Western Family System and Islamic Family System: A Comparative Analysis

I. Dr. Munazza Sultana
Assistant Professor,
Department of Islamic Studies,
National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.


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Abstract & Indexing

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1. Dr. Munazza Sultana
Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.
munazza.aiou@yahoo.com

Abstract:

Family is an integral part of a society. A society cannot stable without a strong and healthy family system. Faintness in a family system results in weakness of a social life. Family and society both are backbone of each other. This academic paper illustrates two different types of family systems exist in the world that’s Islamic and western family system. It is a comparative study of both systems illustrating distinguish features of Islamic and western family system. Moreover, the reasons behind the decline of western family system are explained. An analytical and comparative methodology is applied for this study. This paper concludes that Islam is the religion which gives strong ideological foundations for a healthy family system. Islamic family system based on moral, ethical values. Each family member within the system has his own obligations, duties and status. Man and women have equal rights and respect. Performance of duties is regarded as worthy of rewards by Almighty Allah. Whereas, In contrary to this western family system is demolishing with the passage of time due to materialistic, unethical and un married sexual relations which totally break down the family system and spread various diseases in men and women. The voices of freedom of women socially and economically increase the divorce rate and demolish women reverence in society. This alarming situation gives the signals to think about how to improve family system. The western perspective should need to change and implement the ideological and ethical based values with in family system so that a strong and healthy society exists.

Keywords: System, Family, Society, Western, Marriage.

Introduction

Family is the most fundamental factor of a society which get started through the marital relationship of the human beings. More the stable, progressive and stronger the family, more safe, reliable and strongest the society. Islam emphasizes on the protection and endurance of family system in such a way that one complete branch "Munākahāt" (Islamic family system) is related to this. In Quran Allah said:


O mankind: be in prudent fear of your Lord who created you from one soul; and created from it its mate, and scattered from them many men and women.

A strong and healthy society can exist by following valuable ideological features of Islamic family system. Islam is the only religion which gives rights and respect to men and women on equal bases. People can live together in a family system with a strong cord of brotherhood, sympathy, humanity and collective goods. These norms and values lead to a strong family relations and peaceful environment in a society. Family is responsible to uphold their children and transmit the family sentiments and characteristics in them. Children for their training and future depend on their parents.
Good Parenting plays an important role in upraising the youth generation with bright future. While In contemporary world it is observed that parents and children both facing lake of family relations and social norms which demolishing the dignity of relations as well as environmental peace. It is needed to find out that what are the reasons of communication gap between parents and children and materialistic social environment? It is seen that western culture is suffering more than the Islamic family system. In United States immoral sexual relation causes the increase in divorce rate. So, this research will highlight the discriminate features of Islamic and western family system and the reasons of decline in family relation in western culture. Moreover this destruction of family system effects on all over the world.

**Aims of Study**

This academic paper related to family system has following objectives:
- What is the difference between Islamic and western family system?
- What are the reasons behind the decline of western family system?

**Impression of Family**

Family is a basic entity of a social institution. Family system consists of blood or marital relation clans such as father, mother, children, uncle, aunts, cousins, and grandparents as well. Children's are grown under the shadow of extended band of the mutually linked people. Family gives a name and identity to an individual. People come closer and interact with each other by the influence of a family. Family is an integral factor in shaping society. Family system nurture the intercultural relations more constructively based on norms and values. Family goes through a life cycle changing from time to time based on intellectual and sentimental phases from the birth to the retirement life of an individual. This cycle can be described more appealingly as following:

So the whole life cycle of an individual move successfully from stage to stage within a family
system. Family provides the foundations for living successful healthy life, through mutual understanding. A person worldwide view depends on his family background. The way to think or act build upon his family values, perspectives and attitudes.

**Importance of Family**

Human beings are dignified creature of God; send on the earth to live life by following the commands of Allah and to play a role as vicegerent (Khalīfah). As in Quran said:

وَأَذَّنَّكَ لِلْفِتْرَةِ إِلَى جَعَلمٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَليِفَةً

And when thy Lord said to the angels: “I am placing in the earth a successor.

To achieve the will of their creator, they need to be well trained and groomed with high moral values of brotherhood, love, mercy and compassion. Islam emphasizes on preservation of healthy family life. Other than the legalistic rules and obligations, ethical values like sympathy, humanity, and devotion results in successful home life and pious children. In Quran:

عَلِيَّةٍ وَجَعَلَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا رُؤْيَةً أَعْمَىَ وَجَعَلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِعْتِيَامًا

And who say: “Our Lord: give Thou to us from our wives and our progeny a comfort of the eyes, and make Thou us a model for those of prudent fear.

