Joint Family Transformation and Individualization Amongst Educated Young People in District Karak

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ABSTRACT

This paper will examine the change in the joint family system and the emergence of individualization among the educated young people in Karak District, Khyber Pakhtunkwana, Pakistan. The qualitative research design was used and semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 educated young men and women were carried out. The results indicate that more people prefer to live nuclear families, have more focus on individuality in decision-making, altering marital choices, and more independence of women. The aspects that began to influence these changes were education, urbanization, and economic autonomy. Although traditional family values are still in effect, educated young people are bargaining between tradition and modernity. The work adds to sociological insights into the dynamics of change in the family setting of semi-urban conservative settings and can be viewed through the prism of the Individualization Theory and Liquid Modernity.

Keywords: *family, nuclear family, joint family, individualization, District Karak, Pakistan, and educated youth.*

Introduction

The family has been known for a long time as the basic social institution that organizes social relations, authority relations, and identity formation. In the South Asian societies, more specifically in Pakistan, the joint family system has over time served as a dominant pattern of social organization with the salient features of collective decision-making, intergenerational co-residence and shared economic obligations. However, recent sociological studies show a gradual but significant shift of this structure towards a nuclear and individualized family setting.

Processes of modernization, expansion of education, labor mobility and globalization have contributed to the weakening of traditional collectivist frameworks. In the whole South Asia, studies have documented that increasing education levels and economic aspirations of the youth are altering the intergenerational order of authority and domestic power structures (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016; Rashid, 2020; Rehman & Roomi, 2022). Although the joint family is still symbolically prized, its sustainability is being challenged in practice by changing patterns of employment, migration and exposure to urban life.

The change of family systems can be theoretically located in the framework of individualization theory which was developed by Ulrich Beck. Beck (1992, 2002) argues that in late modern societies, individuals become more detached from traditional structures such as class, religion and family and are forced to create their own "biographical solutions" to structural contradictions. Individualisation does not necessarily mean isolation, but rather a movement away from ascribed roles and towards an individual constructed trajectory in life. In the case of educated young, the more aspirations, reflexivity and expectations for autonomy may be widened through higher education and may come into conflict with the collective family authority embedded in joint systems. Similarly, the concept of liquid modernity by Zygmunt Bauman (2000) offers an insight into the liquid and unstable nature of social bonds in the modern world. Bauman argues that traditional, "solid" institutions (including extended kinship networks) are increasingly replaced by flexible and negotiable relationships. Within this framework, nuclear families and individualized living arrangements represent larger changes in authority, commitment and identity. But for educated youth in particular, in semi-urban areas, and because of global media, increasing education institutions, and labor market uncertainties, preference may lead them to choose flexible domestic arrangements instead of rigid hierarchical structures. In Pakistan, a burgeoning source of empirical studies points towards the rising tendency of nuclear family systems among the younger generation, especially among the educated ones to have privacy, economic independence and decision-making autonomy (Rasool, 2024; Jamil et al., 2023). However, most of the existing studies are based on large urban centers and this leaves the peripheral districts such as Karak under explored. District Karak - located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - is an example of a socio-cultural context where traditional norms of the Pashtun and collective authority of the family are still prevailing, yet where educational expansion and youth mobility are rapidly growing. The conflict between individual decision-making and collective control becomes especially important in such situations. Educated youth might want to make independent decisions about careers, marriage and residential separation, but elder family members might place greater emphasis on obedience, sharing of income and collective honor. This negotiation between tradition and autonomy is the localized phenomenon of more general processes of individualization and liquid modernity. This study thus seeks to investigate the perception of youth in District Karak, who have been educated and in what extent individualization is changing the transformation of the joint family system, and authority of domestic, inter-generational relations, and living arrangements. By combining a global sociological theory with localised empirical work, the research adds to the emerging scholarship on family transformation in the Global South.

Research Objectives

1. To study the views of educated youth on the changing face of joint family system in District Karak.
2. To establish the important socio-economic and educational factors that have led to the shift from joint to the nuclear family structure.
3. To examine the contradiction between the autonomy of the individual and the control of the family as a group in traditional kinship systems.
4. To examine the role of processes of individualization in shaping processes of life choices - including marriage, employment and living arrangements - among educated youth.

