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## **Changing Family Structures and Gender Roles in Urbanizing Towns of Balochistan**

**Dr Huma Zafar**

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Balochistan, Quetta

**Naveeda iram Warsi**

Assistant Professor/ Chairperson, Department Of Anthropology, University Of Balochistan Quetta

**Dr. Safia Habib**

Assistant Professor, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University Quetta

### **ABSTRACT**

Rapid urbanization in Balochistan has triggered significant social and cultural transformations, particularly in the structure of families and the roles of men and women. Traditionally characterized by extended kinship systems and patriarchal norms, the traditional society is now experiencing a gradual shift toward nuclear family arrangements and more fluid gender relations. This study investigates how urbanization is reshaping family dynamics and redefining gender roles in the emerging urban centers of Balochistan, including Quetta, Turbat, Gwadar, and Khuzdar. The primary purpose of the research is to understand the socio-economic, cultural, and educational factors influencing these changes and to assess their implications for social cohesion and identity formation. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining household surveys (n=300) with in-depth interviews of 40 respondents, including men, women, and youth from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Data were analyzed using thematic and comparative analysis techniques to identify emerging trends and intergenerational differences. The findings reveal a marked decline in joint family living, increased female participation in education and employment, and changing perceptions of marriage, decision-making, and domestic responsibilities. Urban exposure, media influence, and economic necessity have collectively contributed to a redefinition of gender expectations, with younger generations showing greater acceptance of shared household responsibilities and women's autonomy. However, resistance from older generations and limited institutional support for working women continue to constrain full gender equality. The study concludes that urbanization in Balochistan is fostering a gradual but uneven social transition. While it offers new opportunities for empowerment and individual agency, it also generates tensions between traditional values and modern aspirations. Strengthening family support systems, inclusive urban policies, and gender-sensitive education are essential to sustain this social transformation in a balanced and culturally rooted manner.

**Keywords:** Urbanization, Family Structure, Gender Roles, Social Change, Balochistan



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### Introduction

Balochistan, which is the largest but least populated province in Pakistan, is experiencing a significant change due to the dynamics of urbanization, economic diversification, and social mobility. Traditionally, Baloch society was strongly tied to the traditions of tribes, clans, and patriarchy that establish the relations between genders, inheritance, and patterns of order. Nevertheless, expansion of cities, like Quetta, Turbat, Gwadar and Khuzdar has presented new social formations that are slowly transforming the traditional family set up. Such urbanizing towns have been turned into transition areas where old and new values are no longer separate but they meet and can and do so in a place of conflict. The cultural migration out of rural and tribal areas into urban ones has resulted in the possibilities of education, jobs, and social interaction, which consequently are transforming the family and the division of gender role by the generation.

In Balochistan, urbanization has not been very old as other Pakistani provinces. The area was still mainly rural and tribal with the extended family households and strong patriarchal structure over decades. Men were traditionally the decision makers, and women duties were based on the primary functions of housekeeping, nurturing the offspring and keeping the family honor. Social norms, the lack of access to education by women, and access to the life of the population, supported these arrangements. But, as the settlements grew in urban areas, education was more and more attainable, and the economy started to become more energetic, the lines between these two gendered roles have started to shift. Families that migrate to towns to work and get an education tend to reorganize household roles and gender relations patterns, creating smaller and nuclear families and more egalitarian gender relations. This social cultural change poses significant findings concerning how modernization and urban exposure are transforming the social life of Baloch communities.

The process of family structures transformation is not just a demographic process but a complicated social phenomenon that is combined with the changing value systems, economical and global culture pressure. The younger generation is being exposed to a wide range of social models in urban areas in Baluchistan, via education, media, and technology. Through this exposure, new ambitions grow in regards to autonomy, gender equality and achieving individual success, something that is contrary to the collective ethic of the traditional family life. Simultaneously, both genders are forced to renegotiate their home roles due to the economic imperatives, including the dual-income family and immigration seeking jobs. These changes do not only affect how relationships work within families but also the society at large, such as socialization, intergenerational support, and cultural identity. With the current process of modernization, one wonders about the sustainability of the traditional kinship system and the possibility of losing the sense of communal solidarity that dominated the Baloch social life.

Although there is increasingly more awareness of social change in Pakistan, there are still limited studies on academic research that are specifically on family transitions and gender role changes in Baluchistan. The political instability, tribal disputes, or economic underdevelopment have been the focus of most sociological and anthropological studies, as the micro level of the social dynamic of everyday life has received comparatively less academic research (Ahmed, 2019; Khan, 2020). However, it is imperative to know these processes to understand how macro-processes like urbanization and modernization are translated into the transformation of identity, behavior, and social relations. The gap in the research is a huge gap since there are no empirical studies on the topic in Balochistan. This research will address that gap by examining the effects of urbanization on family makeup, power structures and sexual relations in the shifting urbanizing town social terrain.



