

‘Don’t be Loud’: Challenges and Issues of Women in Post-Marriage Family Structures of Pakistan

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This paper examined the social, cultural, financial and psychological issues and challenges faced by married women in post-marriage nuclear and joint family structures of Pakistan. It was a descriptive study following the qualitative research approach to investigate the proposed problem with the semi-structured in-depth interviews. Respondents of the study were 12 newlyweds married women (6 from nuclear family structures and 6 from joint family structures), their husbands (12) and their mothers-in-law (12) in Lahore. Therefore, Total 36 participants from the same 12 families (3 participants (husband, wife and mother-in-law) from each family) were selected through a purposive sampling technique to collect the data. Through thematic analysis of the responses under the light of Functional Fit theory and family System theory, this paper concluded the findings at multiple levels. It was observed that the selected newly married women from nuclear families were more independent, confident, financially better, socially active, culturally freer and psychologically stronger than those women who were living in the selected joint families. It was also found that the personal bond between husband and wife from the selected nuclear families was much stronger than that of couple from joint families. They would be happier than those couples whose relationships were influenced by in-laws specifically mothers-in-law. It was further concluded that women feel free to work, cook, give birth to their children, adopt prenatal and postnatal care procedures, and in their life styles in nuclear family structures. Their level of satisfaction towards married life and husband was found much higher than those who share their houses with their in-laws.

Keywords. Post-marriage family structures, challenges, pakistani women

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Popular discourses assume that families play an important role in socio-economic perspectives and promoting cultural norms and values in all the parts of the world. By the passage of time, despite of many changes, families have transformed their functions and roles but their importance for emotional, psychological, financial, and cultural support cannot be negated (Wasim et al., 2008). In spite of the significance of family as a unit, South Asian region is known for its gender-stratified society, which is categorized by patrilineal legacy and succession practices. Women are considered as oppressed and suppressed. They are thought as inferior to their male family members and their lives are ruled by their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons in a family (Kar & Tiwari, 2020). Like other South Asian countries, females in Pakistan also face the superiority of males in their lives. It is observed that in pre-marriage family structures, the important decisions of a woman are taken by her father and brothers while in post-marriage family structures, her point of view and decision making power are in the hands of her husband and his family members (Habiba et al., 2016). This is also evident in a report that published by Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, which stated that males are the dominant part of Pakistan society; even their ratio in term of population is higher than females.

Women of Pakistan are behind the male segment of the society from every perspective. Although the intelligence level of females is ahead of males in Pakistani society but still parents spend less amount of money on their education. Apart from education, the employment rate and job opportunities for women in Pakistan is also very low (Jafree, 2023). In Pakistan, the patriarchal system exists which points out that women are subordinate in the society from every perspective. From home to the workplace, they face discrimination, disrespect, mistreatment and violence (Zulfiqar, 2022). In the post-marriage family structure of Pakistan, women in the husbands' houses specifically mother-in-law and sister-in-law affect their lives. The relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is highly influenced by the factors of jealousy, insecurities, and their own past bad experiences. Although Pakistani women are usually dependent on males for their financial needs but for the domestic matters the decision making choices of males are highly influenced by the opinion of their mothers and sisters (Habiba, et al., 2016). It is also assumed that this living style effects social, psychological, cultural and financial position of a married woman. From career-related decisions to children's health-related issues, daughter-in-law is expected to be dependent on the opinion of her husband and mother-in-law.

Most of the studies on family system focus on the autonomy and decision making ability of women in post-marriage family structures. Some of the scholars described the factors of autonomy while others analyzed its implications in the South Asian region (Char et al., 2010; Jensen & Thorton, 2003; Kadir et al., 2003; Mumtaz & Salway, 2007; Nisar et al., 2016). Aside from decision making and autonomy, the impact of family structures (joint vs. nuclear) is another focus of research in the discipline of gender studies. Some studies supported the joint family system while the other advocates the nuclear family system (Bajwa et al., 2016; Farooq et al., 2015; Mohyuddin & Shehzad, 2014; Saleem & Ajmal, 2018; Shaheen et al., 2017). In addition to family structures, social structures were also examined in a number of researches where it was observed that how social structures effect the married women. For instance, Habiba et al. (2016) discussed the new concept of patriarchy which named as neo-patriarchy. According to their research, instead of males, newly married girls are subdued and ruled by the women living in their in-laws especially their mother-in-law and sister-in-law.

