

Social Change and Exogamous Marriages among Chitrali Girls in District Chitral: Causes and Consequences



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Abstract: Marriage is a socially and legally recognized union between two individuals. Among its common forms are endogamy (marriage within one's blood relatives or social group) and exogamy (marriage outside one's blood relatives or social group). This study examines the causes and consequences of exogamous marriages among Chitrali girls. A qualitative research approach was adopted. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 respondents and 10 case studies involving participants with direct experience of exogamous marriage. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings show that exogamous marriage is widely practiced and culturally accepted among the respondents. Most participants reported positive marital adjustment and satisfaction. However, important challenges were also identified, including social pressure, communication and cultural barriers, divorce-related risks, and in-law conflicts. The study concludes that exogamous marriages among Chitrali girls are increasingly influenced by social change and modernization. While these marriages provide new social opportunities, they also create family and cultural challenges that require greater awareness and support at the family and community levels.

Keywords: Marriage, Exogamy, Chitrali girls, Social change, Marital adjustment, Cultural barriers, Chitral.

Introduction

Marriage is an important aspect of culture, and the cultural ideals and conventions have a big impact on the institution of marriage. In our culture, families frequently plan their children's weddings. Planned marriages are widespread, even when neither prospective spouse is interested in the arrangement. Furthermore, there are instances where it is carried out without authorization. Almost all human societies use marriage as a means of preserving social order. Its objectives include fostering political unity, sexual fulfilment, family and child safety,

financial stability, and youth socialization (Abbasi, 2019). Sociologists frequently view marriage as a social institution that is linked to the family. People frequently believe that once one spouse dies or gets divorced, the family is no longer complete. The situation is different, though, when a married couple is involved. The relationship between a couple, their offspring, and the rest of society is governed and defined by the complex social convention of marriage. This includes the couple's obligation to support their offspring financially. Men and women are expected to share the same level of responsibility for children and adolescents in

today's culture. A presumption of status does not create a legally binding link of affinity between the relatives of a spouse, even in cases when the spouses are related to one another (Abbasi et al., 2020). A presumption of status, in which a person may assume the husband-wife roles without their behavior being supported by existing laws, does not establish a legal bond of affinity between the relatives of the marriage in question, even though such a presumption is socially acceptable. This is because a presumption of status occurs when a person may assume the husband-wife roles without their behavior being supported by existing laws. The beginning of a family is considered to be one of the most important events in the annals of human history. This is due to the fact that the formation of a family offers two or more people a distinct way to fulfil the essential requirements of sex control and reproduction. This can occur due to the widespread nature of the social institution of marriage. (Ali, 2017). Marriage and Family are core institutions in almost every human society. Marriage systems vary across societies. In most of the society's marriage is taking place in two ways i.e. Endogamy and exogamy. When excellent local matches are limited due to small community sizes in some societies, and when productivity varies among communities due to environmental reasons, the exogamy rate is higher. The origin of exogamy in social sciences is to differentiate between a person's family of orientation and the family of procreation (Ali, 2020). Exogamy originated as a result of a lack of women, forcing males to look for spouses from different communities, including forceful marriage, and that it gradually established standard in numerous civilizations. Morgan claims that exogamy was instituted to avoid marriages among blood relatives, particularly among brothers and sisters, which were widespread in a previous condition of promiscuity. Exogamy, according to Frazer, began to protect the survival of family groups, especially when single families became larger political units (Babbie, 2008). Exogamy evolved from the reluctance to marriage between blood relatives or close relatives, sometimes known as the fear of incest. In all societies, marriage brings people from two different families