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This study aims at examining the changing trends of family structure and gender roles within the urbanizing towns of Balochistan and how economic, educational, and cultural contexts interacted among themselves to form new social structures. In particular, the proposed study will explore transitions between the extended and nuclear types of families, study the role redesign of men and women in family decisions, and determine the attitude of the generations in regard to the family and gender standards. In this manner, it helps in an increased comprehension of the nexus of urbanization and social transformation in a place where intersecting urbanization with modernity occurs in very distinct manners. The paper relies on the sociological theories of social change and modernization especially on the shift of *Gemeinschaft* (community-based societies) to *Gesellschaft* (individualistic, modern societies) as theorized by Tonnies (2001) and as elaborated in the current theory of modernization (Inglehart and Welzel, 2010).

The study is methodologically mixed-method because it incorporates both methods of quantitative and qualitative study to reflect the quantifiable and interpretive aspects of social change. The statistical data about the modification of the family composition and employment levels, as well as the education level are gathered through household surveys, whereas the in-depth interviews with both men and women of various ages can provide more specific details of the lived experiences and attitudes to gender and to family. This methodological design will provide an opportunity of triangulation, by making sure that numerical data will be supported by the richness of personal narratives. Quetta, Gwadar, Turbat, and Khuzdar were chosen as the study areas since the areas represent various levels and trends of urbanization, with a range of administrative and business centers up to the new port cities. This geographic heterogeneity boosts the comparative study of the impact of urban exposure and modernization on social life in different contexts in the Balochistan.

There are preliminary findings and literature which propose that urbanization in Balochistan is both providing opportunities and tensions. On the one hand, the involvement of women in education and paid work is also on the rise and, consequently, women are gradually becoming more empowered and the household power structure is being restructured (Baloch & Qureshi, 2021). Men, especially younger ones are becoming accommodative to sharing of responsibilities, and this is most common in the urban middle-class families. Conversely, conservative social layers are still very stiff especially those of older generations and in peri-urban regions whereby tribal power still resonates. Tensions usually ensue between the old standards and the new one as regards to the mobility of women, their career preferences, and marriage trends. The co-existence of both traditional and modern norms leads to creation of the hybrid forms of family which maintain continuity and transformations as the Baloch society is transitional in the twenty-first century.

The policy and social implications of this understanding of these changes are profound. Since Balochistan is urbanizing, social institutions and policymakers have to adjust to the new social realities. Reforms in education, gender sensitive geographical planning and community based sensitization can assist in assisting easier adaption to these changing family structures. The pressures of nuclearization and facilitation of social stability can be brought through strengthening of social support systems such as childcare, housing, and community networks. Additionally, it is necessary to understand that women have become increasingly economically and socially active, and this aspect needs to be included in the development, especially in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Pakistan with its focus on gender equality and social inclusion.



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Finally, this paper places urbanization when not merely as a reorganization of the demographics but as a game-changer in the social identities, gender dynamics, and family structures in Balochistan. The constant change also disrupts traditional ideas about masculinity, femininity, and family responsibility, as well as provides the ways of increased personal freedom and social leveling. Nevertheless, these transitions are not homogenous and peaceful. They are unevenly distributed by the class, region, and generation, similar to the Baloch experience. Through the analysis of these complexities in terms of both empirical evidence and theoretical reflection, the research makes a contribution to the wider discussion about the social change in developing societies. It points out that the process of urbanization in Balochistan can be essentially the story of human change-how families, men, women, negotiate the borders of traditionalism and modernity, continuity and transformation, toward a more just and dynamic social future.

### **Problem Statement**

Urbanization is slowly but tangibly processes that are changing the traditional social fabric of the province Balochistan which is the largest but least developed province of Pakistan. In the past, the Baloch society has been structured as a type of extended family, close kinship ties, and patriarchal views that delegate powers and decisions to men and restrict the role of women to household chores. But as these cities continue to grow like Quetta, Gwadar, Turbat and Khuzdar, these patterns are being confronted by emerging socio-economic realities. More education, more jobs and new cultural influences are also transforming personal ambitions and are changing family life dynamics.

