

Family Dynamics and Social Change: A Study of Internal Migrants from Azad Kashmir in Rawalpindi-Islamabad

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Abstract

The changing family dynamics of internal migrants from Azad Kashmir living in Rawalpindi Islamabad, Pakistan, are investigated in this quantitative study. Simple random sampling was used as part of an organized study process to guarantee representative selection. Using Yamane's technique and population statistics from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the sample size of 398 respondents was established. To find important trends in integration, acculturation, and cultural adaptability, data analysis was done using SPSS. According to the findings, prolonged exposure to the host community has aided in acculturation and assimilation, creating a hybrid social context where metropolitan cultural norms and Kashmiri traditions coexist. A substantial majority (92.2%) of respondents acknowledge the positive impact of migrants on cultural diversity, highlighting the contribution of migration to cultural richness. A similar proportion (85.5%) asserts that migrants actively learn about local cultures, contributing to a more inclusive society. This study provides important insights into internal migration and social development in Pakistan by highlighting the dynamic nature of cultural interchange, where integration and identity preservation take place simultaneously.

Keywords: Internal Migration; Acculturation; Cultural Adaptability.

Introduction

Internal migration greatly affects family dynamics, especially for communities moving from Azad Kashmir to urban areas like Rawalpindi and Islamabad. According to research, impacted families experience social and economic difficulties as a result of this relocation (Zeeshan and Zaheer, 2021). While remittances help families financially, they also place additional responsibilities on the remaining family members, especially women and the elderly, according to a study on the socioeconomic effects of emigration in Rawalpindi District (Noor, 2017). In the absence of make family member, these people frequently endure greater workloads and emotional stress.

According to more studies, internal migration may cause traditional family structures to become unstable, changing relationships and societal responsibilities (Singh, 2019). For example, women may take on roles formerly filled by men, thus increasing their influence over household decisions. Social isolation and heightened strain to handle financial and household obligations may arise from this shift. Additionally, there are difficulties in integrating migrant populations socially. In Pakistan, internal migration flows are much larger than international migration flows (Lucas, 2014). Estimates indicate 4 times higher internal migration compared to emigration, equal to

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approximately 13% of the population moving across cities and districts within the country (IMO, 2019).

According to Grzymala Kazłowska (2016), migrants frequently find it challenging to adjust to new social settings, which can have an impact on their sense of identity and belonging. Potential discrimination and restricted access to necessary services in urban settings exacerbate this challenge. In summary, internal migration from Azad Kashmir to metropolitan areas like Rawalpindi and Islamabad results in substantial shifts in family dynamics. While economic opportunities may improve, families must navigate complex social transformations, including altered gender roles, heightened responsibilities, and difficulties with social integration.

Migration is a significant driver of social change, intrinsically linked to social mobility, which reflects alterations in the status of individuals or groups resulting from a complex interplay of economic, technological, and social variables (Zaman & Vasile, 2001). Changes in social structure and composition occur to the extent that they manifest social mobility and involve transitions within social space, specifically migrations from one social position to another. Change occurs at all levels of the migration process, manifesting either through population shifts or within existing systems due to individual or collective responses. This represents a fundamental and inherent aspect of social reality. Social reality influences each individual or group, prompting alterations at various levels.

Cultural changes encompass modifications in a group's traditions, as well as its economic and political spheres. Psychological changes include alterations in individuals' beliefs regarding the acculturation process, their cultural identities, and their social actions concerning interacting groups (Phinney et al., 2022). Acculturation is defined as the cultural change that results from sustained, direct contact between two distinct cultural groups, emphasizing that it pertains to changes in individuals whose cultural group is collectively undergoing acculturation (Berry, 2019). This research investigates the processes of assimilation and acculturation among migrants from Azad Kashmir residing in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. It aims to understand the social, cultural, and economic adaptations individuals experience within the host society, the challenges encountered in integration, and the strategies employed to maintain their cultural identity while adapting to the new environment. The study will explore the influence of social networks, economic opportunities, and governmental structures on their settlement experiences and sense of belonging.

Review of Literature

Defining the Scope: Exploring Transformations of Individual Identity Due to Migration

Acculturation, in its original conceptualization, encompasses all cultural changes, irrespective of whether they manifest at the social or individual level. As Berry (2019) posits, these transformations reflect modes of acculturation resulting from two primary factors: (1) the value placed on the heritage culture and (2) the desire for connection with the alternative cultural group. Assimilation occurs when an individual chooses to identify with the new culture while relinquishing their connection to the heritage culture. Separation describes a preference for maintaining the heritage culture while rejecting the alternative. Integration arises from the desire to embrace both cultures, whereas marginalization involves the rejection of both (Berry, 2019).