Moreover, many scholars also conducted studies on the difference between the living styles of working and nonworking married women (Amos & Manieson, 2015; Hashmi et al., 2007; Sabre, 2016). In addition, there are number of researches conducted on violence on married women and their mental health in Pakistan (Khan et al., 2009; Niaz, 2004; Qaisrani et al., 2016; Zarar, 2018). Similarly, many researchers examined the weak relationship between husband and wife and found the variables that are associated with the quality of happy married life including autonomy in decision, family structures, compromises, marital rape depression, the status of fertility and age difference, and religious practices (Ali et al., 2016; Ali et al., 2009; Kieran, 2001).

While summing up, this research is based on the concept of triangulation of family structures where interviews are conducted of husband, wife and mother-in-law from the same family that has given a diverse opinion on the same issues regarding Pakistani family structures and patriarchal society.

As this study is focusing on the post marriage family structures, decision making and challenges of newlywed women in Lahore, therefore, Functional fit theory and Family system theory are the theoretical gist of this research. Parson's theory of 'Functional Fit' advocates the importance of nuclear family in the modern era. It was argued that in pre-industrial era extended family were popular because family was considered as the unit of production but in era of industrialization, due to structural differentiation, extended family is

less relevant because now different institutions have taken responsibilities including education, health, law and order etc. which are previously catered by the families themselves. Therefore, according to Persons, the nuclear family fits in current society as nuclear family performs two main functions, geographical mobility and irreducible functions which are important for current society.

All family members are emotionally attached and their feelings, actions and thoughts are affected by the other members of the family. The emotional changes in one of the family member affect the whole family which causes stress and anxiety. He also presented eight interlocking concepts including triangles, differentiation of self, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, emotional cutoff, Sibling position and societal emotional process (Cohen, 2023).

Functional fit theory and Family system theory provide the basic gist to the theoretical framework for this research as this study aims to analyze that how the triangle of three relationship make impact on lives of one another. The triangle (Wife, Husband and Mother-in-law) also affect the bonding of the husband and wife, mother and son, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. This triangle create fraction and cause mental stress which leads towards unhappiness and bitterness towards relationships. Like Person's theory of functional fit theory, this study also suggests that to avoid the bitterness and stress the couples should adopt nuclear family system. As in nuclear family system couples are more confident, independent and free to make their own choices.

Therefore, in this study, the impact of post-marriage family structures on the way of thinking and decision making power of women is analyzed. This study highlights the issues and challenges faced by women while living in post-marriage nuclear and joint family structures. This study also highlights the difference in issues and challenges faced by working and non-working women in post-marriage nuclear and joint family structures of Pakistan. The research questions for this study are:

1. What issues and challenges have been facing by women of Lahore in post-marriage family structures?
2. Is there any difference between the issues and challenges faced by women in post-marriage nuclear and joint family structures of Lahore?
3. To what extent the opinion of husband and mothers-in-law influence the thinking pattern of married women in Lahore?

Method

Research Design and Sample

It is a descriptive study following qualitative research approach to investigate the issues of newlywed women with the semi-structured in-depth interviews. Respondents of the study were 12 newlyweds married women (6 from nuclear family structures and 6 from joint family structures), their husbands (12) and their mothers-in-law (12) in Lahore. Therefore, Total 36 participants were selected from the same 12 families (3 participants (husband, wife and mother-in-law) from each family). The inclusion criteria and the recruitment of these 12 families by keeping all ethical considerations, were also further classified on the following basis: 6 families from post marriage- joint family structures and 6 from post-marriage nuclear family structures were selected. So total are 12 families. All 12 newly married women were selected on the basis of their married lifetime period (not more than 2 years); while, 6 newly married women from post-marriage joint family structures including 3 working women from post-marriage joint family structures and 3 non-working women from post-marriage joint family structures were selected. Moreover, 6 newlywed women from post-marriage nuclear family structures including 3 working women from post-marriage nuclear family structures and 3 non-working women from post-marriage nuclear family structures were chosen.

In addition, another inclusion criterion was their husbands' monthly income that would be less than PKR 1 lac and in joint family structures, the selected married women's husband would be the only bread earner for the whole family. These 12 families were selected on the basis of the willingness of wife, husband and mother-in-law of the same family to participate in the research. It was well communicated to keep the identity anonymous before recruiting all three members of the same family as the participants of the research.

