

Asphyxiated marriage quagmire: Muslim health workers on call

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Abstract

Background: “Love,” as a multidimensional concept has been identified in Islam as one of the basis of good enough marriage. The marriage become asphyxiated when the love in marital relationship becomes lacking. Further complicating the marriage on the downside is that of reaching the stage of inescapability or marriage quagmire. These two are often the major cause of derailed marriage. Hence, this study aimed to identify the causes of asphyxiated marriage quagmire and provide Islamic panacea to them.

Methods/Result: Relevant literature were reviewed and common causes of asphyxiated marriage quagmire identified are premarital pseudo-love bubble, and marital intra-familial and extra-familial factors. This challenges the Muslim health care workers’ public calls to be transformational for both self and others. All conscious Muslims, and all Muslim health workers must be responsively be on call so as to be the Islamic mirror for their communities and the world.

Conclusion: The review concluded that Muslim healthcare workers are also terribly bedeviled with the asphyxiated marriage quagmire phenomenon, if not worse. Outside identifying the likely causes of this phenomenon, it emphasized Islamic-proven solutions as the panacea to a healthier Muslim family as well as a global model for all communities.

Introduction

Marriage in Islam is considered a legal contract and a union requiring consent from both the bride and the groom. It is binding on every Muslim, as emphasised in many verses of the Glorious Qur’an and countless Hadith that encourage marriage for any single man or woman of certain age or background. This is not limited to the young brothers and sisters of marriageable age who have never been married once before and are looking for their life partners, but also those who have been

through divorce, widows or have become widowers; all are strongly encouraged to re-marry.

“And of everything we have created pairs...;”¹

“We did send messengers before you and appoint for them wives...;”² “It is He who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her (in love) ...”³

The last verse implies “love,” a multidimensional concept that carries (1) specific and general; (2) idealistic and realistic; and (3) spiritual and mundane aspects.⁴⁻⁶ These dimensions lead to several theories of love. The second dimensional aspect of love is often the focus of marital relationship, and most described in the Euro-America psychology using the Sternberg’s triangular theory of love.⁷ Based on this theory, romantic love has three (3) components: intimacy, passion and commitment. Being in love, from the personal experience of the second author is that most women interpret it as passion, men as commitment, and intimacy is sparingly shared by both. When this experience did not translate to what either party in the marital union expects and are living, then marriage might become asphyxiated and thus be in a quagmire. The review aimed to describe asphyxiated marriage quagmire, identify/discuss the premarital and marriage related causes, and provide the Islamic panacea to it. It emphasised, the Muslim healthcare workers, who are on call as they must be the model of the panacea.

Asphyxiated marriage

Asphyxia medically implies the “absence of oxygen.” When the love in marital relationship becomes lacking, such can be

termed asphyxiated marriage. In other words, it is an emotional suffocation that couples (man and woman) experience at some point in their marital life, often as a result of high expectation to enjoy marital life. This can occur at any point in the marriage

Marriage quagmire

Quagmire refers to an area of soft and wet ground which gives way or sink in as one treads on it. This expression when applied to marriage implies a difficult, complicated or unpleasant marital situation, which is not easy to avoid or escape from. This often occurs not in the beginning of marriage.

The concept of asphyxiated marriage quagmire

At the start of premarital relationship, there are some expectations, which intending spouses have preconceived based on their understanding of “love” and “true love.”^{4,5} The preconceptions are popularly media generated and wokeness screaming “pseudo-love” as “true love “and promising the “happily-ever-after” to the encapsulated would-be couples.

Such pseudo-love bubble encapsulates the premarital relationship and expectations. Little wonder is it that the man and woman characteristically speak soft and sweet words to each other as they ensure good physical appearance and a lot of show of care through

gift exchanges and presentations. The growing pseudo-relationship grows with more expectations such that after marriage and/or probably after bearing children, the signs and symptoms of asphyxiated marriage quagmire start to manifest. This is as the marriage reaches a stage where they can no more hide their true colours or continues to nurture those flashy pseudo-characters.

The full features of the asphyxiated marriage quagmire gradually manifest as the expectations start declining, until it feels like an avalanche has overtaken the relationship and the couple no longer know which way to head. Common manifestations include extreme changes in patterns of sleep (insomnia or hypersomnia), rapid decline/increase in appetite, marked weight changes (obesity or underweight), emotional gloominess, weepy spells, feeling of loneliness, taking alcohol and/or other substances of abuse to cope, rising conflict and arguing within marriage, repeated domestic violent acts, growing infidelity, etc.⁸⁻¹⁰ These features can be simply described as “when one’s marital life almost always feels like climbing a mountain.” The higher you go the more suffocated and difficult it becomes. As a result of that, most couples feel that the only remedy is divorce.

