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Understanding Decision-Making Patterns Among Older Women in Pathan Households of Mardan, Pakistan: An Intra-generational Perspective

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Abstract

This study investigates the decision-making experiences of older women in Pathan households in Mardan, Pakistan. The focus is on the cultural and traditional norms and their evolving gender roles shaping their liberty to make decisions in family and community. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select the sample, which includes eight married women aged 60 and above from diverse educational backgrounds. Semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection tool, and analysis was done under three main themes: Gender hierarchy in Pathan culture, Cultural expectations and sacrifices of women, and Evolving gender dynamics. The results showed that traditionally men are more dominant in decision-making and women play the role of aides. Although there are a number of cultural barriers, this study enlightens us that older women are contributing to change these dynamics by promoting the importance of education and independence for the next generations. Specifically, the shift towards mutual decision-making within families, particularly among younger couples, signifies the gradual move towards gender equality in decision-making. This study underscores older women as key agents of revolution by bridging the gap between traditional and modern gender roles.

Keywords: Older women, decision-making, gender roles, cultural norms, gender equality

Introduction

Pathan culture, predominantly found in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan, is rich and full of traditions, values, and social norms that govern the lives of its people. Pathans are sometimes called Pashtuns and have a code of ethics referred to as Pashtunwali. It advocates honor (izzat), hospitality (melmastia), and revenge (badal) (Caroe, 1958; Quddus, 1987). These values inform not only individual behavior but also the collective identity of a Pathan. The cultural values given to honor and reputation often result in a patriarchal social arrangement where males represent the primary decision-makers in both public and private domains. It is within this cultural context that one

must appreciate the roles and statuses of older women in Pathan society, especially in household decision-making.

Traditionally, women of Pathan culture have always been assigned to maintain various household and child-rearing activities. They have traditionally been marginalized from strategic decision-making due to structural sexism; generally, women are expected to fulfill the wishes of their families. (Alam, 2012). Older women are the custodians of cultural knowledge and traditions, carrying experience and insights that directly influence the dynamics of a family and decisions that need to be made. Their voice provides a broader understanding of how women act and are positioned in the household, especially in a given culture where one's age has much respect and authority.

According to psychologists, decision-making processes are a part of general cognition and it strikes very deep since it has roots in perception, memory, reasoning, or problem-solving. Cognitive psychology gives guidelines on how women reason out, process information, and make decisions in different contexts: family life, community, and workplace dynamics. Despite forming the majority of the world population, women are still mainly restrictive members of economic and social development processes. Their participation in decision-making is often restricted by the interconnected barriers of sociocultural and structural roles. Therefore, these limitations, as well as cognitive biases, cultural expectations, and environmental constraints, may affect their participation in decision-making roles.

Jan and Akhtar's (2008) point out that the degree to which both married and unmarried women experience limited authority in deciding matters, primarily because of the patriarchal family setup. From a cognitive viewpoint, this restriction may further reduce their sense of agency and self-efficacy, essential components in effective decision-making. In rural settings, it has also been found by Naz, Afridi, and Akhtar in 2017 that decisions regarding agriculture and finances are largely dominated by men. This exclusion may limit women from re-orienting actual knowledge combined with those cognitive processes in problem-solving and critical thinking towards the same domains even as they work practically toward family and community well-being.

These inequalities can only be addressed by understanding how cognitive factors, including motivation, confidence, and opportunity for learning and decision-making, have been shaped by social culture. Empowering women to assume a more proactive role in decision-making would lead to greater cognitive engagement and problem-solving, benefiting not only their households but also broader societal development.

Today, worldwide, the discussion on women's ability to make decisions has become highly influential in the last decades of studies among gender studies, sociology, and studies related to public health. It has been noted that women's empowerment is a concept that encompasses economic independence, education, and political involvement. The United Nations declares that the gender equality and women's empowerment dimension "is crucial to the successful implementation of the post-2015 agenda and sustainable development goals" (UN Women, 2015). While the opportunity for making decisions among women is considered a symbolic expression of their degree of autonomy and agency in most cultures, this aspect has direct implications for both individual well-being and a range of socio-economic outcomes.