In Pakistan, due to the patriarchal system, women move to husband's homes right after their marriage to live with their families where husbands' families and especially mothers'-in-law have dominant role in their lives. Even if the newly married couple decides to live separately in nuclear family system, most of the times, the reasons is their jobs and living in the separate cities. Otherwise, after a few months or at times years, this is very hard for a husband to take his wife to a separate house that causes a very serious family dispute in Pakistani families. Keeping these family norms in mind, the families were selected that were recommended by the relatives and

friends where the researcher developed the rapport to talk about their issues, challenges and struggles of living together or separately. The anonymity was kept assured. In addition to all mentioned above, the participants were also informed that they were free to opt in or out of the study at any point in time. The purpose, benefits and funding behind the study was also well communicated before they agreed to participate in the research.

After managing time and venue by keeping the preference of the respondents, interviews of 40 minutes to 1 hour are conducted. Semi-structured questionnaire is constructed for newlywed women, her husbands and her mothers-in-law separately. The data is analyzed by employing the descriptive approach of thematic analysis. The themes are extracted from the data. The following steps suggested by different scholars (Bringer et al., 2004; Creswell, 2003; Gonzalez-Salgado et al., 2022; McKim, 2023) are adopted by the researcher. The interviews, type field notes and utterances were transcribed that are also called 'Verbatim Transcription'. All the statements were arranged and sorted. The common ideas of the participants' responses were found into the different themes. These themes were coded and categorized through NVivo respectively. The validity of the research was ensured through the following methods: the researcher used the members' check technique by articulating and summarizing participants' responses during the interviews (Buchbinder, 2011; Gonzalez-Salgado et al., 2022). Through member check or validation check, the researcher bracketed own experiences and personal biases to make the findings more reliable and valid. The follow-up meetings, telephone and email communications with participants were also arranged to validate meanings of their perceptions and to make sure that the researcher was not dominant on the interpretation of the statements rather the participants are active (McKim, 2023). As per the commitment to the respondents, their identity kept confidential. They were assigned by the alphabets in the following way.

Joint Families

- A (A1=Daughter-in-law, A2= Husband, A3=Mother-in-law)
- B (B1=Daughter-in-law, B2= Husband, B3=Mother-in-law)
- C (C1=Daughter-in-law, C2= Husband, C3=Mother-in-law)
- D (D1=Daughter-in-law, D2= Husband, D3=Mother-in-law)
- E (E1=Daughter-in-law, E2= Husband, E3=Mother-in-law)
- F (F1=Daughter-in-law, F2= Husband, F3=Mother-in-law)

Nuclear Families

G (G1=Daughter-in-law, G2= Husband, G3=Mother-in-law)

H (H1=Daughter-in-law, H2= Husband, H3=Mother-in-law)

I (I1=Daughter-in-law, I2= Husband, I3=Mother-in-law)

J (J1=Daughter-in-law, J2= Husband, J3=Mother-in-law)

K (K1=Daughter-in-law, K2= Husband, K3=Mother-in-law)

L (L1=Daughter-in-law, L2= Husband, L3=Mother-in-law)

Table 1: *Demographic Characteristics of the Sample*

Joint Family Respondents	Status	Qualification Background
A	Educated housewife	MA in English
B	Educated housewife	MA in History
C	Educated housewife	MPhil in English
D	Educated working	Masters in Economics
E	Educated working	PhD in History
F	Educated working	MA in English
Nuclear Family Respondents	Status	Qualification Background
G	Educated housewife	BS(Hons) Mass Com.
H	Educated housewife	BS(Hons) in Mathematics
I	Educated housewife	B.Com
J	Educated working	MA in English
K	Educated working	PhD in Mass Com.
L	Educated working	BS (Hons) Mathematics

Note. Com. = Communication.

Findings and Discussion

This section discusses the analysis of the responses recorded by 36 members from 6 joint families and 6 nuclear families that answers all the research questions. A woman, her husband, and her mother-in-law from each family were interviewed to investigate the post-marriage issues and challenges facing by newlywed women in nuclear and joint family structures of Pakistan. After analyzing the responses by following the steps discussed above, the emerged themes included decision making, expectations, stress, social networking and social circle, personality changes, and relationship between husband and wife.