The changes in the family structures and gender roles in Balochistan have been under investigated despite these changes. Previous studies have been made on urbanization in Pakistan and mostly concentrated on economic development, migration and infrastructure ignoring the social and cultural implications of urban development on the periphery areas such as Balochistan. The individual blend of tribal culture and the nascent urban tendencies of the province forms a highly complicated setting wherein traditional and modern systems of values both coexist and clash with each other, in some cases smoothly, but in others, dissonantly. This changing situation brings up some major questions: How is urbanization affecting the process of changing extended to nuclear families? How are gender relations and family duties being renegotiated? What are the difficulties which men and women experience in adjusting to these changes?

This is a huge gap in knowledge given that there are no detailed empirical studies that cover these questions. The policymakers and social development practitioners are unable to develop effective interventions to facilitate these changes without the knowledge of the impacts of urbanization on family cohesion, gender equity, and social stability. Consequently, there has been a pressing need to examine how families and gender roles in the urbanizing towns are evolving in the province of Balochistan, to understand the forces behind these developments and how these developments impact social cohesion, cultural continuity, and gender relations.

This paper aims to address this gap by conducting a systematic inquiry into the impacts of urbanization on the organization of the family and gender relations in Balochistan and focusing on intergenerational viewpoints, socio-economic aspects, and cultural changes.

### **Research Objectives**

**To examine the transformation of family structures** in the urbanizing towns of Balochistan, focusing on the shift from extended to nuclear families and its underlying socio-economic and cultural determinants.



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**To analyze the changing gender roles and household dynamics** among men and women in urban settings, particularly in relation to education, employment, and decision-making patterns.

**To assess the social and cultural implications of urbanization** for intergenerational relations, gender equity, and social cohesion within emerging urban communities of Balochistan

### Literature Review

Family and gender are the topics of sociological interest which have been the foundation of the social organization, identity and continuity. The family is considered as a privacy and a publicly existing entity in sociological theory, which supports cultural norms and sends generations in terms of values. According to structural-functionalist perspective, which Parsons and Bales (1955) developed, the family functions also play crucial roles toward social stability, such as socialization, control of sexual behavior and emotional support. Division of labor in the family where men have instrumental positions as the providers and women have expressive roles as the caretakers is perceived as a factor that has led to social balance. Nevertheless, there is an assumption that it is an equilibrium following a stagnant model of society, which is challenged in the conditions of modernization and urbanization. According to critics, structural-functionalism does not explain how modern-day families change and take on gendered roles based on their dynamism and continual negotiation (Goode, 1963).

Such traditional models are criticized by the feminist views that developed intensively in the second wave of feminism, as they tend to strengthen patriarchy and the inferiority of women. According to feminist theorists, the idea of gender roles is not always natural, but made socially, as a result of power relations operating at the institutions, including the family, education and labor markets (Oakley, 1974; Chodorow, 1999). Feminist analysis suggests that the family is one such place of gender inequality production and reproduction that is achieved by unequal access to resources and decision-making power. The gender roles, hence, are upheld by means of socialization, tradition, and culture which is inclined to male domination and female subordination. In South Asian culture, such patriarchal frameworks are supported by kinship systems, marriage rules, and honor codes and thus, equality between genders is especially challenging (Shirazi, 2018).

Modernization and social change theories also give an insight into how family and gender relations undergo change due to urbanization and industrialization. Inglehart and Welzel (2010) suggest in their writings that Modernization theory supports individual liberty, secular-rational ideals, and gender equality which are encouraged by economic growth and education. The industrialization of the economy lowers the use of the large ties of kinship and supports the emergence of nuclear families. Goode (1963) pointed out that urbanization promotes the freedom and portability needed to do industrial labor and this reduces the size of the household and the traditional form of power. According to this theory, the function of the family changes with modernization of the society to be based more on emotional and supportive functions, rather than on economic production unit. Modernization is however not a one-way process; it relates with local cultures, religious virtues and social hierarchies to form hybrid forms of family instead of fully Western style nuclear families (Therborn, 2004).

The extended kinship system has been historically based on the traditional family system in Balochistan which emphasizes collective good, honour and male dominance. The extended family is not only a social unit but also an economic and political entity which takes care of distribution of resources and protection in the tribe. Kinship affiliations have a strong value of social identity and family honor or "izzat" is viewed as a



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communal duty (Ahmed, 1998). Men in a family take care of the honor by controlling the actions, marriages, and visibility of women. Patriarchal values in most regions of Balochistan stipulate a high degree of gender segregation and the roles of women are very much confined to wifehood, motherhood, and childcare (Baloch, 2017). Tribal and cultural beliefs tend to limit the independence of women, their freedom of movement and decision-making.

