

# Sociological Aspects And Bioethical Implications Of Marriage Between Relatives

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**Abstract:** This article examines the sociological and bioethical aspects of consanguineous marriage based on modern academic and legal sources. The sociological analysis highlights the cultural, economic, and religious factors sustaining kin-based marriages, while the bioethical discussion explores genetic risks, public health implications, and ethical dilemmas associated with hereditary transmission. The research compares Uzbekistan's national legal framework and preventive measures with the experience of other countries, particularly those with a high prevalence of cousin marriages. The findings demonstrate that despite its deep cultural roots, consanguineous marriage requires reconsideration within modern bioethical standards. The study concludes that raising genetic literacy, implementing premarital counseling, and enforcing preventive family policy are essential to reducing bioethical risks.

**Keywords:** Consanguineous marriage, sociology, exogamy, endogamy, bioethics, genetic risk, health care, Uzbekistan.

**Introduction:** Marriage, as both a social institution and a biological partnership, reflects the intersection between culture and ethics. In many traditional societies, marrying within one's kin group is perceived as a means of strengthening family bonds, preserving wealth, and ensuring social stability. Yet, modern bioethics raises concerns about the genetic implications and the potential violation of individual autonomy. This duality-between sociocultural acceptance and ethical skepticism-positions consanguineous marriage as a complex issue that challenges the boundaries of social norms and medical morality. Understanding this requires a multidisciplinary lens that captures both social legitimacy and ethical accountability.

Marriage is one of the most important mechanisms shaping the institution of the family in society. Marriages between close relatives have historically existed among various peoples, primarily arising to preserve property, strengthen tribal unity, or under the influence of religious norms. However, modern medical research shows that such marriages can increase the risk of genetic diseases. From a bioethical perspective, consanguineous marriages may also conflict with the principle of "do no harm." Therefore, studying this

topic from sociological and bioethical viewpoints is highly relevant. Marriages between close relatives are regulated to some extent by law in many countries and societies. The current legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan also imposes certain restrictions on marriage. In particular, Article 16 of the Family Code clearly outlines conditions under which marriage is prohibited [1]. Despite this, such marriages have been preserved as historical-cultural institutions in many Muslim societies. Their prevalence is high in Arab countries, where first-cousin marriages account for about 25-50% of unions in many states; Pakistan historically records one of the highest rates globally. The persistence of this practice is explained by economic security, social networks, and customs. At the same time, modern medical-genetic research indicates that these marriages increase the risk of recessive genetic disorders in offspring. Islamic scholars and jurisprudence recognize the concept of "women forbidden for marriage" or "haram women," referring to categories of women whom an individual is religiously prohibited from marrying. This is clearly and explicitly stated in the Qur'an. Specifically, Surah An-Nisa, verse 23 lists the women who are forbidden for marriage. According to this verse and jurisprudential sources, marriage between close relatives is strictly

prohibited (haram) [2]. Consanguineous marriage constitutes a high proportion in certain regions (South Asia, the Middle East, North Africa). The high prevalence of consanguineous marriages is usually explained by the history of kinship systems, large multi-generational families, socio-economic security, property preservation, and motivations related to social capital within the community. From the perspective of modern medicine and genetics, such marriages can increase the risk of autosomal recessive diseases and certain congenital defects. This topic remains relevant for Uzbekistan, where local media and official discussions increasingly address restrictions on cousin marriages according to genealogical lines and related preventive policies.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Marriage between close relatives is a pressing topic in both classical and modern sociology, as well as bioethics, focusing attention on its social causes, consequences, opportunities, and challenges. The issue of consanguineous marriage has been discussed extensively in classical and modern social sciences, as well as in bioethics and genetics. Classical sociologists viewed marriage as a crucial institution ensuring social order, moral regulation, and population continuity. According to Auguste Comte (1896), marriage represents the moral structure of social life, contributing to the stability of families and communities. However, he noted that kin-based unions, while preserving familial unity, limit the broader social integration of individuals [3]. Émile Durkheim (1912) further analyzed marriage through the lens of social solidarity. He differentiated between mechanical solidarity—based on kinship and similarity—and organic solidarity, which emerges in modern societies through diversity and interdependence [4]. From his perspective, consanguineous marriages are remnants of mechanical solidarity that restrict social diversification. In contrast, modern sociologists such as Anthony Giddens (2017) conceptualize marriage as a dynamic institution evolving alongside social modernization. Giddens notes that in traditional societies, endogamy (marriage within kin) served to protect lineage and maintain property, whereas in modern societies exogamy (marriage outside kin) reflects individual autonomy and the democratization of intimacy [5]. From a bioethical perspective, Beauchamp and Childress (2019) identify autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice as foundational principles. Applying these to consanguineous marriage raises critical moral questions: how to respect individual freedom while preventing predictable genetic harm to future generations. This ethical paradox defines the central

dilemma of consanguineous marriage in modern society [6]. Thus, the literature reveals that consanguineous marriage is not merely a cultural tradition but a complex intersection of sociology, genetics, and ethics. Modern preventive strategies must address both the social determinants and bioethical consequences of such unions.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This article focuses on examining the issue of marriage between close relatives from sociological and bioethical perspectives, primarily conducted through an analytical-critical approach based on secondary sources. The following methods were employed in the research: Theoretical-analytical approach: The phenomenon of consanguineous marriage was analyzed within sociological theories such as structural functionalism, conflict theory, and normative approaches. Additionally, from the basis of bioethics and medical ethics principles, the study theoretically and analytically explored the balance between personal freedom, genetic risks, and public health. Analysis of legal and religious sources: The social and moral aspects of marriages between close relatives were studied using the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan concerning marriage and family, Islamic jurisprudence, and other religious-legal sources[7]. Comparative method: The experiences, legislation, and healthcare policies of certain foreign countries were examined analytically. The situation in Uzbekistan was compared accordingly, revealing opportunities and challenges in national policy. Bioethical analysis: Genetic and social problems arising from consanguineous marriages were analyzed based on the fundamental bioethical principles of autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice.