Allah has created human beings in best fashion of psychological, spiritual, physical, and non-physical aspects. All these human aspects are enriched with in a family, tribe and nation. More the children have extended family relation, more the occasions of psychological and physical enrichment. As in context of female they have opportunities to play role of daughter, sister, spouse, mom, kin and grandmother. Similarly a male can act more valuable as a son, brother, partner, dad and grandfather. This shows that one should need to give more time to the family instead of work because if we die company will replace us with in one or two days but the loss of the family cannot be fulfill for the rest of their liveliness.

Allah Almighty has bestowed love within the family system. Allah Almighty said:

وَمَنْ مَاتَ فَأَلَّمَهُ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لَّتَسْكَنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَنَّكُمْ مَوْتًا وَحَمَمًا

And among His proofs is that He created for you spouses from yourselves that you might be reassured thereby, and made between you love and mercy.

This love is actually depends on your love with Allah Almighty. Affection for the creator is on the highest ordinance. After that your love with parents, children and relatives is derived in such level that even they are wrong you like to live with your relations. The way Allah loves much more than anyone else as His blessings on you remain endure despite of your transgress. This type of adoration develops peaceful family environment, joyful parenting, goodness and righteous character among children.

Family relations are much important for satisfying human mental and physical health needs, especially for those minors, disabled and elderly people who are not able to survive by themselves. They depend on other family members support for shelter, food, clean air and water. Man is by nature created socially, staying close to family members benefits his mental and physical health otherwise staying secluded take humanity towards decline of their health.

**Islamic Perspective of Family System**

Family is a divinely enraptured foundation which was not subordinate by the human
experimentation but came in to being with the creation of chap. Allah has created Adam and Eve and through them next human race get started. They were given some education of things and send to the earth to act as a role of vicegerent (Khalifah) by following the guidance of God Almighty.

Principles of Islamic Family

Allah has created man and woman from the equal substance in a state of innocence and pureness and then send to the earth to accomplish mission of the Creator. This creation of man and woman lay down the foundations of a family system based on the determined Islamic principles and values described as following:

1. Fraternity of Faith: Islam is an institution based on fraternity of faith or believes. Anyone who accepted Islam integrate with Allah almighty and with all others who believers of Allah.

2. Protection of Lineage: The main objective of Islam is the protection of race and lineage. For this purpose Islam advised for the marital relation between man and woman, so that the human beings get safe from the prohibited adultery and baffling of lineage. Allah Almighty said:

3. Women status: Islam gives women a respectable place in a society. For this...
woman have separate domestic and social teachings. Childs trainings and home care should be preferable for every woman. Although she can work outside by the permission of his husband but following the Islamic sacred rules and do not mingle with the male. All these commands of Allah Almighty benefits women status respect and value within a society.14

4. Moral protection: Islam is the religion which gives purified form of relationships and prohibit all adultery and filthy. Sexual urge is natural within man and women. Biologically its regulation and control is necessary for healthy existence, for this Islam provide marriage a control mechanism and forbid from non-marital sex. In Quran:

فَأنْكُمْ أَزْوَاجٌ مًُؤَذَّنَاتٌ أَخْيَانٌ – ﻣُﺴﺎﻓِﺤٌ وَﻻ ﻣُﺘْﺨِﺬاتِ أَخْﺪانٍ ﻓَﺎﻧْ(273,636),(409,649)ِ Kِﺤُﻮهُﻦَ ﺑِإِذْنِ أَهْﻠِهِﻦَ وَآﺛِرْهُ ﻣُﺤْﺼَﻨِ دٍ ﻓَﺎ ﻣُﻨْدَهِدَاتَ أَخْﺪانٍ.15

So marry them with the leave of their people; and give them their rewards according to what is fitting, they being chaste and not fornicators, nor taking secret friends.

Man and woman can fulfil this aspect of life in a balance, moral and safe way which leads to positive effects on cultural and social level.