Culture is the primary means through which decisions are made at the societal level. It not only influences the structures involved in making decisions but also the processes by which choices are evaluated, alternatives considered, and action taken. Cultural norms, values, and expectations create cognitive frameworks for individuals that affect who has the right to decide, how decisions are made, and what is important in terms of decision factors. For instance, in collectivist cultures, decisions are made more based on the collective good than individual desires. On the other hand, in more individualistic cultures, personal autonomy and individual preferences have to be as important. Moreover, gender norms in many cultures strongly affect who holds the decision-making power and who can participate. These norms also influence cognitive processes because people's conceptions of themselves in terms of their roles and duties are shaped and conditioned by cultural expectations that can either restrain or empower them in decision-making.

In the Pathan culture of Mardan, it is largely men who decide and often women are homemakers. Traditional values regarding honor, respect, and family reputation significantly influence decision-making structures, with men usually holding power over financial, familial, and social affairs. Yet, older women and women, in general, usually have influence in a hidden way. Despite these constraints, older women often take up a crucial advisory role within the household system on subjects like health, children's education, and family welfare. That amounts to some sort of indirect decision-making power, acquired through a better cognitive read of the ambient culture dynamics where reverence for elders and the experience gained over time permits them input into decisions, although their authority is not explicitly acknowledged in such a unit.

In Mardan, as is most typical in traditional societies, cognitive roles of women in decision-making are often suppressed by such aspects of societal structures as male authority. There is a gradual movement toward presenting the role of women in decision-making progressively as the younger generations become more educated and are faced with different ways of thinking. Although traditional norms prevail, the contemporary cultural configuration of Mardan, by virtue of this urbanization and globalization, is gradually opening the doors for women to partake in decisions that earlier used to be made exclusively by men.

Intra-generational evolution in decision-making refers to changes in decision roles and practices within the same generation, as people shift in response to shifting social, economic, and cultural frameworks. In Mardan's Pathan society, education, economic development, and the exposure of its citizens to modern values through media and globalization are pivotal factors influencing this evolution. For example, women in the same cohort are operating with more varying degrees of autonomy depending on their rural or urban residence. In towns, women can access greater levels of education and employment, which makes them participate fully in household and community decisions. In contrast, rural women are often confined to cultural norms; they have low cognitive agency concerning the decision-making processes.

For women past their childbearing years, intra-generational changes frequently appear as they move from passive to more actively involved status in the family. For example, older women receive greater deference and power and can even make decisions about health, dispute resolution, and distribution of family resources in many societies. These changes show how cognitive processes that

result from living and changing circumstances allow women to redefine their status within the strictures of traditional cultural roles.

Mardan's continuing intra-generational evolution demonstrates that there is actually scope for incremental changes in decision-making power. With shifting societal values, even within the same generation, women are finding a way to work around cultural restrictions and exert their influence. This slow transformation represents a deeper cognitive realignment, an individual review of what is perceived regarding gender relations and the distribution of decision-making authority, leading to the practice of greater inclusivity and balance within both family and community.

A review of the existing literature reveals the increasing body of research conducted on different aspects related to women's decision-making power across cultures. For instance, work conducted in rural Bangladesh reveals that women's income and employment are important in enhancing their decision-making power (Anderson & Eswaran, 2005; Shahidul, 2013). Research in India has revealed that women's involvement in economic activities positively correlates with their decision-making capacity about household expenses and children's education. These findings highlight the significance of economic empowerment as a route to higher agency for women. However, the more concrete role of older women within these contexts is less researched.

The family scene of Pathan culture is essentially patriarchic, in which the roles of women are generally limited to the domestic sphere. However, older women often take the roles as mediators, consultants, and decision-makers related to issues of health care, education, and social networking as well (Alam, 2012). Such wisdom and experience place them clearly in positions from which they contribute substantially to household decision-making, dispelling the mainstream view of women as rather less proactive in family matters. The need is thus set out to shed some light on these dynamics, focusing upon how older women operate their roles within the restrictions of traditional Pathan society.

This study will differ from previous research in that it provides a focused exploration of the older woman's power to decide about her life within the specific cultural and social strata of Mardan. Qualitative research methods will be employed as part and parcel of seeking depth and richness into the lives of older Pathan women, thus assisting in the contribution to this broader discourse on gender roles and empowerment generally among conservative societies.

This paper explores the decision-making authority of older women in Pathan society, Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There is a vast difference in literature as they rarely get a mention in this contribution. Though much attention has been given to how young women deal with their issues, it is the older women who mark the difference in the dynamics of the family, particularly as regards finance and health issues. Their power, as mediation figures within the household keeping things calm and well-integrated are left wanting in academic papers (Ali & Rahman, 2022). The study addresses this particular issue by illustrating older women's unique decisions and practices involved in decision-making while advancing their significant impact on broader discourse about equality and women's empowerment through the context of cultural backgrounds and norms that define their authority.