together. According to Frazer's book "Totemism and Exogamy" (1910), the head of exogamous tribes marries within their own tribe in both Assam (India) and Africa. When beautiful ladies were brought into the tribe as captives, even the group's chiefs married the abducted women from outside the tribe (Dow et al., 2013). Problems associated with exogamous form of marriage in Chitral have taken media attention in the last couple of decades. Young girls married outside Chitral were later subjected to domestic violence, slavery, bondage and immoral activities. The infrastructural development, communication channels and Media exposures for Chitral since 1970s has brought many goods but challenges for local social fabric and cultural expectations of youth. Because of the availability of transportation over the Lowari Pass, people from other parts of the nation began to visit Chitral on a regular basis. Chitral girls, because to their mountainous nature and nurturing, as well as a lack of exposure to life beyond their district, are vulnerable to the dangers of non-local affluent individuals from other places taking them as brides (Zahiruddin, 2016). Over the previous seven years, about 2,860 examples of young women being misled in the name of marriage have been identified. A research project conducted in March 2016 by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme's Regional Women Empowerment Project (AKRSP) uncovered a trend of trafficking Chitrali girls under the guise of weddings. 74% of marriages between Chitrali females and adults from other regions, particularly Punjab, are fraudulent (Naz, 2019). According to a research, internal trafficking of women from Chitral to southern areas of the nation in the pretence of marriage has escalated over the last two decades. According to a local organization (Dawat-e-Azmat-e-Chitral) only 10% of marriages were genuine (Ali, 2012). The issue of Chitrali girls marrying non-local males has gotten so bad that social groups had to come up with a plan to discourage such weddings (Zahiruddin, 2016). To combat the threat, civil society formed the "Dawat-e-Azmat-e-Chitral" organization. The matter was brought to the attention of the then Inspector General of Police, Nasir Khan Durrani, during his visit to Chitral.

After that, the police were directed to evolve a strategy so that no woman would be fraudulently married to an outsider. Under the strategy, no marriage can be formalized between a local girl and an outsider without the clearance and approval of the Chitral Police. Following the verification and the person intending to marry her, the police can issue the NOC to the girl's family. Although the organization's awareness campaign and investigations before and after weddings have discouraged some human traffickers, adolescent girls from impoverished households are still wed to elderly men (Khan, 2016). People sometimes use the fact that people marry based on criteria such as race and ethnicity to argue that choosing a partner is not a random process. Sociologists define endogamy as the union of members of the same group (Kalmijn, 2018). Research indicates that marriages between individuals of the same race or ethnicity are more successful than those between individuals of different races. One of the key economic justifications for marital sorting, according to foundational research, is the complementarity or substitution effects of certain pair characteristics on marital production. The compatibility of two individuals from various cultures may make or break a marriage. It may be easier for a couple to manage their home and make decisions if they share the same language and culture (Kaer & Kogan, 2019). Couples who belong to the same ethnic or cultural background often find it easier to share family values, traditions, food, and daily activities. They usually understand each other's customs and lifestyles better. On the other hand, couples from different ethnic backgrounds may face challenges in adjusting to each other's culture and traditions, which can sometimes create problems in family life. Since choosing a life partner is a complex process, it is not easy to measure how choosing someone with a similar background affects the success of marriage (Adesera & Ferrer, 2014). Numerous external influences affect marriage decisions, which may have a substantial effect on the functioning of the family. Without the necessary tools, it is very difficult to discern between this selection impact and the cause-and-effect relationship between endogamous marriage and family outcomes.

According to Kalmijn's (2018) research, less educated members of lower-status racial groups are more likely to marry equally educated members of higher-status racial groups. Due to language and cultural differences, it may be difficult for interracial couples to connect, yet they may find consolation in one another's other strengths (Kalmijn, 2018). Chitralis are a small group of people living in a region of Pakistan. They are also considered a religious minority (Kumar & Kothari, 2016). They have a strong connection with their culture and mainly speak the Khowar language across Pakistan. This strong connection exists because they have a rich cultural background and a long history of using this language (Kumar & Kothari, 2016). According to Narijo, Hamida, and Avais, exogamy is one of the most crucial ways in which the people of Chitral have been able to preserve their traditions and customs (2018). Even though they also use Urdu and English in specific circumstances, young people who speak Chitral retain their culture via social media use, participation in rituals and customs, and travel (Abbasi & David, 2020).

