

Islamic Solutions for Family Issues in Urban Pakistan

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Abstract

Family issues in urban Pakistan have emerged as a significant challenge, fueled by rapid urbanization, shifting cultural norms, and the influence of modernity. This study explores the Islamic solutions to prevalent family issues, emphasizing their relevance and applicability in the urban context. By examining key issues such as marital conflicts, rising divorce rates, intergenerational gaps, financial stress, and the erosion of traditional family structures, this research highlights the critical need for value-based interventions. Islamic teachings offer comprehensive guidance to strengthen family units through principles of mutual respect, patience, and effective communication. The study draws upon Quranic injunctions, Prophetic traditions, and Islamic jurisprudence to propose solutions such as promoting strong marital bonds, ensuring parental responsibility, and fostering financial discipline. Furthermore, it underscores the role of community leaders, religious scholars, and family counseling centers in implementing these solutions. A comparative analysis of Islamic and contemporary approaches reveals that Sharia-based interventions are not only culturally relevant but also sustainable in addressing family challenges. However, this research identifies barriers such as lack of awareness, misinterpretations of Islamic teachings, and institutional constraints that hinder the practical application of these solutions. The study concludes with policy recommendations, including the

establishment of Sharia-compliant family counseling centers, awareness campaigns, and the integration of Islamic family values in educational curricula. These measures aim to strengthen family systems and foster social harmony in urban Pakistan, demonstrating the enduring relevance of Islamic principles in modern times.

Keywords: Islamic solutions, family issues, urban Pakistan, marital conflicts, Islamic teachings, Sharia-compliant policies.

Introduction:

Family is the cornerstone of any society, shaping its moral, social, and cultural fabric. In Islam, the family holds a central position, with clear guidelines aimed at fostering harmony, mutual respect, and strong interpersonal bonds. However, in urban Pakistan, rapid urbanization, modern lifestyles, and exposure to global cultural influences have significantly transformed traditional family structures. These changes have led to a rise in family-related issues, including marital conflicts, divorce, financial strains, and intergenerational misunderstandings.

While contemporary solutions often focus on psychological and social approaches, Islamic teachings provide a holistic framework rooted in spiritual, emotional, and practical principles to address such challenges.⁽¹⁾

This research investigates the key family issues faced by urban households in Pakistan and explores the applicability of Islamic solutions in mitigating these challenges.

The study delves into Quranic injunctions, Prophetic traditions, and Islamic jurisprudence to present actionable recommendations. Additionally, it identifies barriers such as lack of awareness and institutional constraints that impede the effective implementation of these solutions.⁽²⁾

By analyzing both Islamic and contemporary approaches, this research aims to demonstrate the relevance of Islamic principles in strengthening family systems and promoting social cohesion in urban Pakistan.

This article not only highlights the growing need for Sharia-compliant interventions but also offers policy recommendations to integrate Islamic teachings into urban family dynamics, ensuring a balanced and harmonious society.

Key Family Issues in Urban Pakistan:

The family unit in urban Pakistan faces a variety of challenges, exacerbated by the dynamics of modernization, urbanization and globalization.⁽³⁾

These issues are reshaping the traditional family structure, creating new pressures that often lead to emotional, financial, and social instability.

Marital Conflicts and Rising Divorce Rates:

Marital conflicts and divorce rates have surged in urban Pakistan, driven by evolving social dynamics and pressures. Factors such as lack of effective communication, unrealistic expectations, financial stress, and time constraints often strain relationships.⁽⁴⁾

Urban lifestyles, characterized by dual-income households and high stress levels, leave little time for couples to nurture their emotional connection. Additionally, the influence of media and shifting cultural norms has altered perceptions of marriage, with many prioritizing individual freedom over compromise and collective well-being.

These issues are further compounded by the diminishing role of extended families, who traditionally provided guidance and support during marital disputes. Without such interventions, conflicts often escalate to separation or divorce. Addressing these challenges requires promoting Islamic values of patience, mutual respect, and conflict resolution to strengthen marital bonds and reduce divorce rates.

Erosion of Traditional Family Structures:

The erosion of traditional family structures in urban Pakistan is a significant issue, as rapid urbanization and modernization have led to shifts in family dynamics.⁽⁵⁾

The traditional extended family model, which emphasized close-knit relationships and mutual support among multiple generations, has been gradually replaced by nuclear families in urban settings. This shift has reduced the availability of familial support systems, leaving individuals to navigate life's challenges independently.