Theoretical Background

Patriarchy and Gender Roles

Patriarchy is a dominant framework in many South Asian societies, including Pashtun culture, where decision-making power is predominantly vested in men. According to anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu's theory of "symbolic power," men often possess control over resources, social status, and cultural norms, which reinforces women's subjugation (Bourdieu, 2001). The Pashtunwali code, which emphasizes honor, hospitality, and justice, is often interpreted in ways that maintain male dominance. Women in this society are generally expected to abide by the decisions made by male figures (fathers, husbands, brothers) in the family or community.

Ahmed (1992) argues that Pashtun women often operate under a system of "social contract" where their role is largely passive and driven by societal expectations. Women's participation in family and community decision-making is limited to indirect influence, as they generally work within the confines of family roles.

Kakar (1991) explains that although the Pashtunwali code allows for some forms of negotiation, particularly through women's influence on familial relations, women's formal power in decision-making remains constrained by a traditional, patriarchal system.

Shahnaz (2018) discusses how, in urbanized Pashtun areas like Peshawar, women have begun asserting more control over decisions related to marriage, career, and political participation. The generational shift in attitudes towards women's rights is evident in the increasing number of Pashtun women pursuing higher education and careers in government or business.

Method

This study uses a qualitative research design to explore the decision-making experiences of older women from the Pathan culture in Mardan, Pakistan. The study aims to gain insight into how cultural norms, traditions, and personal beliefs impact their autonomy and role in family and community decision-making processes.

Participants

The participants were older women aged 60 and above from the Pathan community in Mardan, Pakistan. Purposive sampling was used to identify women who have lived through the community's cultural expectations and could provide in-depth reflections on decision-making roles. For this reason, participants of different education background were selected. Total eight married women participated in the study. Details of all of them are:

Participants	Age	Marital Status	City	Education
1.	73 years	Married	Mardan	D-com
2.	60 years	Married	Charsada near Mardan	Illiterate.
3.	70 years	Married	Mardan	Illiterate.
4.	63 years	Married	Mardan	Matric
5.	75 years	Married	Mardan	Illiterate

6.	60 years	Married	Born in Karachi and married in Mardan.	After marriage she studied.
7.	70 years	Married	Toro (a village near Mardan)	Studied till 5 th grade.
8.	78 years	Married	Saro (a village in Mardan)	Illiterate

Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected through interviews with the participants. The semi-structured interview type was used. The utmost care was taken so as to render the questions asked to participants clear, consistent, and easy to understand. After preparing the interview questions, two experts shared their opinions about the clarity and appropriateness of the questions. Furthermore, before the interviews were actually held, a focus group discussion was held with the prospective participants. The final interview form was derived and designed in accordance with the feedback received from the participants. The following questions were included in the form and asked of the interviewees.

1. Tell me about yourself? Age, marital status, education, family structure.
2. What is your understanding of the traditional roles assigned to women in Pathan culture?
3. In your household, who typically makes decisions regarding family matters such as finances, education, and health?
4. Who should make important decisions at home?
5. Do you think women are overlooked when they make decisions?
6. What big compromises and sacrifices have you made when you were young?
7. Choose one best role of yours and share an instance where you felt the most powerful in decision-making?
8. In which sphere don't you have financial autonomy?
9. Have you noticed any changes in decision-making dynamics over time? If so, what has changed?
10. Are there specific areas where you feel more empowered to make decisions? If so, what are they? (Areas of autonomy vs restrictions)

Interviews were derived from the literature review and were carried out under the researcher's control, who prepared the location in which they were to be conducted. Participation was completely voluntary. At the beginning of each interview, information about the topic being researched was verbally told to the participants and the interview process was explained. Before the interview started, participants were asked to give their informed consent. Keeping in mind the age of the participants the informed consent was a verbal agreement. The interview guide was translated in Pashuton Language as the participants could not communicate in English. Finally, the researcher asked the participants whether they had any additional comments that they wanted to share regarding decision making in particular. Recordings for the 8 semi-structured interviews were taken. The researcher then analyzed

the recordings and then transcribed the data with the help of other fellows. Deductive thematic analysis was used to record the results (6-phase Braun & Clarke coding framework).