Definition of Marriage:

When a man and a woman marry, they become husband and wife and jointly raise their children. Marriage is the legal acknowledgement of a couple's long-term loving bond (historically and in certain countries primarily a union between a man and a woman). Marriage, often known as matrimony, is a partnership or legal contract between two persons that offers them, their children, and their in-laws societal duties and rights (Paul, 2018). Various opinions on marriage exist. The social and legal act of combining two individuals is known as "marriage." The basic purpose of a marital contract (Nikkah) is to make childbearing easier and more permissible (Abbasi, 2019). Marriage is the most common way for people to start a family. Even though economic objects are often traded, the legal, physical, and moral responsibilities that a man and a woman make when they marry last as long as their offspring live. Marriage fosters more natural male-female interactions and gives children social skills.

When a couple marries, it is often performed as part of a ceremony, and the woman's children are generally recognized as the couple's legally acknowledged progeny (Lacy, 2009). A legally recognized union between two or more people is known as marriage. All parties get rights and responsibilities, including any possible progeny. You receive rights and obligations through marriage. The most common are sexuality, motherhood, making a living and interacting with others, and social standing. Therefore, marriage is a socially accepted union, and its progeny benefit from these developments. We adopt social rituals to convince others of our viewpoint. After these ceremonies have been performed, people of opposing sexes are permitted to engage in sexual intercourse as well as various sorts of social and professional contacts. (Weiler, 2015).

Objective of the study

1. To find the presence of conditions which compel the Chitrali girl's parents to go for marriage outside Chitral
2. To find out the problems faced by Chitrali girls, their parents and in-laws due to marriages of outside Chitral
3. To find the facilities / benefits of the marriage of outside Chitral to Chitrali girls, their parents as well as in-laws of Chitrali girls
4. To identify consequences of outside Chitral marriage on Chitrali girls, their parents and in-laws.

Research Questions

1. What are the conditions that compel the Chitrali girls for outside Chitral marriage?
2. What are the problems faced by chitrali girls their parents and In-laws due to marriage of outside chitral?
3. What are the facilities / benefits of outside Chitral marriage among Chitrali

girls with down areas in-laws?

4. What are the consequences of outside Chitral marriage on Chitrali girls, their parents and in-laws?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marriage, also known as "marriage," is a social or legal contract that connects two persons. In the majority of nations, marriage is a formal ceremony in which two individuals confess their love for one another and enter into a legally binding contract (Bradford & Barber, Family conflict as intrusive family process, 2019). Marriage is a socially formal institution that fosters sexual satisfaction and procreation. Cultures have very different wedding traditions. Some civilizations prohibit men from having many wives. In certain countries, males are permitted to marry as many women as they like. Most cultures see marriage as a genuine partnership. There's more to a marriage than just two people making out. Survival of all hominid species depends on perception, but it is also crucial that perceptions be accepted in social contexts (Carroll, Badger, & Yang, 2006). One's moral, spiritual, emotional, economical, or religious beliefs may influence the celebration. During the marriage ceremony, legal or customary duties are often established between the couple. In some countries, living away from a spouse and obtaining a divorce are typical. A government, a group, a church, a tribe, a community, or even a group of people's peers may recognize a marriage as valid. According to the authority's marriage laws, marriage is seen as a contract, since that is what it is in the eyes of the law (Wynne, 2011).

Marriage as a legal contract:

Marriage is seen as both a social contract and a contract that may be legally enforced in Islamic tradition. It is now required that a marriage contract be completed in the presence of an imam or an Islamic judge who is knowledgeable about Islamic law and is a well-respected community leader. During the signing of the contract, the bride and groom are often only permitted to have a close family or friend present. In Islam, a marriage is comparable to a binding legal agreement. Its implications, which