In urban environments, the pressures of modern life—such as work commitments, financial demands, and the pursuit of individual success—often result in weakened familial bonds.⁽⁶⁾

The lack of intergenerational interaction has led to diminished guidance for younger generations and a lack of caregiving support for the elderly. Moreover, the absence of extended family members in daily life has limited opportunities for conflict resolution and the sharing of responsibilities.

This erosion challenges the social fabric of Pakistani society, which has traditionally valued the extended family as a key pillar for emotional, financial, and caregiving support. To address this, there is a need for a balance between modernity and the preservation of Islamic family values that emphasize mutual support, respect, and collective well-being.

Intergenerational Gaps:

Intergenerational gaps in urban Pakistan have become increasingly pronounced as a result of modernization, changing educational systems, and the influence of global media.⁽⁷⁾

These gaps manifest in differences in values, attitudes, and lifestyle choices between parents and their children, creating tensions within families. Young people, influenced by contemporary trends, often adopt more liberal perspectives on issues like marriage, career, and personal freedoms, which may conflict with the more traditional views held by their parents.

The rapid pace of technological advancements and media exposure has also contributed to this divide, with younger generations becoming more immersed in digital cultures that may not align with the values upheld by older generations.⁽⁸⁾

This divergence in worldviews can lead to misunderstandings, communication breakdowns, and familial conflicts, weakening the emotional bonds between parents and children.

In many cases, parents struggle to guide their children in a rapidly changing environment, while children may feel misunderstood or constrained by traditional expectations. To bridge this gap, it is crucial to foster open communication, mutual respect, and understanding, drawing on Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of honoring parents and nurturing the next generation. By integrating these values with contemporary realities, families can work toward greater harmony and cohesion across generations.

Financial Strains and Work-Life Balance:

In urban Pakistan, financial strains and the challenge of maintaining a work-life balance are key contributors to family stress. As the cost of living in cities rises, many families find it necessary for both spouses to work, leading to dual-income households. While this financial arrangement helps meet basic needs, it often results in long working hours, leaving little time for family interactions or personal well-being. The demands of balancing work responsibilities with household duties can lead to fatigue, stress, and emotional disconnect between family members.

Additionally, the pressure to meet societal expectations of material success can intensify financial stress, especially when families are living paycheck to paycheck or dealing with job instability. This financial insecurity can lead to frequent arguments, particularly in households where the roles and responsibilities of each partner are not clearly defined. The imbalance between work and family life also impacts children, who may receive less attention and emotional support from their parents.

Islamic principles emphasize the importance of balance, guiding families to prioritize both their spiritual and material needs while fostering a nurturing environment at home.⁽⁹⁾

Encouraging mutual responsibility, financial planning, and time management can help alleviate these stresses, enabling families to achieve a healthier work-life balance and reduce financial strain.

Influence of Media and Modernity:

The influence of media and modernity in urban Pakistan has played a significant role in reshaping family dynamics, often creating conflicts between traditional Islamic values and contemporary societal norms.⁽¹⁰⁾

With the widespread availability of television, social media, and the internet, young people are increasingly exposed to global cultures and ideas that may differ from the values upheld by their families. Media often portrays individualism, materialism, and liberal attitudes toward relationships, marriage, and gender roles, which can challenge the collective family-oriented ethos in Pakistani society.

This shift has contributed to changing perceptions about family roles, particularly regarding marriage, gender equality, and personal freedom. While traditional Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of family unity, respect for parents, and adherence to social and ethical norms, modern media often promotes alternative lifestyles that prioritize personal autonomy and self-expression. The result is an intergenerational divide, where younger family members, influenced by global trends, may prioritize personal desires over communal responsibilities, leading to conflicts and misunderstandings.

Moreover, the rise of digital platforms has exposed family members, particularly youth, to a constant stream of information that may not align with their cultural or religious beliefs. Addressing the influence of media and modernity requires fostering awareness of Islamic teachings on family life and encouraging critical thinking about the content consumed. By promoting Islamic values of respect, modesty, and family cohesion, families can navigate the challenges posed by modern media and create a balanced approach to integrating traditional values with contemporary life.