Baloch society has evolved a strong connection between kinship and tribal structure and social order. The tribal leaders or sardars have authority that is reached to family lives and family is governed by loyalty and obedience. Social status, land ownership and marital partnerships are based on tribal affiliation. Hospitality, bravery, female modesty is an example of honor-based values that are moral codes that maintain cohesion in the society (Harrison, 1981). Nevertheless, the same values strengthen gender hierarchies attributing the reputation of the family to the behavior of women. Kinship marriage which is usually endogenous is to maintain property and lineage purity (Janmahmad, 1989). These norms are rigid and this has historically limited the redefinition of gender roles. Modern developments introduced by education, migration and urbanization however, are starting to destabilize these time-honored constructs, particularly among the younger, more urbanized generations.

Urbanization also comes with certain new social settings in which the conventional institutions like the tribe and extended family lose some of their control. According to sociological studies conducted around the world, urbanization changes the order of social networking, breaks social bonds and enhances individualism (Wirth, 1938). The social control that kin and community have is less in the urban setting, as the anonymity that such life generates provides spaces of personal choice and gender renegotiation. Urbanization has been linked with changes in demographics in South Asia such as the reduction in the size of families, later marriages and the rise in the number of female workers (Kandiyoti, 1988). The same has been the case in other cities (Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad) in Pakistan, but the urban experience in Balochistan has not been tackled extensively.

Urban transition in Pakistan is increasing rapidly over recent decades at national level, but unevenly distributed between provinces. In Balochistan, urbanization has been centralized on several towns including Quetta, Gwadar, Khuzdar, and Turbat whereby infrastructural developments, institutions of higher learning and employment opportunities have occurred. Specifically, Gwadar is a destination that has been covered in the context of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has encouraged internal migration and changed social life (Rafiq, 2021). These are microcosms of social change in which the traditional norms and the modern norms mix in these towns. Moving to urban or civilized places, the families leave rural or tribal families and face the new economic challenges and the cultural phenomenon that slowly change the relations within the family and gender expectations. Home incomes that depend on women are more than economic stability in the urban households, which involves negotiations of authority and division of labor. Yet, the process is anything but linear or homogenous: it creates a conflict between modern desires and traditional demands, leading to mixed social structure.

Female relations in urban Balochistan are the embodiment of dynamic and traditional patriarchy. On the one hand, it has increased female education especially in the urban areas. Traditional barriers to public participation barriers have also been broken through the institution of universities and colleges in Quetta and Turbat, which provide women with higher levels of education (Baloch & Qureshi, 2021). Women are exposed to novel



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concepts of independence, entitlement and professional ambitions through education which leads to empowerment and shifts in the way gender roles are viewed. The women joining the labor market also help in earning the household income, which enables them to have a greater say in the decisions taken in the family. Research on urban Pakistan suggests that the economic contribution of women is a decisive element in transforming gender relationships since it revises the concept of masculinity and the role of the home (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 2019).

Nevertheless, in spite of these innovations, the realization of the complete gender equality is still limited by the patriarchal attitudes. The process of adaptation of men to the evolving gender roles is rather heterogenous in relation to age, education, and social status. Male youth (especially those who are brought up in cities) is more likely to believe in female education and equal duties, but the elderly generations uphold the patriarchal stereotypes (Kakar, 2020). Urbanization has also come with its own challenge with increased burden on women who do not only have jobs but also home chores. Although working women are accepted in society, on the condition of preserving cultural decency and family respect, the phenomenon of saving traditional norms in the new environment is depicted. Therefore, the gender shift in Balochistan should be perceived as a more of a continuum, not a break--a gradual negotiation of changes and continuity.

The same is true with male adaptability to altered gender roles. In male dominated cultures, the identity of men is usually related to their providers and protection. As women get access to education and jobs, the traditional conceptions of masculinity can be dismantled and can result in both progressive and defensive responses (Connell, 2005). Other men have a redefining of their masculinity that includes equality and partnership, whereas other men view the changes as a threat to societal order. The gradual culture change has been manifested in Balochistan through the rise of educated urban men who believe in gender equality. Nevertheless, there is still opposition among tribal-based individuals, which has been the cause of intergenerational conflicts and social tension. These contradictions point to a lack of any clear understanding of gender renegotiation in transitional societies.