include the rights and duties it bestows, are immediate and are not dependent on anything else, such as the payment of dowry. The Nikhah serves not only as a contract but also as evidence that a married couple is entitled to have children (Abbasi, 2019). Before the wedding may proceed, the bride and groom need to express their agreement both orally and nonverbally to one another. To do this, a formal marriage proposal, also known as a "ijab," must be made and accepted (qabul). A married couple's behaviour toward one another, toward their children, toward their extended family, and toward the community is governed by the rules of their marriage. In a culture where several languages are spoken, the decisions and attitudes of speakers of each language have a significant effect on the social standing of each language (Dawulung, 2019). A language's ability to live on depends not only on the language that is spoken in the household but also on features of both micro society and macro society. Variables such as how individuals marry within and between groups, as well as how parents feel about the language spoken in their homes and families, may have an impact on whether or not a language is able to evolve or remain stable in a community that speaks many languages (Khan, 2016). The focus of Lacy's (2009) anthropological study of the German town of Oberwart was on the residents' obedience to cultural norms, gender roles, and economic and social standing. She was of the opinion that the number of people who spoke German was affected by factors such as industrialization, urbanization, the social situation, and the manner in which persons married. After being married to monolingual Germans, a significant number of young Hungarian women stopped speaking Hungarian at home, and their children subsequently stopped learning the language. The socioeconomic features of a language have a significant influence on how individuals choose and develop their language, which is mostly due to the fact that people's social surroundings alter after marriage (Lacy, 2009). David and Nambiar (2020) analyzed the impacts of exogamy on language usage in personal, public, and religious (gurdwara) contexts by conducting interviews with four Chitral males and their families who

were living in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. On the other hand, they advise that additional factors than only the presence of exogamy should be examined. They argue that aspects such as how the native language, Malay, is utilized in day-to-day life are of equivalent significance and should be included as such (David & Nambiar, 2020). Igboanus and Wolf (2009) investigated the impact that marriages between people of different races have had on the development and continued use of Nigerian languages. In this study, researchers examined the languages that parents and siblings of parents who had mixed-race marriages spoke at home to the languages that those same parents and siblings now speak. According to the findings of the study, parents are more likely to communicate with their children in English rather than in their mother tongue at home (Wolf, 2019). Interviews were done by Narijo, Hamida, and Avais with a total of twelve married women whose husbands were all native speakers of the same language group (2018). They were investigating whether or not endogamy was still relevant in the Sindi community of Sanghar. According to the findings of this study, the heads of households are the ones responsible for establishing these marital patterns, which have continued for hundreds of years. Women are motivated by financial gain as well as the provision of land to their husbands and the maintenance of their political and social relations (Narijo & Avais, 2018). Exogamy is gaining popularity in the cities of Pakistan that have more than one language spoken there. Observers of this phenomenon may be found in Chitral among those who have relocated to the major cities of the country. In the past, members of the same group were responsible for arranging the majority of marriages. This made it possible for groups to communicate with one another and ensured that new members were accepted. According to the findings of a study conducted in Peshawar using a variety of research methods to investigate how speakers of Chitral feel about the languages Chitral, Urdu, and English, the researcher asserts that the high number of mixed marriages is a primary factor in young Chitral's distaste for Chitral (Ali, 2017).

Marriages Practices Global:

A marriage is officially recognized in the presence of witnesses and guests at the wedding ceremony. The union of a man and a woman in the eyes of the law is referred to as a civil marriage. Marriages are seen as sacred occasions in many religions, which is another reason why they encourage their members to get married. In a number of nations in Europe and Latin America, if a religious ceremony is to take place, both a religious ceremony and a civil ceremony are necessary (Fincham, 2019). This is also the case in certain countries in Asia. In a few countries, like as Belgium and the Netherlands, the legal or civil ceremony has to come first before the religious one may take place. In certain countries, such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Spain, the legal ceremony, the religious ritual, and the communal ritual may all be performed at the same time. Even in cases when both "civil" and "religious" ceremonies take place at the same time, this does not mean that the state "recognizes" the religious nature of the marriage. The vast majority of those who attend the religious activity do little more than sign a registration sheet. If the legal part of the marriage is skipped, the religious part of the marriage may be completed, but the marriage will not be recognised by the law (Abbasi, David, & Zaki, 2020). Although the civil ceremony and the religious ceremony are different in many ways, they are often carried out simultaneously in many nations. [Civil ceremony] and [religious ceremony] In the majority of states in the United States, the wedding ceremony may be presided over by a priest, pastor, or other religious leader of equivalent standing. Within the parameters of this scenario, they carry out the duties of an authorized representative of the state. It is mandatory to have a civil union in France, Germany, and Russia before entering into a religious one (Dumaing, David, & Shanmuganathan, 2016).