Research Questions
1. How the traditional joint family system is transforming in the minds of educated youth in District Karak?
2. What are the underlying socio-economic and educational factors that are responsible for the transition from joint to nuclear family arrangements among educated youth in the District Karak?
3. How does the emergence of individual decision making among educated youngsters threaten the collective authority and control in joint family forms?
4. How do processes of individualization impact on marriage choice, career choice and residential preferences of educated youth in District Karak?

Scope of the Study

This paper explains the way in which the traditional joint family living system has evolved and the individualization among the educated youths in District Karak, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan has taken place. It focuses on the youth male, females with intermediate education, undergraduate, and postgraduate education as education plays a major role in shaping social values, personal freedom, and decision making. The research is reduced to a semi-urban locality, culturally conservative, which is District Karak, where the customs of a joint family are still prevalent. It talks of the key problems such as the perceived decline of the joint family, the growing popularity of nuclear families, how the decision-making in the family has been replaced by autonomy of the individual, and the changing trends in the production of authority. Although it is conducted in one district, the research can provide the sociological information that can be generalized to the similar semi-urban Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

This paper has theoretical, empirical, social, and policy implications. Theoretically, it helps sociologists to discuss modernization and family change by practicing the theory of individualization and the idea of liquid modernity on the conservative Pakistani setting. It has solved the research gap, which is empirical research on family transformation in District Karak, which has attracted little academic interest. Socially, it points out to the increasing conflict between young autonomy and old authoritative family and has an implication on gender roles, marriage trends, and intergenerational relations. In terms of policy, the results can assist educators and policymakers to understand better the evolving ambitions of educated young people and develop programs concerning employment, housing, and social welfare according to the emerging family trends.

Literature Review

International Perspectives on Family Change Research at the international level has suggested that   the family forms are changing substantially owing to the sociological transformations such as modernization, education proliferation, and individualization. While some classical theory emerges from western scholarship, such as that by Ulrich Beck on individualization, the notion that individuals are increasingly building their own life courses rather than following set traditional roles is well-received in sociology (Ito, 2008). This theoretical orientation implies that family systems, particularly ones that are based upon collective authority are increasingly confronted by growing expectations of personal autonomy and freedom of decision making among youth. Although Beck's work is theoretical in nature, the application has influenced many cross-cultural studies on the effects of modernization on social institutions, including the family.

Further studies tell that with the change in economic conditions and individual aspirations are also responsible for different formation of families in different parts of the globe. For example, studies note that in many cases younger generations prefer living arrangements that allow maximum privacy and autonomy, even in cases where traditional systems provide economic or emotional support. While much of this research is prior to the time span of 2020-2026, this research helps to establish some understanding of the increasing role of individual decision making in family choices in contemporary societies.

Changing Family Dynamics in Pakistan

In the case of Pakistan, studies confirm that the traditional joint family system is undergoing transformation because of social change and pressures of modernization. Research conducted by Rasool (2024) points out that urbanization, economic change, and globalization are affecting the family in Pakistan, leading to a change from a joint family structure to a nuclear family structure because of a change in socio cultural aspirations. This work highlights that these transformations include changing marriage practices, gender roles, and intergenerational relationships and show the tension between tradition and modernity within Pakistani families. "Studies in Pakistan find a definite transition from joint to nuclear family structures with increasing education, urbanization and individual autonomy determining the preferences of youth" (Rasool, 2024). Mobeen, Zaka and Ishtiaq (2025) found a similar pattern in Faisalabad, where the decline of the joint family systems was due to economic pressures, increased participation of women in education and employment, rural to urban migration and increased values of individual autonomy. Their mixed methods research reveals that for independence and modern lifestyles, educated and economically active individuals prefer to choose nuclear family relationships, which serves as corroborative support for the observations from global sociological literature on family change. These studies confirm that in Pakistan youth and educated adults are key actors in family transformation processes. The shift to nuclear families is part of a desire for privacy and independence, although components of the extended family are now hard to die out, especially in culturally conservative environments.

