

Dwindling Classical Cultural Trends of Family: Prospect Consequences on Elderly Care in Modern Pakistan

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Abstract

Aging procedure is the consequence of the demographic realignment, which is a significant concern of countries globally. In developing countries, this sensation is striding faster. The main objective of this article is to present a narrative review of the causes of dwindling classical cultural trends of family structures. Moreover, to discuss the prospect consequences of this situation on the elderly care in Punjab, Pakistan. The findings of this study explored the shift in classical family structures such as the trend of the nuclear family system, increased in women workforce ratio, transformation in women role, family economic stress, change in household size and structure and diffusion of culture causing indicative changes in the rooted structures of a family which are directly affecting the values of elderly care at home.

Key Words: Changing Culture Trends, Household Size, Love Marriage, Matrimonial Issues, Nuclear Family, Women Workforce

Introduction

Pakistan emerged on the map of the world in 1947 and before its existence, there was no recognition of all of its provinces politically, as social and economic units from one strong floor. However, all the provinces had social compatibility and historic chains with the culture of the Indian subcontinent. At the time of partition, the province of Punjab was divided into two parts, Punjab in India (most of the population was non-Muslim) and Punjab in Pakistan (which consisted of Muslims population), though, was a small portion in comparison with the Indian Punjab but cultural attributes, communities and races except the religion were same in all over the Punjab in both countries. However, on the bases of sects, communities, races, 'braderies' and the cultural attributes of this area of Indo-Pak were altogether different in nature as compared to the rest of the region. Therefore, Marxist scholars and other anthropologists coined the term "Cold Society" which means unchangeable cultural values for centuries, due to its powerful virtue situated in the subcontinent (Qadeer, 2006). According to demographers, the population size of Punjab is rising high, but it could not disturb the sociocultural values and social relations among people (Cohon, 2011).

History of Punjab tells that many invaders from all over the world conquered Punjab. These invaders established their own practices by bringing change in the present operational orders, its values and culture. That's why the present culture of Punjab is in a diffused form, resulted from different cultural and religious values. In

addition, after the birth of Pakistan, Punjab had the new oblique attribute of institutions due to changes in the circumstances of an Islamic state. Despite all these diversities, the classical structure of the family, that is, the joint family system remained identification of Punjab for a longer period of time and is still intact.

Punjab is known as the land of rivers and fertile soil, rich in food, therefore, always has been highly populated. Agrarian roots are present in Punjabi society, but urbanization is spreading swiftly. A materialistic and mobile society has been established during the last few decades instead of classical society which were having close interactions with friends and family (Wirth, 1938), thus changing the traditional societal structure rapidly. The classical societies are undertaking noticeable divisions of moral and ideological obligations. Therefore, the old tradition of “family system” (Ibid), which is the smallest societal unit, has been observed under the impacts of changing scenarios.

Change in the family system is rapid, which is causing changes in the traditional and cultural family structures. Since independence, social change in its family system has witnessed internal changes which resulted in shifts in the patterns of Punjabi culture across the Punjab, Pakistan, hence facing many challenges. To fulfil, the social, spiritual, economic and psychic needs of a heavy population, families are facing the alarming situation. To some extent, the major causes of social change are advanced ideas of inventions, changing dynamics, political, historical and economic events, and advanced technology.

Emergence of Question

Being a basic unit of a society, it was assumed that the family has an irreplaceable position. It is considered as the torchbearer of the traditions and values consequently expected as the guarantee of the elderly care in the family. Notwithstanding, the belief of parents has jolted due to increase rate of love marriages (Qadeer, 2006). These increased love-marriage trend is due to certain effects of the process of globalization like the globalization process all over the world explored new key economic system to decrease the economic stress. This phenomenon has changed the ratio of participation of males and females in the work force in almost every country in the world. Men are more likely to participate in labor markets than women. However, these gender based differences in participation ratios have been narrowing substantially during recent decades (World Development Report, 2012). To accomplish the economic needs of the family lead women into the labor force. Thus freedom to work outside the home for both genders has increased this ratio. This economic independence made the young members more self-determining and liberal in all matters of their lives, even for marriages, as compared to their elders in the past (Patricia Uberoi, 1993). Such as, in earlier traditions of Punjab, matrimonial relationships were used to be arranged by grandparents and parents within the clan or family. Such practices were the result of the *braderie* system to ensure the power of a family and elderly care especially. The changing trends of the family have new dimensions of the family, which weakened the previous prevailing family structures with regard to its roles and responsibilities. Now the question arises that how far is this transition of family system responsible for changing the role of the classical family system which were previously playing a significant role in elderly

care in Pakistan? Therefore, this article presents a narrative review of the causes of changing classical family structures and consequently its effects on the elderly care in Pakistan.

