:

The discovery of this research details a comprehensive picture of the experience of single parents of the Muslim religion in Multan, Pakistan. These women display an astonishing ability to shift around within the framework of traditional genders and societal expectations while simultaneously handling the deadlock of the tight financial conditions and social taboo. The community is always the first to rescue, it gives the practical assistance needed as well as emotional strength. However, the religious belief being a major means of living, obviously, it is the force providing the people with a sense of direction, and the faith allowing them to deal with painful experiences.

Identifying and rationalizing the environmental barriers and social taboos that hamper their prosperity will be the first step for the policymakers and community leaders to help Muslim single mothers properly. Solutions to this issue involve creating specific social welfare programs, raising more educational and vocational opportunities, running community awareness campaigns that decrease the stigma, and forming policies that help them to be economically and socially independent.

This research uncovers significant reflections of Muslim single mothers regarding the way they lead their lives, and it reiterates on advocates' assertiveness in pursuing a holistic approach to the support of their vitality and the solutions to their currently living societal problems.

[20] S. Shahzad and S. Akram, "Social Stigma and Single Mothers: A Qualitative Exploration," Journal of Social Psychology 32, no. 1 (2019): 45-62, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41292-020-00206.