5. Kindness and Affection: Man and woman relationship is not a utilitarian relation but it based on psychological emotions and spiritual relationship. Love, solace, mutual confidence, mercy, tolerance and sacrifice and compassion can attain through marriage. Spouses with their kids pursue aggregate feeling of fulfillment with blossoming goodness and virtues16. Allah Almighty said:

ذﻟِﻚَ ﻜِﻠَ يا ﻟِﻘَﻮ وَﻣِﻦْ آﻳﺎتِﮫِ أَنْ ﺧَﻠَﻖَ ﻟَﻜُ ﺑَيْﻨَﻜُﻢْ ﻣَﻮَدَّةً وَرَﺣْﻤَةً إِنْ ﻓِﯽ ﻣَنْ أَنْفُﺳِﻜُﻢْ أَزْواَﺟَ ﻣِنْ أَزْواَﺟَ آَتَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى ﻓِﯽ ﻃِنْفُكُمْ ﻣُدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنْ ﻓِﯽ ﻋَيْنُ إِذْ آَتَيْنَاهُمْ أَزْواَجَ إِنْ ﻃِنْفُكُمْ.17

And among His proofs is that He created for you spouses from yourselves that you might be reassured thereby, and made between you love and mercy; in that are proofs for people who reflect.

Western perspective of Family
In western perspective family is defined as legal, social and economic pledge in which man and woman share with one another status, resources, roles, expectations, emotions and physical affinity. Married man and woman socially recognized as married couple in a society. They are considered being act as husband and wife, representatives of their families and both assume to share their income and spending. Spouses who are not willing to share their economic resources will write a legal contract to manage their expenditures.

Family relationship is not in between two members but it is a religious and legal agreement, each state has its own laws for conducting wedding, attaining marriage license, children custody procedure and dividing property etc...

In western perspective marriage or family relation are amplify in different ways according to various existed cultures as described below:

Types of Marriages in Western Culture
(On the basis of number of marriages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Marriages</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Monogamy</td>
<td>A person can engage in marital relation with only one spouse at a time. This type of wedding is deeply rooted in united states culture where more than 50 countries laws passed for marital monogamy. Moreover, Christianity promote monogamy marriages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polygamy</td>
<td>A person can marry to multiple spouses. It has two types:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Polygyny: Man married to many women + Polyandry: Woman can marry to more than one spouse = Polygamy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>These type of marriages mostly seen in Middle East and Africa. Islam legitimate Polygamy marriage whereas polyandry weddings are very less common, somehow seen in Buddhist culture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Serial Monogamy</td>
<td>Man and woman both have a sequence of spouses throughout their lives with or without marriages. This serial monogamy results in breakups, conflicts among spouses and destruction of society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Common law marriage (Cohabitation)</td>
<td>This is a legal and mutual agreement held between the cohabit spouses, after living together for number of years then state legally authorized them as a married couple. The number of years are vary from state to state for this common law marriage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Different Forms of Family System in Western Societies (On the basis of family features)**

In western societies marriage is a legal agreement between two spouses, socially recognized as married couple mutually cooperating children in their development and economic resources for their survival in the society. This concept is changing from time to time, that’s why the family system in western countries takes different forms as given:

- **Nuclear Family**
  In western culture nuclear family is actually the family means, when a man and woman get married they are free to support themselves economically and geographically. This family system consists of parents biological or adopted children. Historically seen that after marriage newly married couple when they becomes economically stable can live with their waning parents for their financial support or may live in a separate home and support each other. But when the time moves, in 21st century it was seen that nuclear family system in United states promoting cultural divergence, discrimination of rich and poor caste and declining of society.

- **Single Parent Marriage**
  Single parent marriage is the family which depends on the single spouse. This family is formed due to the several reasons for example divorce, spouse death and simulated pregnancy. Historically seen that in single parent marriage due to the divorce between husband and wife one of them take the child custody. But increasing in this family system now a days is because of artificial pregnancy. The woman having child without marriage through simulated insemination increases single parent family system in western countries.

- **Extended Family**
  Extended family is the family incorporating all family members in its system.
Extended family is the part of nuclear family. It is formed by including all family relations father, mother, child, grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle and cousins etc. In Pakistan it resembles joint family system, where all members live together under a shelter cooperating each other in all their needs and family events. The main purpose of this family system is to form relationship on strong social, economic and emotional bases. This family system gives importance to cooperative environment for the elder members of the family and comfortable and supportive surroundings for their life survival.

- **Blended Family**

Blended family also known as mixed families or the step families. When man and woman get engaged in marriage they take a child from their earlier marriage affairs. This mixed couple of children with biological parents and step parents is called step family\(^{19}\).