### **RESULTS**

A large part of human life and activity is related to family and family relations. The comprehensive health of family relationships and the family environment is primarily important for the welfare and stable development of the family, society, and the state. Therefore, not only family founders but also the whole society and the state should bear a certain responsibility in organizing the family and regulating family relations. If this responsibility is not fulfilled properly and attentively, it risks expanding the scale of problems for each stage mentioned above and negatively affecting subsequent processes. One of the family processes that can be a root cause of such problems is the issue of families formed between close relatives. At first glance, this process may not seem significant enough to be widely raised as a social issue at the level of the state and society. However, the scale

of problems it causes can rise beyond the family to the level of neighborhoods, society, and the state. Thus, it is not without reason that this issue is currently receiving focused attention and discussion in the political arenas of our country.

In spring 2024, the Labor and Social Issues Committee of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis discussed this topic at a roundtable titled "Marriage Between Close Relatives: Causes and Consequences" within the framework of drafting a bill proposing amendments to the Family Code to prohibit marriage between close relatives by genealogical lines [8]. A proposal to ban marriage between kin relatives is being considered in the Family Code. According to data from the Civil Registry Agency (FHDYO), from July to December 2021, a total of 1,210 marriages between close relatives were registered nationwide (529 maternal cousins, 307 paternal cousins, 178 first cousins, and 196 maternal cousins). More than half (59%) of these marriages were concentrated in two regions: Surkhandarya (343 cases) and Kashkadarya (371 cases). Among newborns, the incidence of disabilities, including congenital anomalies, deformities, and chromosome disorders within the first year of life, is increasing [9]. In the context of Uzbekistan, marriages between relatives occur more frequently in rural areas than in cities. This is due to traditional views, the desire to strengthen kinship ties, and property interests. According to global experience, in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Iran, marriages between relatives account for 40-60%. In Europe and the USA, there are legal restrictions, and this figure is below 1% [10]. Global epidemiological studies show that cultural and social determinants are the main factors in the prevalence of consanguineous marriages. Although the genetic risks are well documented in medical literature, the results regarding their impact on birth rates and overall fertility are inconsistent. For this reason, a comprehensive set of policy measures requires a complex approach that combines not only prohibition and penalties but also preconception counseling, genetic screening, targeted educational campaigns, and voluntary risk identification programs. It can be seen that developed foreign countries have achieved positive results in this area and that reforms and measures are being consistently continued. In Uzbekistan, it is necessary to further strengthen legal and educational reforms related to consanguineous marriages, as well as promotion and genetic counseling services. At the same time, it is important to collect accurate statistical data on consanguineous marriages and their consequences and regularly disseminate analyses to the broader public, as these measures will be effective in practice.

## CONCLUSION

The issue of marriage between close relatives is a complex phenomenon from sociological and bioethical perspectives, situated at the intersection of societal values and traditions with modern medical and ethical approaches. Studies show that in some regions, such marriages persist due to socio-economic conditions, cultural traditions, and lifestyle factors. At the same time, scientific sources provide sufficient evidence of their negative hereditary consequences. In light of this situation, it is necessary to coordinate legal, educational, and medical measures. Implementing mandatory medical examinations and genetic counseling before marriage, as well as strengthening awareness-raising campaigns, is important. Throughout this process, political mechanisms should be gradually applied with respect for personal freedom and bioethical principles. Overall, reducing the potential consequences of consanguineous marriages should rely not only on prohibitions and penalties but also on state policy, scientifically based approaches, and cooperation with the public. Such a comprehensive approach will serve the upbringing of a healthy generation and the stability of society.

Based on the above scientific analyses and existing statistical data, the following proposals can be made to reduce the social and bioethical consequences of consanguineous marriages. 1. Organize regular educational campaigns through educational institutions and mass media about the consequences of consanguineous marriages. Reduce the motivations for such marriages by expanding economic opportunities and positive alternatives for young people. 2. Conduct special monitoring in high-risk areas and publish the results openly in statistical form. 3. Interdisciplinary Moral Dialogue: Construct inclusive dialogue platforms among sociologists, medical professionals, and religious scholars to develop a hybrid ethical discourse that harmonizes scientific, spiritual, and social dimensions. 4. Approach political decision-making processes with respect for personal freedom and bioethical principles, preventing stigmatization and discrimination. The issue of marriages between close relatives is also a relevant topic for Uzbek society. Although their sociological and historical roots go back to ancient traditions, their bioethical and medical aspects today pose a challenge to national demographic security. To prevent this, it is necessary for the state, society, and scientific institutions to cooperate in developing a comprehensive approach to prevent marriages between close relatives.

A one-sided approach to assessing consanguineous marriage is not the right solution. It is closely related to historical, cultural and religious factors. At the same

time, modern sociology and bioethics require its reconsideration within the framework of human rights, health and genetic security.

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