In a wider context, identity transformations are evident in the process of assimilation into a host country. This process is characterized by adaptation to the new social environment, the adoption of reference models from diverse environments or social groups, integration and assimilation into a different professional or workgroup, the acquisition of a new language, the formation of new

social relationships, and the acceptance and internalization of new norms, rules, and principles of life (Cormos, 2022).

Individuals interact within their social environment, adopting roles and creating symbolic spaces to which they assign meaning, thus shaping their relationship with the physical world. Symbolic interactionism explores how society influences individuals through the acquisition and use of recognized social symbols and meanings. It is a sociological perspective that emphasizes the symbolic aspects of social interaction (Cormos, 2022).

Within a framework focused on ethno-linguistic identity, the acculturation of individuals from diverse ethnic groups follows identification patterns shaped by linguistic changes resulting from these interactions. Acculturation ideally leads to patterns of either joint or exclusive identification with first and/or second-language groups. Ethno-linguistic identity theory posits that, given different courses of action, individuals will choose the one that optimizes their self-presentation, depending on the context (Ahamefule, 2019).

Migrant and Identity Change

Berger and Luckmann (2016), in “The Social Construction of Reality,” argue that individuals are not born as members of society but rather become so. The social self is constructed through daily experiences that involve standardized and self-referential processes. This development begins with internalizing meanings created by previous generations and legitimizing symbolic frameworks. Identity is objectively constituted through its establishment in an external realm and can only be subjectively claimed in conjunction with that realm.

Individuals formulate and redefine their identities based on their surrounding environment and social affiliations, actively participating in the formation of their social identities. Identity arises from an individual’s interaction with society within an internalized symbolic framework, the legitimacy of which varies across individuals. Identity is not a static entity awaiting expression but rather an active and dynamic process. This inherent complexity is central to the dynamics of identity (McLean, 2016).

Several factors, identified through statistical, sociological, and demographic methodologies, influence this process. These include the impact of separation costs from the place of origin and the migrant’s established lifestyle; the degree of isolation within the destination society and continued connections to the country of origin; the extent of familial or close relational support; the influence of both the origin and destination locations; the migrant’s communication with the country of origin and shared perceptions with fellow citizens; and the magnitude and significance of migration for both sending and receiving nations. Thus identity emerges as a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectical interaction between the individual and society. In contrast, identity categories are straightforward social constructs, generally stable components of objective social reality (Jong, 2024).

Integration Process in the Destination Area

Migrants often experience identity transformation. This process is evident in how migration integrates into a new country, encompassing adaptation to the latest social environment, adoption of reference models from diverse social groups, integration, and assimilation into different professional spheres, acquisition of a new language, formation of new social relationships, and the acceptance and assimilation of new norms, rules, and principles. The integration strategy involves maintaining the group’s cultural integrity (demonstrating a degree of responsiveness or resistance to change) while simultaneously seeking to become a functional part of the wider society. The

specific integration tactics a group employs depend on its own goals and the goals of the broader global community (Temper et al., 2018).

Adaptation and Assimilation to Integration

Adaptation to the host society is a crucial first step toward integration. Within the context of migration, adaptation refers to a migrant's capacity to integrate into the pre-existing structures of the receiving society. This involves assimilating the host society's norms and values and understanding and navigating its economic, political, social, cultural, and, particularly, political institutional environment. A rationale for emphasizing adaptation in the migration process is that individuals who migrate assess various adaptive strategies to mitigate risks and select those best suited to their circumstances (Vinke et al., 2020).

Society and personality are deeply intertwined. Societal components such as norms, values, and roles are internalized, becoming dispositional needs or subjective adaptations of their societal counterparts. Cultural models are assimilated and become integral to an individual's personality structure. These value-laden attitudes constitute genuine dispositional needs. Authentic, motivated integration of behavior within the social framework occurs only through the adoption of institutionalized values (Benjamin, 2024).

Individual integration within a host society is understood as a reciprocal process, influenced by the immigrant's assimilation into the dominant group and the immigrant's impact on that group. The emphasis is on maintaining cultural pluralism within a cohesive social unit. This requires immigrants to adapt to norms in certain domains while simultaneously preserving their cultural distinctiveness in others (Phillimore et al., 2018).