Although women in nuclear families are more independent than joint family system but still due to the patriarchal society they have less decision making authority and most of them rely on their

husbands' opinion but on the other hand, women in joint family system, are not independent at all. It was found that women in joint family structures are more dissatisfied, disappointed and frustrated due to high expectations from both ends while in nuclear family structures, they are more satisfied and contented. Moreover, women in joint family structures are more stressed out and have psychological pressure towards their responsibilities and life styles than women in nuclear family structures. Women in joint family structures are more aloof and not social at all due to the fear of being judged by their in-laws. On the other hand, women in nuclear family structures are more well-connected, social and have choices to meet people around. Women in nuclear family structures are more confident, well-groomed and have better vision towards life than women in joint family structures. In addition, women in joint family structures have weak bond with their husbands due to stress and frustration prevailed in the family and in-laws while the women in nuclear family structures have strong bond with their husbands and spend quality time together.

Decision Making: Powerful or Powerless

All the families have their routines and patterns which are formulated over the time that creates an ontological security. As a new spouse come into the family, the routines are inevitably shaken. Communication and power concertation change its pattern after any marriage enters into a family institution (Volling et al., 2015). In patriarchal societies like Pakistan, this perceived relationship between agency and structure in the joint-family system is stronger than the nuclear family system (Sultana, 2011). Therefore, in this study, it was explored that the expectations to bring some change in oneself is only associated with the new female addition into the family. The data that emerged from the study revealed that there is a clear distinction between the decision making power of women after marriage belongs to the nuclear and joint family system. The decision in a joint family system is usually taken by the family of the husband, especially by his mother or father. It is also endorsed by almost all the participants of the joint family system who agreed that the major decisions of the family are decided by Mother-in-law and Husband. Due to the factor of being elder and having authority, B1 added that "she decides everything like from the menu of the lunch to the purchase of a property, she has the ultimate control." Husbands justify the power of their mother by saying their mothers got more experience than their wives due to which it is rightfully fair to let their mothers decide the

matters in their houses. They also claimed that elders always make the right choices as their marriage decision is also taken by their mothers.

In response to this, mothers-in-law also have their own point of view. They think they imposed their decisions in lieu to care for them. As C3 said, “And I don’t want to butt in and I want to be sensitive to them and not impose on them, that would be the only place that we could have problems is if they think I am imposing”. A few stereotypical prior beliefs (especially in non-working less educated newly-wed girls in the joint family system) also strengthen their post-priori beliefs. B1 discussed that she was told by her mother that “do not speak loud in front of your mother-in-law. Consider that house as the last before death. Ignore petty issues. It is your duty to save your house”.

However, the decisions in the nuclear family system do not follow the strict structure. It was found that the decision-making power in the nuclear family is usually done by the couple. The highly educated wives living in a nuclear family system are likely to have more power of decision making in their house. However, the decisions about property investment are still taken by their husband. This propagates that the involvement of in-laws is less in the decision making process in the nuclear family system. Even in few instances, the daughters-in-law get more authority in addressing household chores like deciding a doctor to have a checkup and where they go for shopping. As I1 added that “we are autonomous in taking decisions but I got more power in deciding the doctor and shopping mall, etc”.

It was also observed from the above findings that although women in nuclear families are more independent than joint family system but still due to the patriarchal society they have less decision making authority and most of them rely on their husbands’ opinion.

Expectations: Satisfied or Discontented

In post-marriage family structures, it is noticed that behind all the issues among the daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law is the factor of expectation. Both develop high hopes from each other. When these expectations do not meet, the bitter relationship starts. Before marriage, women develop high expectations and negative vibes for their in-laws due to the popular belief of the society which eventually disturbs their relationship after marriage. Even in-laws do not make efforts to change this perception and expect from daughters-in-law to adjust in the family according to their existing structure (Prentice, 2008). As E1 added that “expecting appreciation and favor from your mother-in-law is just like making a house on sand which collapses sooner or later (laugh)”.

Daughters-in-law E1 and D1 also added that they are working women with newborn babies. So they had a lot of expectations while living in a joint family system. They thought it would be easier for them to do the job as their in-laws would take care of the babies. Contrary to this expectation, they are now facing new and different kind of glitches. They are now taunted as negligent and careless mothers. Their mothers-in-law criticized them in front of everyone that they look after their kids; they are more attached to them; and their daughters-in-law do nothing except spending days out.