Strengthening Marital Bonds:

Islam views marriage as a sacred contract and a foundation for stability in the family. The Quran instructs spouses to live in kindness and mutual respect: *“And live with them in kindness”*.⁽¹¹⁾

Islam promotes love, compassion, and communication between spouses, encouraging them to resolve conflicts through dialogue and patience. Regular efforts to strengthen emotional and spiritual connections through prayer, shared duties, and mutual understanding are key to maintaining a strong marriage.

Resolving Marital Conflicts:

Disagreements in marriage are natural, but Islam provides specific guidance on how to address conflicts constructively. The Quran advises mediation through third parties when necessary: *“If you fear a breach between them, appoint an arbitrator from his family and an arbitrator from her family”*.⁽¹²⁾

Additionally, the Prophet ﷺ emphasized forgiveness and humility as vital tools for resolving disputes.

Parenting and Raising Children:

Islam underscores the importance of parental responsibility in nurturing children's moral, emotional, and intellectual growth. Parents are entrusted with guiding their children to righteousness, ensuring their physical, educational, and spiritual well-being. The Prophet ﷺ said, *"Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock."*⁽¹³⁾

Parental roles are not limited to providing material needs but also include instilling Islamic values and ethics.

Financial Management and Contentment:

Financial issues are a common source of stress in modern families. Islam teaches that financial resources should be managed with wisdom, honesty, and fairness. The Quran advises against extravagance and encourages contentment: *"Indeed, the example of the life of this world is like water which we send down from the sky, and it becomes a mixture of plants and growth that brings benefit to others"*.⁽¹⁴⁾

Islam promotes fairness in wealth distribution, discourages hoarding, and encourages charity to alleviate financial difficulties.

Fostering Respect between Generations:

Islam places great emphasis on respect for parents and elders. The Quran commands children to treat their parents with kindness and gratitude: *"And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him with hardship upon hardship."*⁽¹⁵⁾

In return, parents are to show understanding and compassion towards their children, ensuring their upbringing in a balanced and supportive environment.

Maintaining Family Unity and Social Cohesion:

Islam promotes the idea of family as a unit of social stability. The Prophet ﷺ taught that maintaining family ties is a sign of piety: *"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should honor his ties of kinship."*⁽¹⁶⁾

The preservation of strong family connections through mutual support, respect, and communication helps build a cohesive society and mitigates the isolation and alienation often seen in urban environments.

Divorce as a Last Resort:

While divorce is permitted in Islam, it is considered the last resort after all efforts of reconciliation have failed. The Quran advises couples to strive for peace and offers a structured approach to separation, ensuring that both parties are treated with justice and dignity. *“And if you fear that they will not be able to maintain the limits of Allah, then there is no blame upon them if she gives something for her freedom.”*⁽¹⁷⁾

Mediation, patience, and mutual respect are emphasized as critical components before divorce is considered.

Incorporating these Islamic guidelines into contemporary family life can help address common challenges in urban Pakistan. By fostering a culture of understanding, respect, and mutual responsibility, these principles not only improve individual family dynamics but also contribute to social harmony at large.

While Islamic guidelines provide comprehensive solutions to family issues, several challenges hinder their effective implementation in urban Pakistan. These obstacles stem from a combination of cultural, social, legal, and institutional factors. The following are key challenges in applying Islamic solutions to family problems:

Lack of Awareness and Understanding:

A significant barrier to the implementation of Islamic solutions is the lack of awareness and understanding of Islamic family principles among the general public. Many individuals are either unaware of the detailed Islamic guidelines or have misconceptions about their practical application.⁽¹⁸⁾

Misinterpretations of Quranic verses and Hadith, particularly in relation to family issues, lead to confusion and hinder the adoption of Islamic solutions. The absence of proper Islamic education at the community level and within family units further exacerbates this issue.

Cultural and Traditional Practices:

Cultural norms and traditional practices sometimes contradict Islamic teachings, making it difficult to adopt Islamic guidelines fully.⁽¹⁹⁾

In some cases, local customs take precedence over Islamic principles, particularly in matters such as gender roles, inheritance, and divorce. These cultural practices may perpetuate harmful practices like domestic violence, unequal treatment of women, and forced marriages, which are not supported by Islam. Overcoming these ingrained cultural habits requires a shift in mindset and a re-evaluation of long-standing traditions in light of Islamic teachings.