Changing Classical Family Trends

It can be said that the values of manifest able benefits in villages, towns, cities and the region have changed by the current trends in commodities, monetary values and comfort styles of life (Cohon, 2011). With the passage of time, the familiar roles within old traditional families are fluctuating. In natural settings, caring and domestic roles have been designated for mothers, wives, and daughters. Undoubtedly, these roles were gender imposed, whereas, the role of a breadwinner is linked with the male members of the family (Yasin, 2011). Rather than the traditional family system, the family system of Punjab is transforming towards status conscious and wealth botherations. Explaining the reasons for such transformation, Wise (2003) documented that industrialization, the growth of the economy and availability of opportunities for common people cause a significant change in the present era. As a consequence, society members use to ignore the code of conduct, traditional practices, and moralities (Wise, 2003).

Furthermore, the cohesiveness of the society has lessened due to the fast conversion of a joint family to nuclear structures (Itrat,2007). It is important to realize that matriarchal and patriarchal system that once allowed the elderly in the family to make decisions as the over-all family head is no longer maintaining a hold on the family economic affairs (Guiren, 2006). Though it is still present, however, such attributes are diminishing rapidly with the passage of time. This decline is due to the shift of joint family structure into the nuclear family system, where the younger members of the family have to overlook the elderly because they are considering themselves more productive and independent in their decisions. Aforementioned domination of the young ones in a nuclear family is consequently marginalizing the elderly of the family day by day. This is to say that such vivid conversion has apparently affected the care of elderly persons most.

In the South Asian countries, once it was assumed, the couples having children were less likely to be divorced, which is now not necessarily becoming true (Goode, 1993). The divorce causes unbearable and un-expectable relationships in the modern age. In the West, the divorce rate among the couples having no child is much larger in percentage (Bruce, 1995). It is evident that earlier belief of an increased number of children to strengthen the bond between couples is ultimately getting weak (Goode, 1993). The similar situation can be observed in Punjab. Furthermore, the other reason for the weak marital relationships is the age of marriage. The age of a male has been often more than the female; it is a cultural trend to marry with the younger females. The male life expectancy ratio is less than female due to the high difference in age between them. The female has to face financial crises due to the early death of the husband. Remarrying for having a male child or after getting widow with a daughter or only to avail the opportunity of polygamy is another cultural practice in Punjab. Such family units with multiple role performers give way to put one's duties to other shoulder resulting decreased care of elderly in a family (Hafeez, 2004).

Cultural Impact

Swartz (1994) introduced two splendid terms to discuss the dominance of materialism in society, i.e. “guide” and “tokens”. He (Ibid) explained the guide as an effective tradition of a society and tokens for the ineffective social traditions. The value system of a concerned society can be caused by a new development in a culture (Swartz, 1984). Therefore, those people who have an understanding of ruling traditional value system in Punjab, get endowed to the nuclear family system trend as the vice versa effects of globalization. Thus, the classical value system regarding the care of family members, especially the elderly, is fading out with the passage of time.

As an example, Rummens (1993) identifies culture as an indirect link with the social ideologies of family, religion and gender sum (Rummens, 1993) which is affecting the nuclear family system, so the elderly are being marginalized. As a matter of fact, in our religion, elder persons have very strong and respectable status and people still don't dare to go against their religion. In addition, one can assert that the young person cannot put the status of the elderly on a deteriorating track under the religious norms. However, practicing a religion in a true spirit is another debate in the presence of changing patterns of a culture, which may lead to compromises for moralities like elderly care in Punjab.

Globalization and Transformation of Family Structure

Globalization has brought fundamental transformations in linking family values, communities and geographical borders of the societies (Scholte, 2005), due to which impulsion of loneliness and individualism is raising even in Punjab. A similar idea is given by Ritzer (2010) that a market-oriented society where people prefer their individual identity rather than national integration is a product of globalization.

In other words, where the homogeneity of cultures has been created, on the one hand, the globalization is making the world a global village on a wider perspective but is creating individualism on the other hand, at a similar scale. These changing patterns, a step towards modernization, are prevailing in this part of the country. In short, McDonald (ibid) claimed that modernization attacked directly on the value system.