Perspectives of Youth on Family Systems

Several empirical investigations have focused on the youth's perception about the joint family and nuclear family system in Pakistan. Chandrasekhar (2023) carried out a survey of the young generation in Karachi and discovered that the younger generation expressed a preference for nuclear family systems as they considered nuclear families to provide more privacy and freedom than the collective aspirations of joint families. This research is suggestive of the proposition that educated youth link nuclear arrangements with greater personal autonomy, reflecting broader global trends in the process of individualization. "Research from Karachi showed youth preferring nuclear families more because of privacy and freedom and is part of a change in attitudes among generations" (Chandrasekhar, 2023). Similarly, a study conducted in Quetta which was qualitative in nature explored the perception of youth about joint and nuclear families. Jamil et al., 2023 revealed that the joint family system was described by young adults as limiting in terms of self-decision and personal growth while nuclear families offered them the opportunity to negotiate their own choices in their social and life without being restricted by the hierarchy family authority.

These findings provide useful insight into the meaning of the tradeoffs between collective support and individual autonomy in family structures as understood by educated youth. Together

it can be seen from these studies that educated youth especially in urban and semi urban settings increasingly perceive traditional family systems as restrictive and express a preference for family arrangements that accommodate a form of personal agency and decision making.

Research in Regional / Thematic Evidence of Pakistan

Other research that focuses more on general family dynamics supports the view that family transformation has an impact on psychological and social wellbeing. For instance, Afzal, Ahmad, and Hasan (2024) has found that family structure was significantly related to various aspects of student wellbeing, which implies that shifts in family systems have implications beyond living arrangements and into personal growth and identity development by young adults. This indicates how the shifting family structure can affect individual autonomy as well as social adjustment. A qualitative study in Quetta indicates the similar trend among educated youth with regards to family structure and life choices" (Jamil, Kakar, Habib & Sultan, 2023). Additionally, research on women's autonomy living in the joint family shows that patriarchal power in an extended family limits women's decision making and mobility, further encouraging some educated women to find ways of living in family that allow for more independence. A study by Haji Ur Rahman et al. (2025) demonstrated that the norms of joint families often restrict women's autonomy because of economic dependency and patriarchal control and this strengthens the family's structure and individual agency relationship. These regional studies highlight the fact that while joint family systems may have historically ensured social support and security, they may also limit individual autonomy, especially in regard to educated youth and women, hence the move towards nuclear family preferences.

The reviewed literature shows that family transformation is a multifaceted process, which is affected by socio economic change, education and individual aspirations. International theory, especially individualization models, forms a basis for comprehending these changes. Empirical research within Pakistan -- urban and regional studies suggest that educated youth are increasingly opting for nuclear family arrangements as they seek greater autonomy, freedom of decision making and personal self-determination. However, the traditional norms of joint families still have importance which reveals a complex interplay between the collective authority and the individual agency which needs to be explored further especially in under researched context such as District Karak.

Research Gap

While both international and national studies emphasize family transformation and growing individualization, studies in Pakistan are largely centered on three major cities, Karachi and Lahore (Chandrasekhar, 2023; Mobeen, Zaka & Ishtiaq, 2025). Smaller districts, especially Karak, remain **under-researched**. Limited studies analyze how educated youth in culturalently conservative areas negotiate the gap between the joint family authority as well as individual autonomy (Jamil et al., 2023; Rasool, 2024).

There exists a huge need for context specific research to understand the role of family breakdown, nuclear family trends and individualization in determining social and personal choices of the youth of District Karak.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two significant theories in sociology; the Individualization Theory of Ulrich Beck and the concept of Liquid Modernity by Zygmunt Bauman who offer solid frameworks on

understanding family system transformation and the emergence of individual decision making among the educated youth.

The Individualization Theory (Ulrich Beck)