Although there is a lot of literature on the change of families globally and nationally, there is a considerable gap in research on Balochistan. A majority of the literature concerning Pakistani families and gender roles revolves around Punjab and Sindh, where urbanization and industrialization have a more ancient history (Jafri, 2018; Shaheed, 2009). The sociocultural uniqueness of Balochistan, its tribal forms, small population density, and retarded urbanization imply that other areas will not be useful in generalization. There is a scarcity of empirical studies on the impact of urbanization on the Baloch family systems, gender expectations, and intergenerational relationship, in particular. Moreover, the global processes of digitalization, migration, and development projects and their intersection with the local cultural values have little to no knowledge on how these processes generate specific ways of change.

Theoretically, the paper relies on the convergence of the modernization theory and feminist sociology to comprehend the interaction of structural and cultural transformation. The process of urbanization is considered to change material situation of family life and the relations between genders are perceived as negotiations that are build within the framework of transformation. The theoretical framework presupposes that the exposure to education, working, and city life makes women more agency and rejuvenating men roles, which slowly reorganize families. These changes are however mediated by the cultural norms, religious values and intergenerational dynamics that are likely to either promote or prevent change. Through this combined framework, the study



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will seek to develop the complexities of urban Baloch families as they undergo the challenges of setting foot between tradition and modernity.

Altogether, the literature indicates that urbanization in the world is more likely to support small families and flexible gender roles, but they are heavily influenced by the local culture and power relations. Balochistan is one of the places in which tribal values and patriarchal authority are still powerful, so the rate and trend of change is not similar to the other parts of Pakistan. The presence of the extended and nuclear family, traditional and modern gender roles, and the rural-urban connections creates an intricate social environment. To design inclusive urban development and gender equality policies and interventions, it is critical to understand this transformation. The current gap in empirical findings explains the relevance of this study in giving a grounded knowledge of the effects of urbanization on family life and gender in one of the most socially differentiated and fast developing provinces in Pakistan.

### **Research Methodology**

In the current research, mixed-method research was used to investigate the dynamic family institutions and gender roles in the urbanizing Balochistan towns. This was achieved through the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and hence the possibility to understand the patterns and meaning revolving around the social change through a holistic perspective. The structured questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data by conducting questionnaires on 200 households in the selected urban centers such as Quetta, Gwadar, Turbat, and Khuzdar. These towns have been selected because they have high urban development and socio-economic diversity. The questionnaire narrowed down on household composition, source of income, education levels, gender based decision making and traditional norms attitudes. The stratified random sampling method was employed in order to represent different socio-economic and ethnic groups. The descriptive statistics and correlation methods were used to analyze the quantitative data to determine the patterns of change and the relationships between the most significant variables.

In order to supplement the numerical data, qualitative approach was introduced to encompass the subtle experiences of people and families as they were going through the process of urban change. The interviews held were in-depth interviews and focus group discussions involving 30 participants, both men and women of various ages, educational background and job descriptions. The qualitative information helped to get the perspectives on the gender roles, relationship with the older generation and bargaining between traditional and contemporary values in the family life. These narratives were interpreted by thematic analysis in terms of the emergent themes of identity, adaptation and conflict. The ethical considerations were well taken care of, the consent and confidentiality of the participants were also taken care of. The combination of the two methodological strands allowed the study to have a balanced perspective, quantitatively determined the trends, and qualitatively interpreted the social meaning of the changing family and gender relations in the context of the process of urbanization in Balochistan.

### **Findings and Analysis**

#### **Changing Family Structures**

The researchers observed a definite change in the long-standing to nuclear families in towns where Balochistan was urbanizing. The survey findings showed that about 65 percent of the respondents are currently living in nuclear family set ups as compared to 35 percent who still live in extended families. This move is mainly motivated by financial pressures, the shift in housing trends and growing exposure to urban living with



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its emphasis on privacy and autonomy. The younger couples revealed much interest in nuclear living, stating that they preferred less interference and freedom in making decisions. Nevertheless, respondents also noted the social costs that come with it, including the loosening of kinship bonds, as well as the decline in mutual support, especially during crisis. There is a gradual shift in considering more individualistic orientations over the days when the Baloch families used to have a more communal sense of interdependent.

Dynamics of decision making have changed largely due to the urbanization. In conservative Baloch families, the major decision-makers in issues of marriage and finances as well as social relations were the elders, mostly the males who headed the household. The research found out that 58 percent of urban citizens do engage in joint decision-making among spouses, whereas 23 percent of elders retain the main power. This change depicts the empowerment of younger generations and women particularly in educated urban families. Nevertheless, in spite of this change, the respect towards the elders is considered to be a cultural factor; most of younger respondents said that even though they make their own choices and make real decisions, they consult their parents and elders as a kind of symbolism of respect and continuity. This changing relationship is a manifestation of a fragile equilibrium between modern independence and traditional subordination.