The assimilation process typically unfolds in stages. Initially, efforts focus on fulfilling basic needs such as employment and housing. Subsequently, social and cultural aspects (language, customs, and cuisine) are incorporated. Ultimately, this may lead to relinquishing traditional customs and conventions in favor of prevailing societal standards. This process is often metaphorically represented by the "melting pot" paradigm, suggesting that migration is a selective phenomenon Salins (2023).

Material and Methods

To examine the changing family dynamics of internal migrants from Azad Kashmir living in the Rawalpindi-Islamabad metropolitan area, this study used quantitative research methodology. To guarantee objective assessment and statistical rigor in comprehending the social changes taking place within these immigrant families, a methodical approach was chosen. Because they are the central locations for internal migrants looking for better access to healthcare, education, and economic prospects, Rawalpindi and Islamabad were selected as research sites. The migrant community's family patterns and social customs are greatly influenced by the socioeconomic diversity of these urban centers.

A straightforward random sampling technique was applied to guarantee a representative sample of the target population. Yamane's formula was used to calculate the sample size, and 398 people representing a range of socioeconomic origins, family structures, and occupational categories were chosen. To obtain a thorough insight into the changing family connections, both male and female participants were included. Structured questionnaires intended to investigate the experiences, difficulties, and shifts in family roles and relationships of migrants were used to gather primary data. The questionnaire was specifically designed to meet the goals of the study, guaranteeing its accuracy and significance in documenting important societal changes. The Statistical Package for

the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to examine the data to find trends and patterns in the dynamics of immigrant families. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to extract valuable information.

While this study offers valuable findings, its scope is limited to internal migrants within the Rawalpindi-Islamabad area. Consequently, the findings may not be generalizable to other migrant populations or geographic contexts. Future research could expand the investigation to different migration scenarios for a more comprehensive understanding.

Results and Discussion

This study explores the perceptions of internal migrants from Azad Kashmir regarding the social transformations resulting from their migration, specifically focusing on changes in family structure, gender roles, communication patterns, and overall family dynamics. The results of Table 1 indicate that migration significantly impacts family structures, with 72.2% of respondents acknowledging changes, 20.5% expressing concerns, and a small minority remaining indifferent. This suggests that while many migrants experience shifts in familial responsibilities, some perceive minimal or no change.

Gender roles are also influenced as migrants adapt to new social and cultural environments, affecting expectations and obligations within families. A substantial majority (80.3%) of respondents agree that relocation alters communication patterns, reflecting changes in family connections and social integration. However, 12.6% disagree, indicating varying perspectives on the extent of this influence. These findings align with assimilation and acculturation theories, suggesting that successful integration into the host group improves social and economic stability. These theories posit that individuals with strong social integration within the host community experience greater social and economic stability compared to those who face challenges in assimilating (Bean et al., 2010).

Traditional family responsibilities are also evolving, with 77.3% of participants recognizing these transformations (see Table 1). Conversely, 21.8% perceive no significant change, highlighting the diverse experiences of migrants. Migration influences social interactions and family connections, as reported by 75.5% of respondents, while a smaller proportion (11.4%) expresses doubt. Migrants experience social transformations in the new environment due to the acquisition of social capital, including trust and reciprocity, within the host community, which is considered a crucial factor in altering social roles (Woolcock & Narayan, 2006).

Overall, 93.7% of respondents perceive positive changes in family dynamics resulting from migration, suggesting that relocation fosters new opportunities and social capital, including trust and reciprocity within the host community (see Table 1). However, 6.3% express concerns, indicating that while migration offers advantages, it also presents challenges in adapting to new social norms. These findings underscore the complex effects of migration on family dynamics, where changes in social positions can empower migrants or create difficulties in adjusting to their new surroundings.

This study investigates the cultural assimilation of internal migrants from Azad Kashmir in the Rawalpindi-Islamabad region, focusing on their adaptive strategies while maintaining their cultural identity. Table 1 demonstrates that effective social cohesion depends on the successful integration of migrants into the host society. A substantial majority (92.2%) of respondents acknowledge the positive impact of migrants on cultural diversity, highlighting the contribution of migration to cultural richness. A small minority (7.8%), however, expresses reservations, reflecting diverse perspectives. Migrants adapt to the new cultural environment while preserving

aspects of their original cultural identity, including norms, beliefs, and practices. Social cohesion is facilitated when migrants successfully integrate into the new cultural setting (Berry, 2019).