Nowadays if we see in the western countries two types of marriage system are detected; tradition and untraditional marriage system which can also be called as convention and non-convention. In traditional marriage system man earns and fulfils the needs of his family, whereas woman obliges to take care of his house and children. On the other hand in non-conventional marriage system woman go outside to earn money whereas husband tends to take care of house which is more likely to be seen in western culture.

**Amalgam elements of Islamic and Western Family System**

After description of Islamic and western perspective towards family system, we need to highlight some hybrid elements of both family systems which are initiate in western and Islamic system but with the distinguish features as following:

1. **Marriage**

The term used for the marriage relation in Islam is *Nikāh* which is a legal contract for fulfilment of moral essentials and sexual intimacy. Allah Almighty said:

\[
\text{وَأَنكُحُوَّاْ ٱلْأَلْمَٰلِيَّةَ مِنَّكُمۡ وَٱلْكَثَٰرَيْنِ مِنَ عِبَادِكُمۡ وَإِنْ أَنتُمَ مُتَّطَفِينَ}
\]

And give in marriage\(^1\) the unmarried among you, and the righteous among your male slaves and your female slaves.

Islam emphasis on marriage for leading a satisfactory and happy life. While signing the marriage contract husband should need to pay some amount or valuable goods in form of *Mahr* otherwise woman has right to refuse from the culmination of marriage\(^{21}\). In Quran Allah said:

\[
\text{وَأَوْلَىٰمُ ﻣَنْ ﻛُلِّ ﰊِذَا ﰊِ ذَٰٰلِكَ ﰊُنَّ كُمۡ}
\]

And give to them out of the wealth God has given you.

Marriage in Islam is such traditional institution based on love sympathy, devotion and harmony. Marriage is not a relation between two persons but this will held in between two families by taking in concern parent’s desire and happiness as well as preferably considering children’s own willingness\(^{22}\).

In modern culture marriages are seen to be decreasing, due to the voice of freedom, personal preferences, satisfaction and self-expressions are upraising. This results in increasing number of divorce and cohabitation (alternative form of wedding).

2. **Immoral Sexual Relation**

Islam instructed to their followers to get marry which a religious legal contract is held between husband and wife. The purpose of this marriage institution is to avoid sexual immorality and bewilderment of lineage .The term "*Zinā*" is used
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for this in Islam a sexual relationship in a man and woman that is strictly forbidden in Islam. In Quran

 Sexual relation without marriage is strictly forbidden in Islam. Islam introduces marriage for the protection of family and society. In contrary to this if we see in western culture, children in very early age, have sexual relation with one another without discrimination of gender, married or unmarried. Marriage has no importance in western culture. Even married persons have extra marital relations which lead towards breakdown of their relationship very soon. Man can get marry too many woman and women marry to many man. There is no implication of any ethical or moral values and rules at religious and Government level. Due to this uncontrolled of sexual urge of man and woman STD (sexually transmitted diseases) like HIV (Human Immunodeficiency virus) occurrence is increasing rapidly among youth which badly affects the social atmosphere.

3. Divorce

Divorce is a lawful phenomenon but undesirable disjunction of relationship that is allowed to be use in some circumstances. Just like the marital relation which is the natural need of an individual, divorce is advised to be avoid as far as possible but in some situations when it seem to get rid of marital relation is necessary and better than this right of divorce can be used. In western countries rate of divorce is increasing which badly affect the society and the infrastructure of the whole family is shaken.

Reasons of Increasing Divorce Scenario

There are many reasons behind the increasing rate of divorce:

- In western countries women also given the right of divorce which give women full freedom to remain engage in married relation or to get rid of it.
- Constant conflicts between spouses and battles results in unsurvival of marriage relation and stressful home environment.
- Trustworthy is very important to strengthen marriage relation. When a person betray you and have extramarital affairs, this bluff will lead to broken the relationship.
- Emotional and physical affection is very important to strongly bond your relationship with the spouse. Misbehaviour of husband, loneliness .infidelity, anger and sexual distance etc. end the marital relation after some time.
- Communication gap is one of the most drivers of divorce. The problem rises more and misunderstanding increases, if the spouses cannot resolve problems by mutual communication respectfully.
- Addiction of drugs, alcohol, gambling's etc.

From all these reason discussed above, the most highly rated cause of divorce now a day is lack of commitment and extra marital affairs. People having good family system but involved in other affairs to satisfy their emotional and sexual needs. This leads to the boredom or disaffiliation with his own family. In all over the world, the divorce rate is more than the marriage relations, about 4 to 5 million people get marry every year from which 50-53% results in to divorce.