Ulrich Beck (1992, 2002) suggests that in late modern societies, there is a tendency for traditional social structures, such as family, class and gender roles to lose their binding power over individuals. People are increasingly expected to build their own life paths and make decisions without reference to ascribed social positions. Applied to the context of Pakistan, and especially District Karak, Beck's theory explains the reasons behind educated young people's challenging traditional joint family authority, seeking autonomy in career, marriage and living arrangements and settlement in nuclear family structure. Individualization does not mean isolation but points toward a movement away from collective decision making toward personal agency, which is apparent among the youth exposed to higher education and modern socio-economic influences (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).
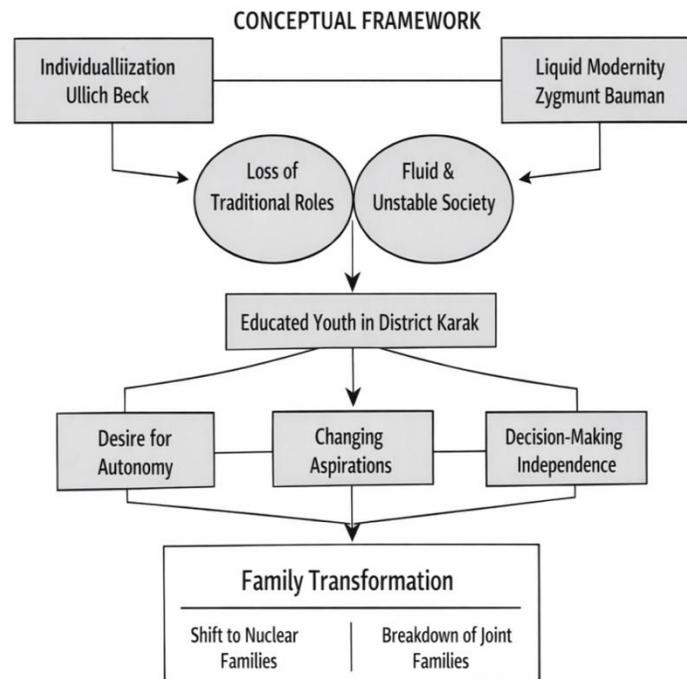
Liquid Modernity (Zygmunt Baumann)

Zygmunt Bauman's (2000) concept of liquid modernity complements Beck's theory by stressing on the fluid and flexible nature of today's social relationships. According to Bauman, traditional "solid" institutions, such as extended family structures, are increasingly unstable as individuals deal with uncertainty, mobility and new social norms. In this framework, the joint family system in Karak is viewed as a traditional institution under various pressures of new social expectations, education and globalization. Educated youth, under the influence of media, education, and urban ideas, take flexible approaches to the family, marriage, and residence on an issue of compromising between tradition and the desire for personal freedom.

Application of the Theories in the Study

Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman theories can be used to explain the shifting family trends in educated young people at District Karak. The Individualization Theory by Beck reveals how education promotes the independent choice of the youth in life. Liquid Modernity by Bauman emphasizes on the dynamic and malleable features of traditional institutions such as the joint family system. These theories combined provide a reason as to why there was a transition into increased individualism and preference towards living in nuclear families.

Conceptual Framework

This paper examines the theories of Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman in order to explain the changes in families within the educated youth in District Karak. Beck is an Individualization Theory that presents the way young people are becoming more and more independent in their life choices and family authority is being pushed back by them. The increasing flexibility of the family relationships has been emphasized in Liquid Modernity by Bauman. All these theories combined demonstrate how education, exposure to urbanization and economic independence contribute to the youth to take charge and make decisions in the family.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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                    │ Educated Youth in District Karak │
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   │   Desire for  │   │   Changing    │   │  Decision-Making  │
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        │ Shift to Nuclear  │  Breakdown of Joint    │
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Research Methodology

Research Design

This study has used qualitative research design to understand the change in joint family system and the emergence of individualization among educated youth in District Karak. A qualitative approach is suitable because of the possibility to develop a deep understanding of participant's perceptions, experiences, and social realities, which are not possible to capture through quantitative measures. By focusing on lived experiences, the focus of the study is to identify the socio-cultural dynamics that govern the transformation of families within a culturally conservative context.

Population and Sample

The population here is educated youth living in District Karak and those who have done at least intermediate education or undergraduate education or post-graduate education. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select participants that could provide rich and relevant information in terms of family structures, decision making and individual autonomy. A total of 30 participants (15 males and 15 females) were selected for in-depth interviews (IDIs) in order to ensure a variety of perspectives on joint and nuclear family systems.