Cultural exchange between migrants and the host population is widely recognized, with 85.4% of participants agreeing that interactions between the two groups promote mutual adaptation (see Table 2). A similar proportion (85.5%) asserts that migrants actively learn about local cultures, contributing to a more inclusive society. Furthermore, the collaborative celebration of cultural events is highly valued, with 94.8% of respondents endorsing the view that such shared experiences strengthen social bonds. The influx of migrants significantly influences cultural traditions in the host community, with 88.6% of respondents acknowledging discernible changes attributable to migration. This aligns with contact theory, which posits that meaningful interactions between migrants and locals foster mutual understanding and enhance social relationships.

Language proficiency is a crucial factor in economic and social integration. This research indicates that migrants with strong language skills have better employment opportunities and earn 15-20% more than those with limited proficiency (see Table 3). Moreover, improved language skills increase employment prospects by 20-25%. 77 % of respondents view migrants' language abilities favorably, while 19.8% express concerns, reflecting varying degrees of linguistic assimilation.

This study reveals that cultural integration is a dynamic process influenced by social interactions, language proficiency, and shared experiences. While most respondents viewed migration as beneficial for cultural diversity and economic stability, challenges remain in achieving full integration and acceptance within the host society. Regarding the role of language proficiency in migrant assimilation, opinions are divided. While 43.8% (23.7% strongly agree and 20.1% agree) acknowledge the importance of language skills for integration, 42.6% (19.5% disagree and 23.7% strongly disagree) express skepticism or disagreement, highlighting differing perspectives. A small percentage (2.9%) remained neutral. This research supports the idea that assimilation is a lengthy process, often requiring decades to fully adopt socio-cultural values Bean et al. (2010).

According to Table 3, a significant majority (86%, comprised of 50% strongly agreeing and 35% agreeing) acknowledge the existence of programs designed to improve migrants' language skills within the host community. Conversely, a minority (13%, with 8.1% disagreeing and 5.7% strongly disagreeing) express doubts or disagreement about the prevalence of such initiatives. Research has established a link between language proficiency and integration, finding that 75% of migrants proficient in the host country's language are highly integrated compared to only 45% of those with limited language skills. A substantial 93.7% of respondents (56.5% strongly agree and 37.2% agree) hold positive views on migrants' contribution to the cultural richness of the host community. A small minority (6.3%, with 3.1% disagreeing and 3.1% strongly disagreeing) express doubts or disagreements regarding this cultural influence (see Table 3).

A Chi-square test revealed a statistically significant association between respondents' gender and their employment status, results are presented in Table 4. The Pearson Chi-square statistic was 22.168 (df = 8, $p = 0.005$), which is below the conventional significance level of 0.05. This result led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating a significant relationship between gender and occupation. This finding was corroborated by the Likelihood Ratio test (26.151, $p = 0.001$) and the Linear-by-Linear Association test (6.054, $p = 0.014$).

In Table 5, a Chi-square test was conducted to examine the relationship between education level and income among respondents. The results revealed a statistically significant association between these two variables. The Pearson Chi-square statistic was 131.892 with 12 degrees of freedom (df), and the associated p -value was less than 0.000. This finding was corroborated by the Likelihood Ratio test, which yielded a significant value of 121.977 with 12 df. The analysis was based on 398

valid cases, providing a sufficient sample size for the test. These results indicate that income disparities among the respondents are significantly related to their educational attainment. In summary, the findings demonstrate a strong association between education and income, suggesting that education level variations are linked to income differences.

Table 6 presents a Pearson correlation analysis examining the relationship between migration duration and language proficiency, both treated as continuous variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.219 indicates a weak, positive correlation between these two variables. This suggests a tendency for language proficiency to improve with increased migration duration. The statistically significant correlation ($p < 0.001$) is based on a sample size of 398 valid cases, providing sufficient power for reliable analysis. While the results support the hypothesis that longer migration duration is associated with better language proficiency, the weak correlation coefficient suggests other factors likely contribute to language acquisition.