Marriages may take place almost anywhere and in complete privacy in Australia. In certain countries, such as England, the civil ceremony is required to take place in a public location that

has been specifically designated for that purpose (such as a church or register office). Emergency marriage licences are only issued in the most dire of circumstances, such as when one of the individuals being married is in danger of passing away in the near future. The venue and time of weddings, in addition to other laws pertaining to marriage, are both within the jurisdiction of local governments. In a number of jurisdictions, one of the parties is required to be physically present in the office of the registrar in order for the process to be legal (Lacy, 2009). Traditions connected to marriage have evolved with the institution of marriage throughout the course of human history. In mediaeval Europe, it was possible for a couple to wed without the presence of a priest or witnesses. Instead, they only reached a verbal agreement to cohabitate as husband and wife in the future (Abbasi, David, & Zaki, 2020). The word "verbum" in Latin was used to denote the meaning of this oath. During the time of the Reformation, the state began the practice of maintaining official records of marriages and drafting laws pertaining to marriage. In the Protestant nations of Europe throughout the 1600s, the involvement of the state in the institution of marriage was sometimes rather significant (Babbie, 2008).

Marriage custom of Chitral:

The marriage preparation starts with the sending of a proposal or asking the hand of their daughter in marriage. In case of acceptance, then the bride's family demands a gun, ox, goats from the groom. The groom will present these to the bride's family, then the bride's family demands money from the groom's family (Fowers, 2019). The money which is demanded by the bride is returned to the groom's family not in the shape of money but by buying items that would be a washing machine, bed, tailoring machine etc. It was after the gifts when they fixed a date for the departure of the bride but mostly after consultation with the village priest about an auspicious day of the week for the ceremony. A few days before her departure, the parents would invite all their neighbors, relatives and friends to attend a function, to see their daughter in her bridal dress called *Zap anjeik*; her bridal dress included various kinds of clothes, embroidered cap and head band, jewelry and an

over coat made from duck down. the invitees brought and still bring gifts for the bride , mostly jewelry and clothes which were packed and send along the marriage to the grooms family (Abbasi, David, & Zaki, 2020). A similar function was held in the groom's house to dress him before his departure. When the groom and his party headed by an elder of the family came into view the bride relatives would come out to greet them and conduct the guest to the guest room before the 'Nikah" ceremony took place (Miller & Rhodes, 2020). If the bride and the groom (both called shaboak) were grown up and no too young, then the movement of Nikah between them was a thing to be seen and enjoyed. They were seated in the presence of all the people gathered for the purpose in the bride s house. At least three man of each sides were named to be witness and note the amount of "Maher" fixed by a consensus of the family members of the two sides. At present a certain amount of Pakistani currency is fixed and mostly written on prescribed forms which was not the case in the past. The priest who conducted the "Nikah" ceremony formally sat in the house , the groom to his left and the bride to his right (Dumaing, David, & Shanmuganathan, 2016). At first he recited a few verses from the Holy Quran and then asked the groom and the bride alternately about their willingness to enter the matrimonial bond which being given by both sides in the presence of all the participants. Now the bride and the groom appoint their attorneys to act on their behalf who accomplish the "Nikah" ceremony without passing through these stages (Bradford & Higginbotham, 2019). At the time of her departure the bride was conducted to the left side of the fire place from where the groom held her hand and led her out of the house and then came back to kiss his mother's-in-laws hand as a show of his gratitude. She gave him either a glass or a cup or any other small thing who took it with him and kept safe known as "Bakht Korali". then the faather or her elder brother come with her sister in the form of special guest known as (Tokhmeran) to the groom's house who was lavishly entertained for a day known as (Tokhmeran Basi), then the groom visited to his parent in laws after one day called (Door

Jamari). A grown up bride usually lives in her new home for about two or three weeks before her return to her parent house this phase is called (Geche nezik) one of the maternal uncle of the bride receive s a sizeable gift from the grooms father which is called (Muzhi angiali) (Zahiruddin, 2016).