Data Collection Methods

The main source of data collection in this study was semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs), whereby the participants were given the freedom of expressing their experiences and the researcher propounded significant issues. The duration of every interview was 45 to 60 minutes whereby the family composition, living arrangements, decision-making process, perceptions of autonomy, family authority, as well as perceptions of joint and nuclear family systems were addressed. The sensitive nature of family authority and personal autonomy did not imply the use of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), since the approach could be applied to individual interviews, which was more appropriate to guesst the privacy and sincere responses. Also, informal

discussions and field observations provided contextual information and knowledge of the socio-cultural context of participants.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed with the help of a qualitative analysis approach, added to the thematic analysis, which presupposes coding and classifying the patterns in the data to determine the repetitive themes and the essential information. This method is especially helpful when it is necessary to investigate the subjective experience of the participants and comprehend the social and cultural aspects of family transformation. The themes were elaborated by the continuous process and were interpreted to the theoretical framework, namely the Individualization Theory proposed by Ulrich Beck, and the Liquid Modernity, the concept proposed by Zygmunt Bauman that was helpful to align the experience of the participants to the sociological vision.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly maintained during the study. Participants gave informed consent and their anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Sensitive cultural norms were respected in the process of data collection and participants were given the right to withdraw from the study at any point. Finding of the study

Finding of the study

Theme 1: Preference for Nuclear Family among Educated Youth

Educated youth in District Karak are increasingly showing more and more inclination towards nuclear family set up in view of desire for autonomy and personal decision making. During the in-depth interviews (IDI), one participant expressed, "*I want to live separately after marriage so that I can make my own decisions without family interference,*" which clearly shows a change in authority structure from the collective family authority to the individual's control over his or her life choices. Another participant explained in the IDI *that living in a joint family often restricts personal space and freedom and makes it hard to plan a career or personal life on one's own.* The researcher noted that the study subjects who were more exposed to urban lifestyles or had more education consistently expressed this desire for independent living, which leads the researcher to believe that modernization and education play key roles in family preferences. These findings are consistent with the existing literature showing that younger generations living in Pakistan and South Asia are increasingly identifying nuclear family systems with personal freedom and privacy (Jamil et al., 2023; Rasool, 2024) suggesting that the trend demonstrates broader socio-cultural changes. This theme is in accordance with Objective 2 which aims to identify the socio-economic and education factors that lead to the changes from joint to nuclear families, and Research Question 2 that seeks to find out these dynamics in District Karak. Theoretically, Beck's Individualization Theory describes this change as youth forging their own life paths apart from conventional roles while Bauman's notion of a liquid modernity describes nuclear family preference as part of the transformation of flexible, modern social bonds taking over from traditional kinship structures. Overall, the theme touches upon the negotiation between tradition and autonomy made by educated youth and the tangible impact of social change to family structures in a semi-urban Pakistani context.

Theme 2: Conflict between Autonomy of the Individual and Authority of the Family

Educated youth in District Karak feel a discernable tension between wanting to have a life of theirown and the demands of family authority. During the IDIs, one participant explained *"My*

parents want me to take their advice for every decision but I feel I should choose for my own career and marriage partner," which highlights the conflict between traditional joint family and individual aspirations. Another participant shared, "*Sometimes I avoid talking about my plans because I know that my elder family members will not agree*" which shows how youth are often dealing with pressure from their family members while trying to assert independence. The researcher did observe that this tension was especially strong among participants seeking higher education and/or employment outside the hometown, suggesting that interaction with modern ideas and larger social networks increases the pressure involved in negotiating between self-determination and collective family control. These findings are consistent with past research findings in Pakistan that youth in joint families often experience limited personal choice and at the same time have aspirations for autonomy (Jamil et al., 2023; Rasool, 2024). This theme connects directly with Objective 3, focusing on the tension between the individual and the family control and Research Question 3, focusing on how educated youth challenge traditional authority in joint family structures. From the theoretical approach, Beck's Individualization Theory which proposes that these processes are a gradual disconnection from ascribed roles to create one's own life paths, and Bauman's concept of liquid modernism which places this conflict within the larger process of transformation of stable social bonds into flexible negotiable relationships. Overall, this theme shows how the negotiation between autonomy and authority is a crucial dimension of family transformation, representing the struggles of the educated youth to balance respect for tradition and freedom as individuals.