Given graph show the results more exquisitely:
This graphical analysis shows that the country on the most high divorce rate is Maldives and Srilanka is on the lowest level of 0.15.27

**Supervisor of a Family System**

Family system can run on wheels of both husband and wife. Both has specified position with in a family system. Islam has instructed both husband and wife with obligations and duties, which they need to perform with their bests. From Islamic perspective husband is the caretaker, protector and maintainer of his family. He is obliged to fulfill needs of his family members for their survival in the society. In Quran Allah almighty said:

\[
ُعۡﻀَهُﻢۡ ﻣِﻦۡ أَﻣۡﻮَٰﻟِهِﻢۡۚ ٱﻟﺮِّﺟَﺎلُ ﻗَﻮﱠٰﻣُﻮنَ ﻋَ
\]

28 Men are responsible for women by what God has favoured one of them over another.

This verse clearly describes use of the word "Qawwām" for the men who mean Ḥākim or the ruler, decision maker, custodian, guardian and protector. The superiority of men is in a sense of caretaker, head, decision maker, career and the one who runs functional affairs of his family not in a sense of ruler or in political sense of leader or commander.

Allah has made men transcend over the women under His consideration and absolute wisdom.

**Reasons of Precedence**

Allah has created men naturally with some physical and mental attributes that are different from women. He is physically stronger and having strength that he can protect his family and safeguard them.

Secondly, men work hard and earn money to accommodate his family needs. He is obliged to spread his wealth and property on his family survival in a society.30

It is observed in older and modern times that an organization smaller or bigger, tribe or institute must run by some people collectively and one of them is owned to act as a head and lead the affairs of the firm under his supervision. Similarly for strong and stable
family, Allah has given this responsibility to men to administrate his family matters. As he has some pronounce qualities then women based on God absolute privilege. But this thing never diminish the importance or the status of women within a family. Instead as regard to this women should be obedient to his husband and protect his property and home in his absence.

Children training and Education

- A family play a vital role in teaching children ethical, social and religious values such as self-discipline, responsible and obedient. Before Islam in some oblivious Arab tribes; birth of son was consider sign of proud and birth of girl was dislike and obscured alive. But Islam is a religion which collapsed this cruel treatment and brutality.
- Islam give importance to the training of girl and boys on equal basis. Moreover raising girls in good manners with love and affection declare benignity and accolade.
- In modern era where the liberation movements arises, which raise the voice of freedom for women physically, socially and economically without any etiquette. All this benefits on the individual basis to women at some degree but ruin her family life entirely. Islam is the only religion which gives a women dignity and rights.
- Now a days with the passage of time due to industrial revolution and enlargement children education and training getting more change and complicates. Religious and ethical training of children is intricate.
- In western countries women are given priority to their personal economical and educational freedom then marriage. These struggles of self-independence go towards family decline. The economical and ideological change give free of choice to children regarding occupation and marriage. Lack of parental control of children leads to misbehaviours and wrong deeds.

Conclusion

This academic research concludes that Islamic and western families are moving in two opposite directions. Islamic family system is based on faithful, ideological and ethical values. Men and women sacred relationship run with love, affections, and respect. Men is consider the protector, care taker and supervising all matters of the family and women is responsible for the religious, ethical training and education of children. Although she is also allowed to participate economically but the preferences are her family members care and support. Both men and women are running their family and fulfilling their needs together for the survival in the society by enjoying equal rights and respect. In contrary to this the western family system having different form of relationships nuclear, and monogamy, blended and extended etc. But each family type now days is suffering materialistic, unethical values and immoral sexual relationships. The women lake of interest in children care and family life demolished the race and dignity of a marriage relation. In European countries children at the age of 10 to 12 are involved in drug addiction, cigarettes, crimes and sexual relations before marriage. Parenting is not taken as an important obligation and elder parent at the age when they need support and respect leave in the old houses. So, the respect of each relation is ruined and home is a source of anxiety disturbance and disquiet. Youth generation goes in to casinos and dance clubs in search of peace and amity. The western countries need to think about this phenomenon and pursue the shelter in the clemency of Islam which emphasis on the preservation of family. Islamic faithful perceptions can only give healthy family.
environment and eternal peace in the society. Muslim *Ummah* should need to guide those regarding Islamic norms and principles and participate to improve their family life.

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28. Al-Qur’ān 4:34.