Influence of Modernity and Western Ideologies:

The rapid growth of modernity and the influence of Western values on urban societies have contributed to a decline in adherence to Islamic values, especially in family matters.⁽²⁰⁾

The rise of individualism, materialism, and secularism has led to the erosion of traditional family structures and values. In an increasingly globalized world, many individuals prioritize career, personal freedom, and financial success over family cohesion, which challenges Islamic teachings that stress the importance of family unity and responsibility.

Misinterpretation and Misuse of Religious Teachings:

While Islam provides clear guidance on family matters, there is a tendency among some individuals to selectively interpret or misuse religious texts to justify personal biases or social practices that contradict the spirit of Islam.⁽²¹⁾

For example, the misuse of certain Hadiths or Quranic verses may lead to justifying unjust treatment of spouses, especially women, or may perpetuate inequality. Such misinterpretations can hinder the application of genuine Islamic solutions and create division within the family unit.

Institutional and Legal Barriers:

The legal and institutional framework in Pakistan often does not fully align with Islamic family laws. While Islamic law provides comprehensive solutions to family disputes, the Pakistani legal system is a mixture of secular and religious laws, which

can lead to confusion and delays in resolving family issues. For instance, the Family Courts Act and other secular legal frameworks sometimes offer solutions that conflict with Islamic principles on matters like inheritance, child custody, and divorce. Additionally, there is a lack of Sharia-compliant family counseling centers or legal support services that provide guidance based on Islamic jurisprudence.

Economic Pressures and Financial Stress:

Financial difficulties, especially in urban settings, significantly affect family dynamics and exacerbate tensions within households.⁽²²⁾

The high cost of living, coupled with job insecurity and economic instability, places immense stress on families, making it difficult to prioritize family welfare or adhere to Islamic teachings on financial management. While Islam emphasizes financial responsibility and contentment, economic realities often lead to conflicts, particularly in matters related to work-life balance, inheritance disputes, and the financial obligations of spouses and parents.

Social Isolation and Lack of Community Support:

In urban areas, families often experience social isolation due to the fast-paced and individualistic nature of city life.⁽²³⁾

The breakdown of traditional support systems, such as extended families and close-knit communities, makes it difficult for families to navigate challenges collectively. Islam encourages strong community bonds and mutual support among families, but the lack of such social networks in urban environments leaves many families struggling with issues alone. This isolation prevents the application of Islamic solutions, which rely heavily on communal support and collaboration.

Gender Inequality and Patriarchal Structures:

Although Islam advocates for equality and justice between men and women, deeply rooted patriarchal structures in urban Pakistani society often hinder the implementation of these values.⁽²⁴⁾

Women, in particular, face significant challenges in asserting their rights within the family, especially in areas such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and domestic violence. Patriarchal attitudes, sometimes masked as religious practice, contribute to

gender-based discrimination, which is contrary to the teachings of Islam that emphasize the fair and just treatment of women.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that involves community awareness, legal reform, religious education, and cultural shifts. Islam's guidance on family issues remains relevant, but for it to be effectively implemented in the context of urban Pakistan, society must overcome these barriers through collaboration between religious scholars, community leaders, legal authorities, and policymakers. Only then can Islamic solutions be fully realized, ensuring stronger and more harmonious family structures in urban Pakistan.

To effectively address family issues in urban Pakistan through Islamic principles, practical recommendations can be implemented at various levels of society. These recommendations aim to bridge the gap between Islamic teachings and contemporary family challenges, promoting stronger family units and social cohesion. The following recommendations can be instrumental in applying Islamic solutions to family problems:

Promotion of Islamic Family Education:-

Community Awareness Campaigns:

Establishing awareness programs to educate the public about Islamic family values, focusing on marriage, parenting, conflict resolution, and financial management.⁽²⁵⁾

These programs can be conducted in mosques, community centers, and educational institutions to reach a broad audience.

Curriculum Integration:

Integrating Islamic family ethics into school curricula, both in religious institutions and mainstream schools, to ensure that young people are equipped with the knowledge of their

rights and responsibilities within the family from an early age.⁽²⁶⁾

Workshops and Seminars:

Organizing workshops and seminars by religious scholars and family counselors to address common family issues from an Islamic perspective, helping individuals apply these teachings

in their personal lives.⁽²⁷⁾

Establishing Sharia-Compliant Family Counseling Centers:-

Support Systems for Families:

Setting up Sharia-compliant family counseling centers across urban areas that provide professional guidance based on Islamic principles.⁽²⁸⁾

These centers would offer mediation services for marital conflicts, divorce counseling, and financial advice according to Islamic teachings.