Theme3: Education Impact on Family Decision-Making

Education has a significant role in deciding the minds of the youth educated in District Karak about family decisions. During the IDIs one of the participants stated, *"Since getting my university degree, I am confident to talk openly to my family about my marriage and career choices"*, reflecting the impact of the higher education on self-confidence and assertiveness in decision-making. Another participant shared *"Education has taught me to think independently; I cannot blindly follow what elders expect anymore",* meaning that education facilitates thinking on one's own accord and rejects traditional family hierarchies. The researcher noted that those who were more educated were more likely to challenge group decisions and negotiate personal preferences, indicating a direct relationship between people's exposure to education and greater individual agency. These findings are consistent with the available literature on the role of education in fostering autonomy and transforming intergenerational authority in Pakistani families (Mobeen, Zaka & Ishtiaq, 2025; Rasool, 2024). This theme relates to Objective 2, that is, to identify factors of socio-economic and educational origin that influence the transition from joint to nuclear families, and Research Question 2, which focuses on how these factors affect changes in family decision-making. Theoretically, Beck's Individualization Theory describes this as the way in which education allows individuals to build their own life-paths apart from ascribed roles, whereas Bauman's concept liquid modernity explains the increased possibility in decision-making as part of the overall destabilization of traditional family structures. Overall, this theme emphasizes the fact that education is a crucial factor in family transformation and that with education, youth can assert their autonomy and negotiate authority within the joint family system.

Theme 4: 1nfluence of Urban Exposure and mobility

The experience of urban lifestyles and mobility plays a key role in influencing the view on, and negotiation of family structures by educated young people in District Karak. In the IDIs that one participant has provided, the participant noted that after being exposed to the city, he will learn that he will want more freedom to make his personal decisions, one of them being where to live and whom to marry, this is the influence of the urban exposure in regard to the personal desire. Another respondent reported that seeing how my friends in other cities live their lives, have their own families, made me feel like living on my own as well, although sometimes my family might want us to live together, which implies that social comparison and perception of the norms in the cities has an effect on the attitude of young people to the family set-ups. The researcher observed that majority of the respondents who had moved out of their home district either to study or work, did constantly feel that they would like to live in nuclear families and this perhaps due to the mobility subjecting them to new social norms and catalyzing the re-examination of the traditional structures of authority. These findings are consistent with the literature that emphasizes less inflexible views on family and independence of rural and semi-urban young people after exposure to urban settings (Allendorf and Pandian, 2016; Rehman and Roomi, 2022). This theme is connected to Objective 2, which is concerned with the socio-economic and educational forces behind transformation of the family and Research Question 2, which is concerned with how much the external exposure by the youth influences preference formation. In the theoretical perspective, the Individualization Theory of Beck views this influence as the extension of individual life choices in the form of social and spatial mobility but Bauman on liquid modernity views the experiences as the creation of part of the fluidity and negotiability of the contemporary relationships within the family. Generally, the theme demonstrates the power of exposure and mobility of the urban setting on the family change where the young are able to interfere with the traditional ways and attain independence in marriage, houses and career decisions

Theme: 5 Gendered Experiences and Women's Autonomy

Gender is an important factor influencing experiences of autonomy and family decision-making among educated youth in District Karak, where women are likely to negotiate for more constraints in joint family systems. During the IDIs, one of the female participants shared, "*In a joint family, the decision of my movements, my career are often restricted by my male elders, but I want to complete my education, work in my own,*" which indicates the gendered limitations brought on by traditional authority. Another participant explained, *"Even small decisions such as visiting a friend or attending a workshop taking permission sometimes makes me feel powerless"* which shows the disproportionate effect of joint family norms on women's agency. Examples provided to the researcher: Female subject who was better educated had more independent living and decision-making desires, but was often forced to carefully balance these desires with family expectations to avoid conflict. These results are in line with the regional literature that highlights that the joint family structures may constrain women's autonomy and that the educated women are increasingly looking for arrangements which permit personal freedom and self-determination (Haji Ur Rahman et al., 2025; Mobeen, Zaka & Ishtiaq, 2025). This theme has direct links to Objective 4's exploration of the role of individualization in shaping life choices, such as career and the living arrangements of individuals as well as Research Question 4's examination of the negotiation of youth autonomy within traditional kinship systems. Theoretically, Beck's Individualization Theory covers women's struggle for agency as part of self-constructed life

trajectories while Bauman's liquid modernity covers these negotiations as part of wider fluid social structures which allow for flexible roles and relationships. Overall, the theme makes it clear that gendered relations are key to the process of family transformation, as educated women actively search for ways to navigate and expand their autonomy in culturally conservative environments.