The researcher then came together and agreed that the data should be collected under three main themes and sub-themes under these main themes.

Older women views about the decision making and its evolution have been discussed under the three main themes of Gender hierarchy in pathan culture, Cultural expectations and sacrifices of women, evolving gender dynamics. Information related to these three themes is presented in this section. So to maintain participants' confidentiality, their names have been coded and their real names hidden.

Results

Table 1: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub themes
Gender hierarchy in pathan culture	• Male dominating society • Have to seek male permission i.e. father, brother, husband • Sons are assets and daughters are liability. • Brothers and sons should be breadwinner.
Cultural expectations and sacrifices of women	• Female sacrifices in every sphere. • Adjustment • Daughters should be submissive • Grandmother's decision of clothing for all home • Role of mother is the best one
Evolving Gender Dynamics	• Subtle changes within Patriarchal structure. • Mutual decision making between spouses regarding house • Girls decision on what to wear • Education and financial autonomy for women

Themes

Theme 1: Gender Hierarchy in Pathan Culture

This theme was examined under four sub themes 1. Male Dominating Society, 2. Have to seek male permission i.e. father, brother, husband 3. Sons are assets and daughter is a liability 4. Bothers and sons should be breadwinners.

Subtheme 1: Male-dominated society

Participants agreed that they live in a society where patriarchy is prevalent, males are made to make the major decisions whether it's about expenses, management, health, education etc.

"I have grown up seeing my father taking all the important decisions at home. After getting married, I saw my father-in-law and husband doing that; my son is taught that too. Pathan is a culture where male will take all the decisions"

Subtheme 2: Have to seek male permission

All the participants second on the concept of asking permission from their fathers about everything when they were young, it was a norm which was to be followed rigidly. When they got married the permission seeking was from either father-in-law or husband. This concept has always prevailed and continues to do so.

"My father took all the decisions when I was young and after marriage I have seen my husband do that, it's a norm."

Subtheme 3: Sons are assets and daughter a liability

When asked about who is supposed to get the financial autonomy of home, most of the women replied that son should be the best candidate. They believed that sons are assets, every parent should invest in the education of their sons because at the end of the day they will be the breadwinners. One should invest in daughters too because they are made for other homes.

"I have made sure that my son and daughter both get the best education but I think sons are assets and financial autonomy should be given to them"

Subtheme 4: Brothers and sons should be the breadwinners

It reflects traditional societal and cultural expectations surrounding gender roles and responsibilities within families. It encompasses the belief that males, particularly brothers and sons, are inherently tasked with the duty of financially providing for their families. This idea is often rooted in patriarchal norms that define masculinity in terms of strength, responsibility, and economic productivity.

"In my family, my brothers were provided with the best education, my brother is an MSC in Zoology and the concept of girl getting the education didn't exist in our village so I was deprived of education"

Theme 2: Cultural Expectations and Sacrifices of women

The participants stated that Females has to sacrifice in every sphere, they are bound to do adjustment, daughters should be submissive, and Grandmothers decision of clothing for all home, role of mother is the best one.

Subtheme 1: Female sacrifices in every sphere.

This theme explores the pervasive expectation for women to prioritize the needs of others over their own in various aspects of life, including family, career, education, and personal well-being

"When I was young, I only saw my mother being docile in front of my grandparents and I was taught the same that its valuable to be submissive for the sake of respect"

Subtheme 2: Adjustment

This is the concept of adapting to circumstances, environments, or relationships in response to external pressures, challenges, or expectations. It often explores the emotional, psychological, and social processes women undergo to align their behavior or mindset with the demands of a particular situation.

"I never made important decisions because I thought if I go wrong I will be blamed for the wrong decision"

"I was allowed by my husband to make decisions for my health and children"

Subtheme 3: Daughters should be submissive

Participants made clear that their culture demands the girls to be docile and submissive. Respect is the only thing these women live for.

Subtheme 4: Grandmothers decision of clothing for all home

Participants declared that earlier, during their youth, grandmothers were seen to decide for what clothes were to be worn by them. They never had the autonomy in their own decisions.

"My grandmother would decide what colors we would wear when it came to clothing, we never knew a concept of shopping for ourselves existed"

Subtheme 5: Role of mother is the best one

For all the women, their favorite role was as a mother. Despite all the circumstances, hardships, adjustments and submissiveness, majority believed that its all worth it as a mother. It all means so much when they see their children grow.