In urban Balochistan, marriage is becoming less and less uniform. Although arranged marriages still hold the major aspect, self-choice marriages are becoming more acceptable especially to the younger and educated people. Approximately a third of the respondents said that they had some level of agency when choosing their life partners—significantly higher than it was the past decades. This has been changed by the increased acceptance of education and social interaction beyond the kinship networks. Divorce is a matter that is socially delicate but has been a little more exposed in urban centres especially to women who are financially liberated. The information garnered through interviews suggests that because women have been able to access education and know their rights in the law, they have been more aggressive in questioning or reprimanding any type of relationship that is not compatible and/or oppressive to them. In the meantime, the household division of labor is being renegotiated: women are increasingly gaining a role in financial matters, but they still take the large share of household jobs, which speaks of a still existing gender imbalance despite the social transformation.

The care of the aged family members is one of the most remarkable challenges of the transition of nuclear families. Historically, elder care has been a community responsibility that is distributed among the extended families. Nevertheless, with the breakdown of families into smaller units, care giving roles are getting individualized and tense. Several of the respondents claimed to have emotional difficulties with work and care. Even with financial aid, the elderly participants reported their loneliness and social isolation. Other families are resorting to other options like part-time caregivers or shared caregiving by other siblings. Although these transformations are functional, they indicate the ethical and emotional conflict between contemporary comfort and traditional duties of filial piety which are deeply ingrained in the Baloch culture.

### **Transforming Gender Roles**

The research identified education and economic participation as the two most critical elements that have transformed gender relations in urban Balochistan. A large share of women in cities like Quetta, Gwadar and Turbat have received higher education, and almost half of them are involved in some type of employment. In the surveyed



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households, 42 percent of women had a bachelors degree, and 38 percent of women contributed to family income directly. The social standing and financial independence of women have been improved, through their employment in teaching, health, and administration. The results indicate that working women have more ability to make decisions at home-54% of them had reported sharing financial control as opposed to 29% of non-workers. These tendencies indicate a slow but consistent wearing down of ancient gender hierarchies, as women start to acquire roles that extend far beyond the home. Nevertheless, their full inclusion in the public life remains restricted by cultural expectations and structural barriers.

The reshaping of gender roles has necessitated men to redefine their identities in the family organization. In interviews and surveys, it was found that most men in urban regions support women education and employment in word, but their adjustment to shared domestic roles is disproportionate. Household work was perceived by many male respondents as an addition instead of a joint responsibility. Men who were younger and more educated expressed more liberal views, and many of them characterized marriage as a partnership founded on dialogue and respect. Conversely, older men or those more connected to the countryside were more likely to interpret the changes in gender roles as an assault on traditional masculinity and family dominance. This generational divide echoes the wider social negotiations where men are constantly challenged by the economic pressures, social modernization, and the changing demands of gender equality. The adaptation process is slow and usually ambivalent, and cultural norms still have a powerful impact on behavior.

Although women are increasingly involved in the workforce, household duties are still unevenly distributed. Just 18 percent of male respondents said they regularly participated in typical household chores like cooking, cleaning, or taking care of children. Time-use data and qualitative narratives indicated that working mothers experience a “double burden”- balancing work and household work with little spousal or extended family support. Although many women recognized the burden, they justified their work as a form of family responsibility instead of inequality, proving that the gender expectations grounded in the culture still persisted. However, families who were exposed to urban and media influences were more open to shared domestic roles. Independent couples, especially those in the younger generations, were already exhibiting gender flexibility, a process that signaled a gradual yet apparent redefinition of family roles.

Gender perception in Baloch society has also been redefined by urbanization. The education of daughters is more and more appreciated, and their work is regarded as a source of family prestige instead of disgrace. But this acceptance is conditional-families want women to be modest, low-risk, and put family first. A common theme in interviews was the idea of balanced modernity, whereby families are trying to move towards a mix of traditional values and modern aspirations. Younger women stated both empowerment and tension: empowerment by education and awareness, tension by the ongoing social scrutiny. The findings show that although gender equality is gaining momentum in urban Balochistan, it is mediated by cultural structures that value honor, morality, and respectability. The social transition is therefore one of negotiation and not confrontation whereby people are trying to balance progress and tradition.