Therefore, Qadeer (2006) quoted that;

“Social change is palpable to individuals and is evident in various indicators.... What is not so obvious is the direction the change is taking. It is a march toward modernism, oscillation, from traditional to modern ways and back, as a practicing of the adherent social system”(p.13)

It is fact that family care depends upon the quality of relationship which members of that family achieve by spending time together, through sharing inter-generational experiences, living within available resources, overall family environment and positive interaction among them. Further, a condition of care giving relationship is established by reciprocation acts of honor and affection which is independent of age group. Aforesaid emotional attachment demands consistency, availability along with the schedule of assigned duties among the members of the

family specifically youth. On the contrary, youth nowadays preferred to be more independent regarding their responsibilities towards relatives and opportunities in the public domain, for example, school and workplace, while elderly too, and want to remain authoritative. These two above mentioned realities, raising complex sort of questions about the family structure and consequent threat to elderly care (Santana).

In addition, the current Punjabi is precisely depicted by Livingstone & Helpers (2011), who opined that education, modernization, and knowledge has no reversing process due to which our moralities and ethical social fabrics are being affected. Traditional ways of living, including collective rituals and ceremonies to eating habits have altogether changed by the people and they went far away from these (Livingstone, 2004). Changing the old central thoughts with modern ideologies was a western concept (Cohon, 2011). However, the above mentioned aspects are depicting that in the name of modernization, now it is happening in Punjab at present.

Change in Household Size and Structure

A group of male and female persons having legal/religiously marital relation with certain blood relations is defined as families in Punjab. The holistic definition of the household for Punjab is not available in the literature; however, locations and living arrangement can be defined as a household. Earlier, a group of persons living together and sharing a family structure and housing unit together was known as a household in Punjab. Hence a family is considered when it has such household. With the passage of time, the definition of a household family has changed to a nuclear family.

Such change in definition is due to various reasons, among them, delay in carrying the family. Decline in women getting married, delaying in having children due to responsibility-free lifestyle or busy in jobs, family planning campaigns to control the population explosion in Asian countries, are the facts that are reducing the family size in this part of the region.

This nuclear family trend has contributed not only in shrinking the family size but also has reduced the living area per person in a square meter. The major reason behind this scenario has been recognized as the urbanization in the name of modernization. Small apartments and multi-floor flats are becoming the fashion of the day. Such residences may not be friendly for the mobility of elderly sometimes, and hence increasing attitudinal hazards for the families as their caregivers consequently families prefer not to keep elderly with them.

Economic Stress on Families and transformation of Woman's Role

In 1990 the household percentage of Pakistanis was reported as the highest (Hashmi, 2003) comprising maximum 5 members in it. Hence there is no dominance of large household in Pakistan and in Punjab as well. The economic stress on a family is directly linked with the holding up the least number of the family members. Economic stress due to the psychological burden of expenditure for providing an excellent education to children and comforts of life, which is the desire of every young couple, is more manageable with the smaller size of a family (Doo-Sub Kim, 1997).

This blooming need of both parents and children are leading them towards a nuclear family system instead of extended or traditional family system.

A few decades back, no nuclear family system existed in Punjab, but in the current era of inflation and economic stress, the concepts of an aging population, brain drain, migration and certain other multiple changes emerged internally and externally. Such changes are causing a high rate of unemployment, financial crises, temporary jobs, less opportunity of entrepreneurship (Abbas & Ashiq, 2017) and revamping the social safety nets especially in Asian countries and thus putting the people under economic stress. In result, male members of the families have to move away from home to win bread and butter for their family members (Wei-Jun Jean Yeung, 2013). Under these circumstances, females take over the charge as the head of a nuclear family in the absence of their partners. Therefore, the magnitude of their tasks within the homes and outdoor increases thereupon leaves no or less time to look after the family members who are residing with them especially elderly (Ayad, 1997).

The traditional role of women in Punjab is also under the transformation due to local and international changing patterns of life. Female-headed houses have faced other affecting factors, despite the migration of male members, like divorce, widowhood, single male son and late marriages due to career building. The rising ratio of women's employment is yet another significant cause for less quality time for family members. Day by day, it is becoming obligatory for a female to work shoulder to shoulder with their male counterpart for financial support of a family, but at the cost of their family time specifically for elderly care (Ibid). Although they can't find much time for themselves as well still it is getting inevitable to remain a non-professional female unlike the traditional women of the past.