Causes of asphyxiated marriage quagmire

The causes of asphyxiated marriage quagmire as a phenomenon described above, can occur pre-, intra- and post-marriage.¹¹

The following are the probable list of some major causes based on the three phases.

The pre-marriage phase

Causes in the initial phase can broadly be grouped into socio-cultural and psycho-spiritual issues. The former includes: the concept of looks/physical attributes for marriageability e.g. craving barbie doll looks for female and six-pack physique for men; when is the right time to marry? Till when either or both party seeking to marry acquires certain higher qualifications, financial stability, possessing luxurious houses and cars etc.; material portrait of who to marry e.g. seeking individuals in lucrative professions as the ideal marital partner or looking out to marry someone for social climbing.

The psycho-spiritual issues are: wrong expectations, where pseudo-love is projected as true-love e.g. pushing to act out the story of Habi (Cain) and Qabil (Abel) in marital partner selection or that of fictional characters such as Romeo and Juliet; gullibly pursuing “lived happily ever after” – an all-time generational myth – that keeps wrecking premarital and marital relationship; living

aspiritual life where there is neither norm nor boundary clearly spelt out by Islam.

The combination of both broad categories does exist and might manifest as a party freak of whom comes to seek for a pious man or woman as marital partner. Here, either of the party keep hoping to influence the other towards their respective kind of change. Another mixed issue is hiding of critical personal information about both would-be couple (man and woman) coming together. Here, lying about age, income, health, family background, and the likes abounds, so as to be found acceptable. Forgetting that it is a sin, apart from the potential of causing major issues later in marriage. The third mixed category of issues occurring at the pre-marital phase, is the type and nature of marriage ceremonies anticipated and planned for. This is because most Islamic marriage ceremony these days are almost completely against the teaching of Islam. Activities such as taking pre-wedding pictures, cocktail party, wedding cake display/cutting etc. The pictures taken are pseudo-romantic with public display of hugging one another, exposure of some part of the bride's body etc. The most disappointing and sadder part is that all these events happen under the watchful eyes and encouragement of both couple's families. It seems parents and

guardians are satisfied in breaking every rule of the Shariah just to please their children and impress the society. These are grievous offences, and hence, may cause evil eye.

The intra-marriage causes

Under this category, there exists two sub-categories, that intrafamilial and extrafamilial. The intrafamilial can be subdivided into either of the couple, both couple and the extended family. The personal issues from either of the couple included individual likes, demands, and interests carried out without consideration for the other partner e.g. one of the couple may like to sleep with light off at night, while the other prefers light on. At the level of both couples are issues related to communication styles, trust, finances, infidelity/adultery, domestic violence etc. Extended family issues relate to interference from families and in-laws. According to some studies,⁸⁻¹¹ the extended family's influences are among the major disruptive elements in the lives of many of the recently wedded. This is speculatively linked to the in-laws as they interfere in problem that the couples should be able to resolve amongst themselves. Contributing partly to the extended family's influences is the extrafamilial issues like current societal celebration of divorce, single parenthood, attitude about childbearing out of wedlock,

promoting alcohol and/or other drugs of abuse as fashionable, and focusing on material acquisition as superior to proper child upbringing.

The way out

Living the premarital golden rule

In a hadith from Prophet Muhammad (SAW), he was reported to have said: “that people marry for four (4) reasons: looks, wealth, status and piety. The best among the four is piety.” This golden rule of premarital education/counseling demonstrates the secrets of marital success. The lesson therein is, therefore, that whoever (individuals, groups, cultures etc.) concentrates on the first three is already a potential loser. By this golden education, the emphasis is to choose a marital companion possessing Islamic faith and piety as foremost. This is then followed by nobility of the family, compatibility, physical health and mental state of wellbeing.

The marriage ceremony

Brothers and sisters are advised that our marriage ceremonies should be organised in accordance with the teachings of Islam. In other words, Muslims marriage should be in line with the ways the Prophet (SAW) and his companions celebrated marriage.