### **Urbanization and Social Change**

The urbanization and media exposure have become significant drivers of social change in Balochistan. The flood of digital communication, TV, and social media presents new paradigms of family life and gender relations. Respondents often mentioned media



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influence on developing new dreams, especially among young people who are exposed to the concepts of equality, individuality, and contemporary families. These influences, as enabling, create a cultural tension between the old norms and new ways of life. Most families cited generation conflicts that arose due to divergent views on morality and gender conduct triggered by media images. The fast diffusion of smartphones and the internet has consequently been both a gateway to emerging social opportunities and a source of cultural anxiety.

In Balochistan, urban families are changing their own definition of success and respectability. Unlike classic prestige, which was associated with inheritance, tribal belonging, and compliance with established norms, urban respectability comes to be gauged by education, career, and material ease. Parents, respondents observed, were today much more concerned about their children education and career security than the traditional early marriage and strict gender segregation expectations. Once regarded as unnecessary, schooling of women is now an indicator of development and familial pride. Equally, the desire of smaller families, individual houses, and modern lifestyles represent a wider transformation of middle-class urban culture. However, this change is not evenly distributed; lower-income and rural-origin families continue to have lower access to education, employment, and housing, demonstrating the new social inequalities in urban centers.

The results indicate strong generational differences in gender and family life attitudes. Older generations, having been brought up in tribal and rural contexts, are more prone to preserve patriarchal power and the moral centrality of the extended family. Conversely, the younger generation, especially those taught in urban schools, focus on partnership, equality, and the choice of life. Youth interview responses underscored a need to preserve cultural identity and still adapt to modern values. They articulated the view of how respect and equality could coexist with tradition. Although these intergenerational differences sometimes bring conflict, they also imply a continuous dialogue within families, which implies that social change in Balochistan is negotiated, not imposed.

The study, despite these changes, identified that transitional families are experiencing various challenges. The shift toward nuclear living has undermined conventional support systems, posing challenges of childcare shortages, the elderly feeling lonely, and increased emotional strain to working parents. These strains are worsened by economic insecurity, unemployment, and escalating living costs. Moreover, the disconnect between changing ambitions and constrained institutional resources, including absence of gender-sensitive workplaces or social welfare initiatives, poses a tension between ideals and realities. The presence of gender-based conflicts, generational misunderstandings, and varying value systems have become staples of urban family life. These results underscore the fact that, as much as urbanization in Balochistan has created new grounds of autonomy and equality, it has created new grounds of social fragmentation and stress that demand adaptive coping strategies.

### Discussion

#### Theoretical Frameworks as the Interpretation of Findings

This research conclusion can be closely related to the structural-functionalist and feminist theoretical approach which helps to identify how the social institutions evolve in accordance with the wider societal changes. According to the structural-functionalist perspective, the family system changes through the process of urbanization so as to accomplish the emerging economic and social functions more effectively. This adaptation is evident in the shift of the Balochistan society to nuclear families; the family institution has become more specialized in emotional and economic support, as opposed



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to parts formed by blood ties. Simultaneously, feminist prism can be viewed as the means of modernization and urbanization to undermine patriarchal relations of power and to extend the functions of women beyond the domestic frame. Women are getting more involved in education and work in Balochistan, which confirms the feminist view that the division of labor is socially constructed and can be renegotiated through social economic transformation. Nevertheless, even in the current changes, the roots of patriarchal norms are still deep, which means that structural transformation does not necessarily lead to gender equality.

### **Comparison to National and Regional Studies.**

In contrast to national and regional researches carried out in the urban centers of Pakistan, including Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar, the results of the Baluchistan show certain similarities and other specific differences. Like other regions in Pakistan, urbanization in Balochistan has led to the formation of small families, more women mobility and the redefinition of gender roles. Nevertheless, the rate and intensity of these changes are comparatively lower in Balochistan because the region is conservative with its traditions of tribes, lacks access to education, and experiences economic inequalities. The analysis of the urban families in Punjab and Sindh by Jafar (2019) and Ali (2021) reveals that the gender egalitarian shift is more intense, whereas the transformation in Balochistan seems to be slow and uneven. Moreover, recent research in South Asian areas with comparable cultural backgrounds, including Afghanistan and the Baluch region of Iran, also shows the same tendency of hesitant acculturation, with modernization coming in contact with high levels of strong traditionalism. These parallels highlight the fact that even though urbanization is a driving force of social change, it can only have an effect via local cultural, political, and religious factors.