"Being from Karachi and getting married here in Mardan, I have seen many sides. My father gave my mother all kinds of autonomy in decision making when we were small and now my husband have done the same, but I have seen by friends not given the same independence"

"Mothers make the most sacrifice and I am a mother and that's my best role."

Theme 3: Evolving Gender Dynamics

The sub themes include 1. Subtle changes within Patriarchal structure 2. Mutual decision making between spouse regarding house 3. Girls decision on what to wear, 4. Education and financial autonomy for women

Subtheme 1: Subtle changes within Patriarchal structure

The rigid patriarchal structure has evolved and changed. This explores gradual shifts in traditional, male-dominated societal frameworks. It focuses on the nuanced ways in which patriarchal systems are adapting, bending, or being challenged, without entirely breaking or abandoning entrenched norms.

"Now the times have changed, my daughter is a doctor and is self-sufficient."

"My son is the breadwinner but he is not very strict on making decisions as his father and my father were, I can see the change"

Subtheme 2: Mutual decision making between spouse regarding house

This highlights a partnership-based approach to managing domestic life. It reflects a shift toward equality and shared responsibility, emphasizing collaboration, respect, and joint effort in making decisions that impact family life and household dynamics.

"Decision making is based on mutual understanding between spouses today."

"My son and my daughter-in-law have the independence of every decision I haven't written any script for them"

Subtheme 3: Girls decision on what to wear

This subtheme highlights the autonomy, societal influences, and cultural expectations that shape how girls and women make choices about their clothing. Earlier when these older women were young they were bound by family elders to decide their clothing but now it is in the hands of girls.

"I have never seen my daughter ask me what to wear, she goes to the shop and buys her own stuff. I don't like being rigid on her. Yes, she asks for suggestion but I don't stop her from her own choices."

Subtheme 4: Education and financial autonomy for women.

This theme emphasizes the transformative power of education and economic independence in empowering women and challenging traditional gender norms. It explores how access to knowledge and financial resources enables women to take control of their lives, make informed decisions, and contribute meaningfully to their families and communities.

"My uncle allowed me to study till metric and I still regret it, I made sure my daughters have this liberty of education"

"My daughter-in-law is a teacher and she earns for herself, in our times very few girls had the chance to go outside home but now it's a norm and nobody is upset about it"

When the findings are examined as a whole, the gender hierarchy in Pathan Culture, cultural expectations and sacrifices of women and evolving gender dynamics were found to be the reasons of decision making in pathan culture and how it has evolved.

Discussion

This study looks at the decision-making roles of older women in Pathan families and how these roles are shaped by both traditional culture and the changes happening over time. The stories shared by participants show a mix of strong traditions and small but important steps toward change, especially in how families handle decisions now compared to the past.

In Pathan culture, men have always been the decision-makers in most households. Participants talked about how, growing up, they saw their fathers, brothers, and later their husbands taking charge of all important family matters like money, education, and health. One participant said, "In my family, my father and husband made all the decisions, and now I've taught my son to do the same because that's how our culture works." This shows how these traditions are passed down, making male authority a deeply rooted norm. Women, on the other hand, were expected to focus on the home and follow the decisions made by men. Many participants mentioned that daughters were often treated as less important than sons, especially when it came to education. One woman shared, "My brothers got the best education, but there wasn't even a concept of girls being sent to school in our village."

This culture of male dominance has had a big impact on how women see their own ability to make decisions. Many participants admitted that they avoided making big decisions out of fear of being blamed if something went wrong. One woman said, "I didn't make decisions because if I made a mistake, I'd be blamed." This kind of fear reflects how women were socialized to stay in the background and let men take charge. Yet, even within these limitations, women found strength in their roles as mothers. Many participants described motherhood as their most important and fulfilling role, saying it gave them some influence within the family. Mothers acted as mediators, guiding their children and helping resolve

family issues. This informal authority, while limited, shows that women's roles in the family are more complex than they might appear at first glance.