Training Counselors and Mediators:

Training professionals who can mediate family disputes with a strong understanding of Islamic teachings.⁽²⁹⁾

This would include creating a pool of certified family counselors skilled in both Islamic law and modern counseling techniques.

Strengthening Legal Support for Family Matters:-

Harmonizing Legal Systems with Islamic Law:

Advocating for reforms in Pakistan's family law system to ensure better integration of Islamic Principles, especially in areas like divorce, inheritance, child custody, and financial support.⁽³⁰⁾

Family courts should be equipped with judges well-versed in both Islamic jurisprudence and modern legal practices.

Facilitating Access to Islamic Legal Aid:

Providing legal aid for individuals seeking Islamic solutions, particularly women and marginalized groups, ensuring their access to fair and just treatment according to Sharia law.⁽³¹⁾

Encouraging Role Models and Religious Leadership:-

Religious Leadership:

Encouraging religious leaders and scholars to play a more active role in addressing family issues within their communities. Scholars can serve as mediators in conflicts and provide guidance on family matters based on authentic Islamic sources.⁽³²⁾

Community Leaders as Role Models:

Promoting exemplary role models who demonstrate the successful implementation of Islamic family values in their personal lives.⁽³³⁾

These role models can share their experiences through media, public talks, and community events.

Promoting Extended Family Networks:

Encouraging the strengthening of extended family networks where relatives support one another emotionally, socially, and financially, in line with Islamic teachings on kinship.⁽³⁴⁾

Creating Family Support Groups:

Establishing community-based support groups where families facing challenges can come together to share their experiences, seek guidance, and offer mutual support.⁽³⁵⁾

These groups should be inclusive and provide a platform for all family members, regardless of gender.

Addressing Economic Challenges through Islamic Financial Principles:-

Islamic Financial Literacy Programs:

Providing programs focused on Islamic financial management, teaching families how to manage their finances responsibly, avoid debt, and engage in charitable giving (Zakat and Sadaqah). This can alleviate financial stress, which often exacerbates family conflicts.

Promoting Fair Wealth Distribution:

Raising awareness about the importance of equitable wealth distribution within the family, including fair inheritance practices, as outlined in Islamic law. This can prevent disputes and ensure that all family members are treated justly.

Fostering Gender Equality in the Family:-

Empowering Women through Islamic Teachings:

Providing platforms for women to learn about their rights and responsibilities in Islam, including their right to education, financial independence, and protection from harm. This will help eliminate the patriarchal practices that undermine women's roles in the family.

Family Balance and Equity:

Promoting a culture of mutual respect and equity between men and women in the family. Encouraging shared responsibility in household chores, childcare, and decision-making, in line with the Prophet's teachings on marital cooperation.

Utilizing Media for Positive Family Messaging:-

Media Campaigns:

Developing media campaigns, including TV shows, radio programs, and social media content, that promote Islamic values related to family life. These campaigns should highlight the importance of respect, patience, and responsibility in family relationships.

Islamic Family Content Creation:

Encouraging content creators to produce material that educates families about Islamic solutions to contemporary problems, presenting relatable stories and scenarios in an engaging format.

Islamic Approach to Divorce Prevention:-

Pre-Marital Counseling:

Introducing mandatory pre-marital counseling based on Islamic teachings to prepare couples for the challenges of marriage, addressing potential issues such as communication, expectations, and conflict resolution. ⁽³⁶⁾

Divorce Mediation:

Promoting Islamic mediation techniques to resolve marital conflicts before resorting to divorce. This can involve involving family members, local religious leaders, or community mediators to help the couple resolve their issues through dialogue and compromise.

Conclusion:

The implementation of Islamic solutions to family issues in urban Pakistan requires a multi-faceted approach that combines religious education, legal reforms, professional support, and community engagement. By fostering a deeper understanding of Islamic family principles and creating accessible resources for families, it is possible to address contemporary challenges while upholding the values of justice, equity, and compassion that Islam emphasizes. These practical recommendations can help create a more harmonious and supportive environment for families in urban Pakistan, ultimately contributing to a stronger society.

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