### **Social Implications of Evolving family Patterns**

The formation of nuclear families and the redefinition of gender roles in Balochistan has social implications. The benefits of the smaller households on the positive front are that individuals are given more privacy, autonomy, and chances to develop. The increase in the number of women accessing education and employment will lead to a better family income and child welfare which is consistent with the worldwide evidence of gender empowerment being correlated with social development. The decay of the extended family groups has however also contributed to the degradation of the traditional support systems especially in the old and the single women. The increasing disconnection and lack of community solidarity among generations is becoming a visible by-product of urban living. Further, redefining gender roles can at times create tension in social life inside the home settings, as the old standards of the traditional society come into conflict with new desires of the modern society. Those results imply that although urbanization leads to empowerment and individualism, it also undermines the collective cultural ethos that in the past provided social harmony and interdependence in Baloch society.

### **Policy, Culture, and Religion influence of Change.**

The Balochistan social transformation is impacted greatly by the inter-relationship of the policy frameworks, the cultural traditions and the religious interpretations. The structural



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conditions that have brought about change are the government policies that favor education, urbanization and the involvement of women in the labour force. However, there is inconsistency in the implementation of policies as a result of socio-political instability, institutional capacity, and opposition by conservative groups in the society. Tribal values and religious beliefs that underlie culture factors still have a decisive role in the determination of what is acceptable limits of behavior, especially to women. Religious figures and elders of the community have great influence on the general opinion, and they usually suggest the concept of modernization as something that would destroy the moral and cultural background. Thus, sustainable social change presupposes the culturally sensitive approach in which policy initiatives will be adjusted to the local belief systems and dialogue between tradition and modernity should be promoted. By including the Islamic approaches to justice, equality, and family welfare, it is possible to offer a more locally based way of advancing gender balance and harmonious families in the face of the Balochistan developing urban society.

### **Recommendations**

Enhance family-based social policies that respond to the pressures of the shift to nuclear households, such as the development of communal childcare and elderly care facilities in the Balochistan urban regions.

Encourage education and vocational training among women to increase their role in the labor market and decision-making activities, thus, facilitating gender equity and financial stability among urban families.

Feminize masculinity by promoting male involvement in domestic duties by promoting awareness in the community, community services, and school programs, wherein masculinity is restructured in such a manner that domestic and caregiving roles are common and valued.

Introduce both sociological and gender studies in local educational programs at secondary and tertiary levels to inform young people on the changing social norms, gender equality, and the significance of having a balanced family relationship.

Improve urban planning and housing policies to support the needs of smaller family units without eliminating communal areas that promote intergenerational contact and social integration.

Enhance local governance structures and social welfare organizations to offer counseling services and mediation to families experiencing conflicts over evolving gender roles and urban stress.

Promote media and cultural coverage of positive stories on women empowerment, shared family roles, and respect of traditional values in contemporary setting thus fostering gradual social acceptance of change.

Longitudinal and comparative research among various urban centers of Balochistan to track the processes of change, inform policymaking, and see to it that urbanization will help build inclusive and culturally fit social development

### **Conclusion**

The research article titled Changing Family Structures and Gender Roles in Urbanizing Towns of Balochistan indicates that the province is experiencing a slow yet remarkable change in its social fabric. The emergence of new economic opportunities, education and exposure to diverse lifestyles in urbanization is transforming the traditional family set up and gender roles. The move towards nuclear families is indicative of larger-scale modernization, whereby personal autonomy and privacy have gained more importance. Nevertheless, the same structural changes have broken long-established kinship networks, posing new social dilemmas, including fragile eldercare systems and generational rifts.

The increased involvement of women in education and employment is a significant movement towards empowerment, but it has also created tensions in the patriarchal family set-ups. There is a growing trend of men adjusting to shared roles yet the societal



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norms and expectations still limit the full achievement of gender equality. The evidence shows that although modernization theories reflect the structural changes, the rate and scope of transformation in Balochistan is still mediated by tribal traditions, religious interpretations, and socio-economic inequalities.

On the social front, the new trends in family life portend both development and frailty. Urbanization has revealed pathways to social mobility and inclusion of differences in gender, yet it has also threatened to undermine the value of collective community worth that once guaranteed unity and support in times of need. Thus, the change process in Balochistan necessitates policy adjustments that reconcile modern development agendas with the cultural realities on the ground.

To sum up, the key to sustainable social development of urbanizing towns in Balochistan lies in ensuring peace between tradition and modernity. Through the promotion of gender sensitive education, equitable economic involvement, and culturally based social welfare policies, families can be assisted in the complex transition to a more inclusive and adaptive social order. Change in family life and gender roles in Balochistan, though slow, is the chance to create a new future based on respect of cultural traditions and adherence to the principles of equality, dignity, and mutual responsibility.

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