Daughters-in-law from a nuclear family system added that their mothers-in-law have developed high expectations from them. As they assume from them to take care of the whole house, their son visits them every weekend and also to call them daily. If they fail to visit them every weekend, they start poking their sons against their wives and making a big issue out of it. As K1 said "I always try to call her daily but sometimes due to my busy routine I forget to do that, she calls my husband and starts complaining about my rude behavior which I think is quite unfair because I even do not get time to call my mother daily".

On the other hand, husbands from the nuclear family system said that they only expect their wives to manage the house effectively and respect their parents. According to most of them, their mothers do not expect anything from both of them. They just pray for their wellbeing together. They thought themselves under pressure due to the expectations of both parties from them. As the husband from the nuclear family said that "every weekend I am in a great stress as my mother wants me to visit her while my wife wants to stay in the house, go for shopping, picnic or to visit her mother. So I feel helpless under the burden of expectations". Husbands from the joint family system also face the same issues with the addition of many other issues. They have to manage the time, money, support, and many other things for their wives and mothers at the same time but to avoid the conflict they mostly try to make understand their wives and ask them to compromise instead of their mothers.

This trend is also verified by the responses of mothers-in-law from both family systems. Although all the mothers-in-law have a lot of expectations from their sons and daughters-in-law as compared to mothers-in-law from nuclear families. They put less pressure on their son than the mothers of a joint family system. All of them emphasize that they presume that their son and daughters-in-law should give them respect, should seek their permission before making any important decision, and should visit them often because it is their right being their parents.

On the other hand, mothers from the joint family system had developed quite higher expectations from their sons and daughters-in-law. From the food to dresses, from the kid's matters to shopping, the mothers-in-law have developed expectations for each matter. One of the mother-in-law told her that "in the initial days of my son's marriage, his wife used to cook tasteless food without adding any kind of spice and salt but now I guide her to make the perfect food for our family". Another mother-in-law added that "my son always complains me about the bad dressing of my daughters-in-law and frankly speaking I also do not like her dressing sense so I have worked a lot on that and made her realize that she should dress up according to her husband desires."

Like the studies of [Kadir et al. \(2003\)](#), [Mumtaz and Salway \(2007\)](#), and [Nisar et al. \(2016\)](#), this study also endorses that mothers-in-law from joint family system keep expectations regarding the family planning of their sons and daughters-in-law which put pressure on the spouses and ultimately influence the decision of the couple.

Stress: Peaceful or Unhappy Married Life

Stress has received significant attention in marital research which proved it to be a significant part to understand the stability and quality of marriage ([Bryant et al., 2001](#); [Cutrona et al., 2005](#); [Marotz-Baden & Cowan, 1987](#); [Wu et al., 2010](#)). Previous researches found its close association with longevity and satisfaction with marriage life ([Randall & Bodenmann, 2009](#)). Stress is caused by different factors which are called stressors and the negative consequences of those stressors are called strains ([Greenberg, 2012](#)).

Two types of stress are perceived by the newly-wed daughters-in-law. One of them is caused due by the overburden of household chores. Whereas, the second one is due to the criticism on the quality of work and behaviors. The perceived stress among newly-wed daughters-in-law varies in nuclear and joint family structures. Like women from the joint family system face more stress as compared to women of nuclear families. They feel controlled, less important, and burdened. Usually, the women in the joint family structure do not do jobs by their own choice or they are not allowed to do the job. As a result, she sometimes asked to look after every matter in the house from dawn till dusk. For instance, A1 said that "I used to work from morning to evening, my fathers-in-law gets up at the *Fajr* (prayer time), I boil water for him so he could do ablution before praying." She further said that "this could lead to exhaustion. Sometimes... rather I would say all the times, my in-laws consider me a machine

which they think never turn off". Similarly, D1 added that "I sometimes think of visiting a psychiatrist due to the stress which is caused by the exhaustion". Moreover, one subject E1 replied that "I use to feel a headache starting from noon every day". This is an example of a strain due to the stressors of stress.

In nuclear families, even the daughters-in-law, who do not do jobs, gave their opinion about the criticism they face from their in-laws. Their in-laws think that they do not do anything because they are only two members (not counting the newly-born babies even) but the situation is quite different.

For instance, F1 said that "my in-laws often say, O dear, didn't you get bored from living idol all day? (laugh gently). They think taking care of a baby and looking after the needs of husbands are nothing."