The in-laws roles

With respect to parents’ involvement in their children’s marital lives, they should be of

positive influence, serving as models of virtues and values. They must therefore, contribute to resolving marital conflicts, give counsel on family life and children upbringing, and practise forgiveness towards their in-laws’ mistakes. It should be remembered that Allah loves those who forgive.

Meeting up with the challenges of communication

Communication in marital relationship is beyond simply talking to each other. It entails: voicing out complaints; sharing each other’s feelings, concerns, and silence; expressing feelings healthily and with assertiveness, etc.

Avoiding delays in marriage

Unnecessary delays in getting married comes with many challenges like future mismatch, fulfilling the rights of marriage outside wedlock, increase in number of illegitimate children, and rise in infidelity/adultery when married, to mention but few. Hence, getting married at the right time has a lot of benefits. Among these are: practice of adultery; reduction in negative societal judgment; rising hope in salvation; and, having legitimate children who will worship Allah the right way and pray for you. To be a better Muslim, one should heed the advice of the best of mankind. He said: “one should marry as soon as, he/she is capable of supporting the family.”

Remember, marriage will also help one to fulfil one of the recommendations of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) on: “getting married and multiply so that I will be proud of you on the Day of Judgment.” This is salvation indeed.

Building and strengthening trust

Breach of family trust often arise from the willingness to deceive and manipulate the other through hiding things from each other, telling lies, gossiping, and sharing personal intricate information with other people outside the family. Remember, marriage provides for couples an avenue to share their joy, sorrows, desires, goals, highs and their lows with each other. It is for these reasons that marriage must be built on trust to facilitate the healthy support of one another, patience, beauty and peace that exist in marital relationship. Thus, a relationship built on the foundation of trust and loyalty will blossom into the most beautiful emotion we can ever experience.

Preventing domestic violence

Unhealthy use of anger often results in domestic violence among the couples. It can make couples to lose control of their cool-headedness and say or do things they will later regret in life. This is not accepted in Islam. Hence, the pristine instruction from

our Creator, Allah (SWT), that “O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should you treat them with harshness, that you may take away part of the dower you have given them, except where they have been guilty of lewdness. On the contrary, live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings through it a great deal of goodness.”¹²

Running away from infidelity/adultery

The mockery of marriage these days is in the rise of infidelity among married couples. This de-civilization is a serious psychosociospiritual disease that is globally destroying homes. Our Creator, Allah (SWT), admonishes us to distant ourselves from it. “Nor come nigh to fornication/adultery: for it is a shameful deed and an evil opening the road (to other evils).”¹³ Hence, supplications against zina, but praying for a successful marriage and being in the company of the righteous are good beginnings to practicing staying away from infidelity/adultery.

Practise and practise the showing of gratitude and not just appreciation

It is generally believed that when appreciation is low, conflict is high. Therefore, learning to say jazakumullahu

khairan to our partners for every little and huge opportunity is vital to marital success and wellbeing. More importantly is gratitude. This is what helps one to be able to demonstrate appreciations beyond just the I deserve it but linked to higher purpose. For gratitude, building a healthy emotion helps one to relish and benefit from being thankful and appreciative. Thus, gratitude helps the couple to experience more healthy feelings like kindness, warmth, generosity etc. Hence, gratitude is said to be the mother of all attitudes. And by a far stretch, gratitude helps to lessen the financial challenges that might occur between the couple, especially when role reversal takes place (i.e., the wife now must take the financial burden of the family).

Muslim health workers on call

The Muslim healthcare workers are also bedeviled by the above challenges with, probably, longer delay in getting married and higher divorce rates than other members of the community. Thus, this paper provides that the Muslim healthcare workers, being one of the visible members of the community, hence being on call, must change. That is, for their public calls to be healthily impactful, they must change in themselves and the community through attitudes and orientations related to the asphyxiated marriage quagmire. They must

learn to reform the premarital and intramarital practices among themselves to pristine Islam, the best and complete way of life. This is a responsibility for all conscious Muslims, and all Muslim health workers must responsively be on call to be the Islamic mirror for their communities and the world.

Conclusion

The review concluded that Muslim healthcare workers are also terribly bedeviled with the asphyxiated marriage quagmire phenomenon, if not worse. It identified the likely causes of this phenomenon, discussed it and suggested Islamic-proven solutions. Importantly, it emphasised the building of marriage Islamically as it will lead to a healthier Muslim family as well as a global model for all communities.

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Conflict of interest: Nil

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