One of the most interesting things this study found is that these traditional roles are starting to change, especially because of education and new opportunities for women. Participants shared stories of how they made sure their daughters received better opportunities than they had. For instance, one participant said, "My daughter is a doctor now and financially independent. That would never have been possible in my time." This shift reflects the influence of urbanization, globalization, and changing attitudes about gender roles. Awareness, in particular, is playing a big part in empowering younger women, giving them the tools to make their own decisions and contribute to their families in new ways. Another key finding is the role older women play in driving this change. Even though they grew up in a patriarchal system, many participants are actively supporting their daughters and daughters-in-law in becoming more independent. One participant said, "I didn't get the chance to study, but I made sure my daughters did." This shows how older women are bridging the gap between tradition and modern values, helping their families adapt to a world where women are gaining more rights and opportunities. They are not just passive observers of change; they are actively shaping it.

The study also highlights how relationships within families are evolving. Participants noted that younger couples, including their own children, are more likely to make decisions together rather than following the old model where only the man decided. One participant explained, "Today, my son and daughter-in-law make decisions together, and I support that." This kind of mutual decision-making represents significant shift in family dynamics, showing that gender roles are becoming more balanced, at least in some households.

However, these changes are not happening everywhere or in the same way. While some families are moving toward more equality, others are still holding on to traditional norms. Even participants who supported their daughters' independence often said they still believe sons should have the final say in major decisions, especially about money. This shows how deeply these traditions are embedded in the culture. Change is happening, but it's not uniform, it's a gradual process that looks different in each family.

Another important point is how local traditions and environments shape these changes. One participant who moved to Mardan from Karachi explained that she found the rules for women stricter in her new home. This shows that even within the same culture, where a woman lives and how her family interprets traditions can make a big difference in her level of independence.

What stands out most in this study is the idea of an "intra-generational revolution." This means that while older women were raised with strict cultural norms, they are helping the next generation of women break free from some of those restrictions. By supporting education, careers, and independence for their daughters and daughters-in-law, these older women are playing a key role in changing how families function. They are holding onto some traditions while letting go of others, showing that cultural change doesn't happen all at once, it's a slow process driven by people who are willing to challenge the old ways in small but meaningful ways.

The stories from this study give us a deeper understanding of how cultural traditions and modern values interact. They show that older women in Pathan culture are not just passive followers of tradition. They

are active participants in shaping their families and pushing for change, even if it's within the limits of a patriarchal system. Their experiences remind us that cultural change often starts at home, with individuals who choose to take small steps toward a better future.

Limitations

1. The following study constituted a very small sample size (N=8). Results from small samples may not accurately represent the larger population, limiting the applicability of findings to broader contexts.
2. This study utilized interviews which were semi-structured, used thematic analysis, narrative interpretation, and coding techniques which is why risk of errors during analysis increased.
3. This study was relied on subjective details of the participants which increases the risk of social desirability.

Conclusion

The study shows the importance of norms in Pathan culture and how strongly the people are devoted to their traditions and historical patterns of patriarchy and despite the way deep-rooted patriarchal norms have traditionally crystalized decision-making roles in Pathan families; older women are playing a predominant role in transforming these dynamics by supporting their daughters and daughter in laws for higher education and independence to be able to stand equal to men, and breaking the patriarchal customs. Being raised within a system of male dominance, these women actively encourage the empowerment of younger generations. The study highlights there has been slow transformation in decision making processes, which have increasing involvement of women. The egalitarian models are emerging in some households where mutual decisions are made through discussion between men and women. This shows the departure from patriarchal norms where women were expected to bow to male authority figures. This change is not uniform, however, and this shift towards equality of genders is slow and uneven. Regardless of the evident change, research also identifies that, in some families the traditional norms, that place men as ultimate decision-makers, are still engrained. These families continue to follow the patriarchal values embedded in Pathan culture, where women's roles are largely confined to the domestic sphere, and their voices are often marginalized in formal decision-making processes. This study demonstrates slow but noticeable change in family decision making with some household's matters having balanced gender roles and mutual agreements. However, the shift is not smooth and some families are still influenced by traditional norms of Pathan Culture. The research highlights the significance of developing the insight about intra-generational shifts, and suggests that, cultural change is gradual and is driven by individual interrogation of immutable norms and values, maintain some traditions. The evolving role of elder women as both preservers and challengers of the cultures is indispensable.

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Author Contribution:

Conceptualization, methodology, data curation, writing, project administration, Syed, I. interview guide validation, and formal analysis, investigation, original draft preparation, writing, review and editing, Rafique, H.M.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Ethical considerations

This research adhered to the ethical standards of National University of medical sciences. Participants provided informed consent, and no identifiable personal data were collected.

Informed consent

All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. They were informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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