However, the daughters-in-law who live in nuclear families and do some kind of jobs usually have the facility of a maid. Their in-laws know that their daughters-in-law do the job so they do not get much criticism which could yield stress. Therefore, husbands from the nuclear family system think their wives are not facing any kind of major mental stress, whereas husbands from the joint family system agreed that their wives are facing mental stress due to family expectations. As K 2 added that "we are enjoying our life. You could ask my wife separately, she never complained about any big problem related to my family". However, C2 said that "I am worried about the relationship between my wife and my mother. They usually indulge in a verbal fight on tiny issues."

It was found that daughters-in-laws living in families having low income, irrespective of which system they belong (joint or nuclear), tend to experience stress more than the daughters-in-law living in families having a better financial resource. As A1 stated that "my husband gives his whole salary to my mother-in-law and then I need to take from her if I need. Just see, isn't it unfair? Sometimes, my mind comes at the brink of exploding". On the other side, H1 from the nuclear family added that "I usually have a significant amount of money with me all the time. My husband shares money with me every time he gets a new contract".

There are many videos, articles, news writings, and other suggestions available that guide how to live happily after marriage (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012; Stutzer & Frey, 2006; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008). Many of them suggest dividing the household work but the patriarchal societies including Pakistan where the work, like cooking food, cleaning the house, and other household chores, are mainly

associated with women. It is obvious when someone is taking care of one person (or of children as well) and when she is told to look after the parents also, the workload increases and this could lead to some changes in cognitive, emotional, and eventual behavior. This societal association of housework is further seen differently among joint and nuclear family systems. Most of the women living in a joint family system believe that they are doing overwork since their marriage. This fact becomes darker as A1 said, "It is suggested by Islam to serve the husband and his family". One of the daughters-in-law in the joint family system, E1 said that,

My mother-in-law told me in front of my husband about one incident of the saint's life that the wife used to keep a stick with herself while working [while making breads etc.] So, when her husband used to return from work and find that the bread was not made as per his choice, he would not be in need of searching a stick to beat her. Can you imagine how much stressful this story would be for me and family?

Social Networking and Social Circle: Connected or Aloof

Women feel the disruption in their communication patterns after their marriage. They acculturate and adjust themselves in the new house according to the norms and values of their in-laws (Won & Kim, 2014). They give up their social life and also make a compromise regarding the usage of social media and the friends in the real social circle due to their in-laws. By large, it is observed that in patriarchal societies, strategic constraints and restrictive social norms can limit the interactions of daughters-in-law with their social networks and the number of benefits that they can get from them.

It was observed that daughters-in-law from joint and nuclear families have different point of views about their social life after marriage. The women from the joint family system feel restricted and unhappy related to their social circle. As most of them said that they do not get much time to meet their families and friends after marriage. As one of them, A1 stated that "whenever I came back even from my parents' house I welcomed with a weird expression like I have committed a blunder. So to avoid that I hardly go anywhere."

Even the usage of social networking websites for daughters-in-law of the joint family system is quite difficult. As they said that in-laws do not restrict them openly or verbally but they have to hear the barbs from their mothers-in-law while using mobile phones. Privacy is another reason which restricts the usage of mobile phones among the

newlywed females from the joint family system. As D1 said that “everyone is watching you and judging you from your facial expressions while using a mobile phone.”

Apart from all of that, working women from the joint family system enjoy a little bit of more liberty than non-working women because they spend some time outside the house in the offices and also have the freedom to meet with their friends but still their interaction with their parents is less.

Similarly, women from the nuclear family system are also concerned about their social life but the reason behind their apprehensions is different. All the women from the nuclear family system whether they are working or non-working do enjoy full freedom concerning the usage of mobile phones or meeting with their friends until or unless their husband do not mind.

Husbands and mothers-in-law said that they do not restrict the social networking and usage of mobile phones of their wives and daughters-in-law. In fact, according to them, they encourage them to stay active and connected. Husbands from the joint family system said their wives can meet their relatives and her friends any time but she should inform them or their mothers before going anywhere for security reasons due to the current situation of Pakistan. They also think it is a gesture of respect if their wives seek permission from their mothers. Before marriage, they also take permission from their parents before going anywhere. According to them, it is no threat to their privacy or social life.