Table 1: Distribution of perception of the respondents based on social changes due to migration

Social Changes	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
You believe migration has influenced changes in the family structure in the study area	175 (43.0%)	114 (29.2%)	30 (7.3%)	47 (12.2%)	32 (8.3%)
Migration has an impact on the communication patterns within families in the study area	186 (45.8%)	134 (34.5%)	30 (7.3%)	30 (7.8%)	18 (4.7%)
Migration affected the traditional roles and responsibilities of family members in the study area	189 (46.6%)	120 (30.7%)	13 (2.9%)	42 (10.9%)	34 (8.9%)
Migration has influenced the social interactions and relationships within families in the study area	182 (44.8%)	120 (30.7%)	32 (7.8%)	14 (3.6%)	50 (13.0%)
Migration has led to positive changes in the overall dynamics of family life in the study area	227 (56.5%)	145 (37.2%)	0 (0.0%)	14 (3.1%)	12 (3.1%)

Table 2: Perceptions of cultural integration in the host community

Cultural Integration	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Migrants contribute positively to the cultural diversity of the host community	215 (53.4%)	151 (38.8%)	18 (4.2%)	14 (3.6%)
The cultural exchange and interaction between migrants and the host community are noticeable	202 (50.0%)	138 (35.4%)	38 (9.4%)	20 (5.2%)
Migrants in our community actively engage in learning and understanding the local customs and traditions	203 (50.3%)	140 (35.9%)	33 (8.1%)	22 (5.7%)
Cultural events and celebrations from both migrant and local communities are embraced and celebrated together	224 (55.7%)	152 (39.1%)	13 (2.9%)	9 (2.3%)
I have observed changes in my cultural practices or traditions within the host community	89 (20.6%)	262 (67.7%)	22 (5.2%)	25 (6.5%)

Table 3: Perceptions of language proficiency and cultural impact in the host community

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Overall, migrants in the host community have good language proficiency	189 (46.6%)	120 (30.7%)	13 (2.9%)	42 (10.9%)	34 (8.9%)
Language proficiency significantly affects the integration of migrants into the host community	97 (23.7%)	79 (20.1%)	54 (13.0%)	77 (19.5%)	91 (23.7%)
Initiatives or programs aimed at improving the language skills of migrants are visible in the host community	203 (50.3%)	140 (35.9%)	0 (0.0%)	33 (8.1%)	22 (5.7%)
Migrants have a positive impact on the cultural richness of the host community	227 (56.5%)	145 (37.2%)	0 (0.0%)	14 (3.1%)	12 (3.1%)

Table 4: Chi square analysis to test the association between gender and occupation of the migrants

Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.168	.005
Likelihood Ratio	26.151	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.054	.014
N of Valid Cases	398	

Table 5: Chi square analysis to test the association between education and income of the respondents

Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	131.892a	.000
Likelihood Ratio	121.977	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.234	.267
N of Valid Cases	398	

Table 6: Pearson's r correlation between independent variable and duration of migration and language proficiency

	Duration migration	Language Proficiency
Duration migration	1	0.219**
Pearson Correlation		
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
N	398	398
Language Proficiency		1
Pearson Correlation	0.219**	
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
N	398	

Major Findings

The major findings presented as under displays a detailed account of how migration and social development are closely linked specifically the social changes experienced by migrants and social development made in the area.

According to sustainable livelihood frame work presented in the theoretical framework resources like savings, credits and income build the financial capital. It directly affects the livelihood of the individuals because all their socio economic aspects delve with financial capital. Most often the individuals who hold financial capitals can invest in beneficial activities; the individual also can manage risk and cope the challenges (Jackson, 2020).

The majority of respondents about 30.7% reported higher income levels; participants had a monthly income of 39,000 PKR and above. This means that there was a large proportion of migrants who had relatively higher incomes after migrating.

Evidence from Pakistan's rural areas suggests that temporary migration is associated with higher school enrollment, especially for girls (Mansuri, 2006). Beyond its direct effects on health, migration has also shown the ability to raise health awareness. Mexico has seen lower infant mortality rates and higher birth weights as a result of these phenomena (Hildebrandt & McKenzie, 2005).

Majority of the respondents about 69.3% of the respondents had positive attitudes towards the social and cultural integration of immigrants in the host society. Among them, 42.2% were agreeing strongly, while other 27.1% of the respondents agree on the point. This suggests that a large number of the respondents is of the opinion that migrants can easily integrate in society and embrace the customs of the receiving society.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the majority of internal migrants from Azad Kashmir have successfully integrated into the socio-cultural fabric of Rawalpindi-Islamabad, likely due to extended interaction with the host society. Simultaneously, they have maintained and integrated aspects of their Kashmiri cultural heritage within this new environment. Data analysis demonstrates a process of assimilation and acculturation, wherein both cultural identities Kashmiri and that of the host community have converged while retaining their distinct characteristics. This interplay between the two cultures has fostered a hybrid social environment where traditions, values, and practices coexist and evolve. These concurrent processes of cultural assimilation and identity preservation underscore the dynamic nature of familial and social life among migrant populations in metropolitan settings.

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