Although, this female participation in the economy of a family has multifaceted impacts on improving the financial status of a family and kids for their wellbeing, nonetheless, such financial participation of female is increasing separation, unsatisfactory marriages, and divorce rate in the society (Bruce, 1992). Consequently, the informal safety net of a family is getting weak due to these changing trends. To sum up it can be said that in near future family bond will become weaker besides the divorce issues, population controlling trends, delay in marriage, and no or less childbearing trends. The matter can be well described and understood which drew out from the above discussion with the help of the following diagram:

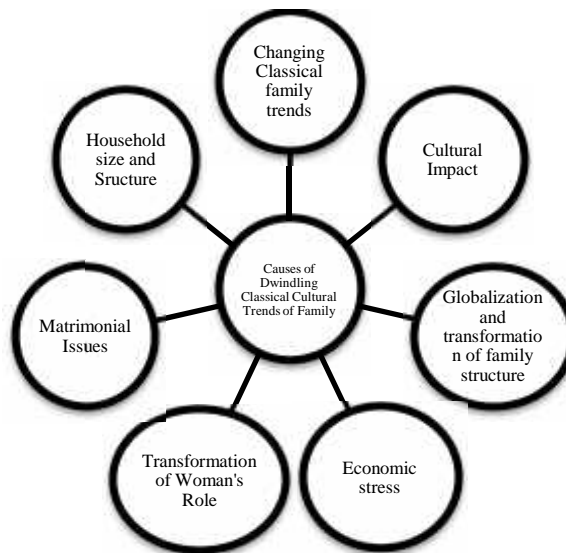


Figure 1: Dwindling classical cultural family trends and Elderly Care Conclusion

Discussion and Conclusion

This critical review strongly supports the importance of relationships within the family where there is an obligation to give due care to the elder persons. Both parents and children are responsible in this regard, parents have to look after their kids responsibly and the kids are obligated to pay affection, respect, and care for their elders as mentioned earlier as the reciprocation acts. Uberoi (1993) presented the idea which focuses the relative in spite of family members only he argued that in certain important and crucial matters only relatives are commonly ready to help rather than others, for example in funerals, marriages, financial help, and celebrations other different occasions (Patricia Uberoi, 1993). For all kind of financial, physical and moral help or support the informal safety net were friends, families, and neighbors along with children and family members of the elderly (Logan, 1999).

Development of a country needs the full participation of the entire population. Lloyd & Duffy, (1995) supported this phenomenon of maintaining increased demand of financial needs of a family through female's engagement, especially of wives in the economic growth (Lloyd, 1995). In the region of Punjab, Pakistan, the females significantly, in the mother's role have to carry out multiple important chores at home. Therefore, sometimes families who are busy in money-making, do not have time and interest to attend social gatherings (Bruce, 1995). It causes isolated family structures. However, at the time of need like celebrations and eves, relatives are yet the major source of help in Punjab. In *braderie* system, elder people are supposed to be an important asset and family system are considered as a blessing to fulfill this classical assumption. On such occasions, neighbors, and relatives are always assumed to fill the gap if any member of the family is not available. About aging assessment of some UN population projections, the researchers comment about age structures in Pakistan elderly is on the base of their wages-earning or not earning are active and supportive with their family (Hashmi, 2003). But due to multiple factors, this

privileged system is, unfortunately, becoming obsolete because of a decline in relations due to privacy and lack of time for a family.

Although urbanization has strong impacts and is a cause of the decline of a family system numerous think tank considers married son and daughter-in-law have a duty of emotional, social and financial support of their parents (Ikels, 1985). When someone gets sick or dies, it is observed that sense of responsibilities remains same under the social pressures (Myung-Hye, 1996). This tradition is present in Punjabi culture and in Islam as well. However, in a Punjabi culture, according to class, this obligation is assigned to male's parents instead of female's parents. Even economic conditions and circumstances, practices are being influenced.

To sustain the upholding position of elder people in a society, strong inter-generational positive interaction is required. For instance, Mak&Chan suggested that the role of a mother and mother-in-law after the birth of a child becomes imperious. In family elders like; grandparents, aunts, and uncles while sharing their experiences of life, share new ideas with young family members (Mak, 1995).

Thus, if the issue of elderly care is unaddressed, it will lead to a challengeable situation not only families but also at the government level. A country, like Pakistan has no visible social policy for elderly care, only family is playing the role of securing the needs of the elderly population. In such a scenario, if this classical family trend transforms into a nuclear structure completely along with declining social values and increased economic stress, no one will take care of the elderly persons at present and specifically in future, where we are expecting more than 50% population getting old or above 60 years (Logan, 1999). Therefore, it is better to have a comprehensive social policy to strengthen and give relief to the elderly bearing families in Pakistan. No matter, if financial help is not possible to a greater extent, the magnitude of the problem can be minimized by raising awareness among the caretakers and prospectus elderly about the preparation of active and healthy aging. This can be accomplished with the involvement of the gerontology experts and geriatric medicine specialist to raise awareness and educate the youth about building support networks or inter-generational networks for elderly care in the family system. Ultimately, youth groups can be formulated who may educate them about the prevailing phenomenon and the role of prevention strategies at the societal level in mitigating the problem.

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