Changes in Personality: Positive or Negative

Women undergoes many self-changes after marriage. Publically binding yourself with a stranger or opposite personality is not easy for a woman. They experience different changes in their attitude as well as in their behavior. Some of these changes are positive while others have negative consequences. Like feeling more independent, open, confident, and valued are some positive changes that some women get develop after marriage due to the support of their husband, those changes make their personality more pleasant. On the other hand, some women after marriage due to facing constant criticism by their in-laws and husbands lose their self-confidence, independence, and boldness which make their personality dull and boring. They look frightened, have zero confidence, and unable to make even simple decisions. All these factors not only leave an impact on their mental health but also make a huge effect on the mindset of their children (McIntosh, 2002).

This study also tries to analyze self-changes that occur in the newlywed women of the joint and nuclear family to understand how in-laws and husbands' behavior influence the personality of women. Women belong to nuclear families agreed that they are more independent and confident after marriage, their opinion is being valued and respected by the husbands and they are also now becoming more well aware of the financial matters. All the women from the nuclear family system said that they feel positive changes in their personality after marriage. Contrary to this, women from the joint family system have mixed opinions on this issue like some of them felt no change after marriage but some of them felt that they were more confident and independent before marriage. Now they have to consider a lot of factors before taking a single step. For example, A1 added that

If I want to buy a sofa for my room, first, I have to discuss it with my husband. Second, I have to get permission from my mother-in-law who will ask a lot of questions like why you want it? What happened to the previous one? Then I can get it if she allows.

The women from the joint family system have to make a lot of compromises after marriage. They want to save their house so they keep their 'loud voices' to themselves which makes the relationship with in-laws bitter.

On the other hand, the husbands from the nuclear family system take all the credit behind the positive changes in their wives to themselves. Whilst the husbands from the joint family system added that their family especially their mothers are the main reason behind the confidence and independence of their wives as they make them comfortable in the house and also guide them about household matters about which they were untrained what they got married. As E2 added,

My wife did not know how to cook. She was unable to do grocery shopping. It is my mother who taught her everything. She was even not able to speak for herself but now after marriage, she is vocal on every matter and we even listen to her suggestions. I think all these factors have increased her confidence.

Mothers-in-law from the joint family system also told the same story. They said that like every member of the family she has right to give suggestions about family issues but the final decision is made by the male members of the house as they have more exposure to the world than them.

Relationship Between Husband and Wife: Strong or Weak

Post marriage family structures also make an impact on the overall relationship between husband and wife. In a joint family system, the wife and husband do not enjoy a healthy relationship. The husband always strangles between his family and wife especially his mother. He has to show his loyalties to both women and all these factors make his relationship conflicted with his mother as well as his wife. Whilst, the husband and wife from the nuclear family enjoys a healthy relationship as they are the decision-makers of their house. So they spend more time with each other. Although even in conflicting moments, they sort out their differences more rapidly as compared to the couple belong to the joint family system. As one of the daughters-in-law H1 from the nuclear family stated that “after marriage definitely misunderstandings come in between husband and wife but we always try to sort out these silly things quickly as there is no third party (pointing towards her mother-in-law) involved. So, things get settled down easily.”

The working daughters in law from the nuclear family also highlighted that most of their misunderstandings are because of their in-laws. As one of them, H1 added that;

I and my husband are enjoying a friendly relationship but mostly after the call of his mother, he started complaining to me about petty issues which make me angry in the initial days but now I understand it is just a matter of time he will calm down soon and then he will realize his mistake on his own.

On the other hand, couples from the Joint family system do not often enjoy a healthy relationship. According to daughters-in-law from the joint family system, they have to spend the whole day with in-laws and they only get less time to spend with their husbands. So their relationship lacks the element of sharing which in turn makes their bond weak. As one of the daughters-in-law, B1 stated that she thinks that the only discussion that she has done with her husband after two years of marriage is either related to household work or about family issues.

Apart from the issue of spending quality time, the wives also emphasized the misunderstandings that are created between both of them by in-laws. Like most of the daughters-in-law said that whenever they make food, their mothers-in-law highlight their mistakes, also point out their faults in house cleaning in front of their husbands and all in-laws to damage their repute. They represent daughters-in-law as

irresponsible and careless. All these issues create a rift among husband and wife.