Theme6: Marital Preferences and Decision-Making.

Young people in District Karak with an education are developing more interest to have more control over their choices of marriages, a shift of family choice to individual choice. The fact that the choice of whom to marry is becoming an issue of great importance was explained by one of the participants of the IDIs who stated, *"I desire to marry someone compatible, someone I have personal knowledge with, rather than what my family would dictate as some have been doing in the past, the person I want to marry is a personal choice.* Yet another participant explained it in the following manner, *in a joint family, all the decisions are made by the elderly, yet I believe that marriage is my personal problem and I should have the final say, so the traditional decision-making process is undergoing a challenge by the young ambitions*. The researcher observed that better educated participants, or those participants who have been exposed to norms of the urban environment, are more vocal about their wish to have control over their marital choice and this makes the researcher come to the conclusion that youth can argue about authority when it comes to their family when they are better educated, or when they have been exposed to the norms of the urban environment. These results are consistent with the national research that reveals the increasing popularity of self-directed choice towards marriage among the youth with higher education without disregarding the family expectations (Rasool, 2024; Jamil et al., 2023). This theme has a direct relationship to Objective 4, which dwells on the impact of individualization in forming life choices, and Research Question 4, which dwells on the impact of youth autonomy in forming choices like marriage, career and residential choices. Theoretically, the Individualization Theory of Beck sees this change as a youth constructing his/her own way in life regardless of the assigned role as Bauman does of marriage choices in the context of the greater fluidity and flexibility in contemporary social relations. Generally, this theme reveals that young people who are educated are reclaiming the traditional standards of marriage that emphasized on compatibility, personal choice and autonomy as major transforming factors of marriages.

Theme: 7 Economic Independence and Negotiating the Family

Economic independence is one of the important factors in enabling educated youth in District Karak to generate authority and do independent decision making within the family. In the IDIs one of the participants commented that *she is now no longer a burden to her father because she now has a job and consequently can contribute to the home as well as to make a decision about her personal life without being constantly interrupted which is also financial self-sufficiency at play.* Another participant stated, *"Earning my own income gives me confidence to talk openly about my career and marriage choices with my parents and I have the economic power to do so which means I have the ability to negotiate in matters related to family."* showing that economic empowerment has a direct impact also on being able to negotiate issues in the family. The researcher mentioned that the subjects who were financially independent were likely to argue for nuclear living arrangements or personal decision-making whereby the conclusion is that economy factors complement education and exposure in developing autonomy. These

observations are also consistent with previous research that shows that income and employment enable youth to assert their preferences and resist the collective family control (Mobeen, Zaka & Ishtiaq, 2025; Rasool, 2024). This theme is related to Objective 2, which is about socio-economic factors driving joint to nuclear family's transition, and Research Question 2, which is about the role of financial independence in family decision-making. From a theoretical perspective, Beck's Individualization Theory explains this empowerment in terms of individuals taking advantage of the structural resources to create independent life paths, while Bauman's concept of liquid modernity explains the flexibility in the family negotiations as part of the change in traditional social structures. Overall, this theme has brought to light that economic independence is a very important enabler of youth autonomy whereby educated people are empowered to negotiate family norms and implement the decision-making power to operate within a cultural conservative context.

Theme 8 Negotiating Tradition Modernity in Family Life

Educated youth in District Karak are negotiating very actively between the traditional expectations of the family and the modern aspirations and it is a complex negotiation between respecting elders and seeking personal autonomy. At one point during the IDIs, one participant said *"I want to honour my family's values, but at the same time, I want to make my own choices about career, residence, and marriage"* and points out the concurrent pressures of tradition and modernization. Another participant shared *"It is a struggle to please my elders and my inclination and try to discuss decisions openly so we can make a compromise"* thus negotiation instead of flat-out rejection of family ways is a typical strategy. The practice sites in which youth negotiate the tension between individual and group goals by selective adoption guided by personal objectives while preserving social harmony was also seen by the researcher as demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of cultural expectations. These findings are consistent with the existing literature highlighting the fact that educated youth in semi-urban Pakistan are likely to mix traditional values with modern values as they gradually redefine family roles without completely discarding the collectivist norms (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016; Rasool, 2024). This theme relates to Objective 3, which deals with the tension between the autonomy of the individual and the control of the family as a group, and Research Question 3, which considers how youth deal with conflicts between their personal choice and the authority of the family. Theoretically, Beck's Individualization Theory accounts for those negotiations as part of the construction of self-directed life trajectories, while Bauman's idea of liquid modernity places them in the noxiousness and pliability of modern social bonds. Overall, this theme demonstrates that family transformation in District Karak is not the simple transition from joint to nuclear systems, but a complex process in which the youth balance respect for tradition with the desire for individual autonomy.