In addition to that, husbands agreed that they spend less time with their wives. Even a few argued that they feel frustrated in their house due to a continuous clash between their wife and mother. They pointed out that their mothers often complain about their wives while wives are also doing the same thing. Contrary to this, mothers-in-law from the joint family system argued that due to the virtue of the joint family system, the working daughters-in-law are easily doing a job without taking tension in household work. They said that they enjoy their life freely.

To sum up the whole discussion and answering all the research questions, it can arguably be said that the daughters-in-law are happier living in nuclear family structures after marriage and mothers-in-law in the joint family structures. The daughters-in-law are more powerful in decision making in nuclear and the mothers-in-law in joint family structures. Expectations of daughters-in-law are too high and somehow met after their marriage whereas the opposite in both cases in joint family structures. The daughters-in-laws living in nuclear family structure enjoy more individual, modernized, and personal focused life which eventually gives pleasure to the couple. Whereas the daughters-in-laws living in a joint family structure enjoy more collective, traditional, and family-focused life which may or may not be a source of satisfaction for all. Similarly, social life is limited in joint and broad in nuclear for daughters-in-law. Every structure (either nuclear or joint) is not inherently bad but the choice of living in which family structure should be of the independent view of a spouse. The patriarchal societies, like Pakistan, have traveled a lot to give this right to many individuals but yet many daughters-in-law live in accord with their in-laws' choice.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study has few limitations on the basis of the selection of the limited sample. Only 12 families are selected because to find families in a patriarchal society like Pakistan where daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law and husbands from the same family unit do not easily get ready to be the participants of the research at the same time to talk about the issues and challenges of living together.

There are also many other variables involved in post-marriage family structures that may increase the issues and challenges in the lives of newlywed women. For instance, fathers-in-laws, sisters-in-laws, brothers-in-laws and their extended families, domestic helpers and their conspiracies in joint family systems, time management and

balance between personal and professional responsibilities, etc. Therefore, the relationships and effects of such variables on physical, psychological, social and cultural aspects of women are also one of the limitations of the study.

The study offers a detailed look at the issues and challenges of women in post-marriage family structures which opens the way for the other researchers to analyze this issue from the different perspectives. Regarding this study, there are some recommendations that can be used for future research. The social and psychological impact of status of women in the post marriage family structures on the mindset and intelligence level of their children can be a focus of further investigation. For this purpose, psychologists and sociologists can be involved for further collaborations.

Influence of daughter-in-law on the decisions of husband/mother-in-law can be another continuation. For this, the same methodology used in this project can be utilized in terms of husbands and other members as a center of focus. There can be a comparison between the issues and challenges faced by newlywed women and those who have spent a few years with their in-laws. There can be another comparison between the issues and challenges faced by young (teenage/mid 20s) newlywed women which is a common practice in Pakistan and mature (30's or late 30's) wed women.

This study is focusing on overall issues of a daughter-in-law in the nuclear and joint family system one can study the issues and challenges of mother-in-law and husbands in detail by using the same methodology. This study is only related to mother-in-law, daughter-in-law and husband so the future researcher can extend this area by adding the father in laws' point of view. As in this study, it is concluded that father-in-law also makes an impact on decisions of the family. Future research can also compare the issues and challenges of women from other South Asian countries by keeping in view the findings of this research.

Conclusion

This descriptive study illustrates the issues and challenges that are being faced by the newlywed daughters in law from Lahore in post-marriage family structures. By conducting interviews of 12 families (6 nuclear and 6 joint), this study stresses that triangle of relationships is influencing the lives of married women in post-marriage family structures as it is described by the family system theory. The triangle (Wife, Husband, and Mother-in-law) also got disturbed in the bonding like the bonds of husband and wife, mother and son, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. This triangle generates

fraction which causes mental stress and makes the relationship between all the three parties bitter and unhappy. Like functional fit theory, this study also recommends that the nuclear family system is suitable for the current age. As in a nuclear family system, couples can develop more bonding than in a joint family system. The finding of the research concludes that the issues and challenges of married women from the nuclear and joint family system are quite different. Women from the joint family system are not able to make their decision, living under high expectations from in-laws, facing mental and physical stress, unable to a decide for children and household, not bonding well with husband and also experiencing a bitter relationship with mother-in-law. On the other hand, the dynamics of the nuclear family system are different. They are bonding well with husbands, and can take decisions with more autonomy and power than the joint family daughters-in-law. From household chores to giving birth to children, the nuclear family's daughters-in-laws are more autonomous as compared to their counterparts.

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