Discussion

The results of this research indicate that the traditional joint family set-up is gradually changing in the district of Karak among the educated young people. Despite the fact that the joint family still is a significant cultural institution that helps to support each other on the social level and preserve the collective values, the findings reveal that education, urban experience, and financial ambitions prompt the youths to become more independent in their personal and familial lives. The numerous participants said that they prefer nuclear family setups as they are perceived to have higher privacy, autonomy, and they have a higher level of control over the decisions

pertaining to marriage, career, and residence. Simultaneously, the paper also emphasizes the apparent conflict between personal ambitions and family values, especially regarding the choice of some matters that are traditionally subject to the control of the elders. This conflict is indicative of a wider range of sociological processes that have been outlined by Ulrich Beck, who claims that the people in modern societies tend to build their life courses more and more on their own instead of following the established social roles. On the same note, the discovery justifies the notion of Zygmunt Bauman, which states that the contemporary social relations are increasingly elastic and bargainable with the traditional institutions losing their hard power. The research further reveals that gender is a pivotal factor in this shift with special consideration to educated ladies who desire more freedom and decision making in the family set ups. Nevertheless, even though the trend towards independence was increasing, the majority of the participants shunned the joint family system even though they tried to strike a balance between respecting cultural practices and their own wish to be independent. Thus, change in family in the District Karak seems gradual and compromised as opposed to an abrupt substitution of traditional systems. The results of the study offer a contribution to the overall picture of family change in Pakistan by showing the interaction between global modernization and individualization processes with the cultural norms of that society and their impact on the attitude and life preferences of young individuals with higher education levels in Pakistan.

Conclusion

The paper has examined how the joint family structure has changed and how individualization is becoming a common behavior among the educated young people in District Karak. The results show that even traditional family authority is slowly being questioned as youths, particularly the highly educated and those who have experienced urban life are giving more importance to individual independence, freedom of choice and nuclear families. Exposure to urban lifestyles, education and economic independence were formed as the most crucial factors in youth preferences towards independent decisions on marriage, career and residence. The aspect of gender relations is also a key factor, with women being eager to gain the independence of action in family arrangements, which were traditionally controlled by males. Although the joint family system is still considered to be of symbolic and cultural value, the research proves that family change in the District Karak is a bargaining process that is between respect of tradition and the modern desires. These changes can be well explained using the Individualization Theory developed by Beck and the Liquid Modernity by Bauman, which highlights how the interplay of structural changes, modernization and personal agency is leading to the reconstructions of family patterns in a culturally conservative society.

Recommendations

Educational Programs: Policy makers and schools must offer awareness on family dynamics, individual freedom and skills of negotiating in order to balance traditional and modernity among the youth.

Financial: Economic Empowerment: Promote financial autonomy within youth, particularly women, since economic empowerment will increase their ability to make informed choices regarding marriage, career and living arrangements.

Family Counseling and Awareness: The workshops can be organized to the family by the local community organizations and social development programs that can help in intergeneration

conflict resolution and foster the understanding between the elderly and the educated young people.

Urban Exposure Programs: A program with exposure to urban and semi-urban ways of life, either educational or vocational, may allow the youth to be familiar with the social norms of modern times, without losing the culture, and help the youth to negotiate easier within the family structure.

Policy Support on Youth-Centric Housing and Social Programs: The authorities can create housing, social welfare, and work policies that can be able to accommodate the preferences of the nuclear family and aid young people in gaining autonomy whilst not fully weakening the system of extended family.

Further Research: More researches should be conducted in other semi-urban and rural districts to compare the trends of transformation of families, through longitudinal research so as to know how it will change the gender roles and intergenerational relationships.

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