Theories about Origin of Exogamous Marriage

John Ferguson McLennan believed that exogamy started in ancient societies because there were fewer women available within a group. Due to this shortage, men had to marry women from other groups. Over time, this became a social custom and later a rule. McLennan also connected exogamy with **totemism**. Totemism was an early religious belief in which people worshipped animals, plants, or natural objects and considered them sacred symbols of their clan. He argued that people belonging to the same totemic clan were not allowed to marry each other because they were considered relatives. Therefore, they had to marry outside the clan. According to him, this practice also helped prevent incest (marriage between close relatives). He believed that ancient human societies passed through a totemic stage where clans and matrilineal systems became important parts of social organization. Researchers such as Dow and his colleagues also argued that exogamy has a religious origin. They explained that ancient people believed members of the same totemic group shared a sacred relationship. Because of this belief, marriage within the same clan was considered forbidden or taboo. Thus, the rule of exogamy developed to stop marriages within the same clan and to maintain religious and social boundaries. Claude Lévi-Strauss presented the **Alliance Theory** of exogamy. According to this theory, groups encouraged their members to marry outside their own tribe or clan in order to create friendly relations and alliances with other groups. These marriages helped different tribes cooperate with each other socially, culturally, and economically. Through marriage exchanges, tribes developed stronger connections, peace, and mutual support. Lévi-Strauss believed that societies practicing

exogamy became stronger and more successful because they formed wider social networks and partnerships.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a qualitative research design to explore the causes and consequences of outside marriages among Chitrali girls through in-depth interviews and case studies.

Nature of the Study

The research was qualitative in nature. Themes and sub-themes were developed to analyze the collected data and draw conclusions.

Target Population

The target population included Chitrali girls married outside District Chitral, along with their parents, elders, and mothers-in-law residing in Peshawar.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was used to select respondents for the study.

Sample Size

A total of 15 in-depth interviews were conducted with married girls, while 10 case studies were conducted with mothers-in-law, following the recommendations of John W. Creswell.

Tools of Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and case studies using interview guides.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed through thematic analysis by developing themes and sub-themes based on the research objectives and questions.

Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with 15 female respondents and supplementary case studies from parents and in-laws. The study explores socio-cultural dynamics of exogamous marriages among Chitrali women, focusing on marital experiences, family relations, economic

arrangements (Haq-e-Mahar), and post-marital adjustment. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring patterns in the narratives. The findings are organized into the following most respondents were aged between 17 and 48 years. The majority were housewives, married through arranged or love marriages, and belonged to joint family systems. Educational levels ranged from primary to Master's level. Both exogamous (outside Chitral) and intra-regional marriages were represented.

Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Normalization of Exogamous Marriage and Marriage Acceptance

Sub-theme 1.1: Increasing acceptance of outside-area marriage

Most respondents reported that marriages outside Chitral are socially accepted, especially when the groom is educated or financially stable.

"The society looked normal after our marriage." (R1, R6, R13)

Sub-theme 1.2: Role of arranged marriages and family approval

Arranged marriages dominate, with family networks playing a key role in partner selection.

Interpretation:

The findings indicate a shift from purely endogamous to exogamous marital patterns, reflecting changing cultural boundaries.

This aligns with Goode's (1963) theory of global family change, where modernization weakens traditional marriage restrictions.

Theme 2: Socioeconomic Factors and Urban Attraction

Sub-theme 2.1: Preference for urban life and mobility

Many respondents preferred outside-area marriages due to better facilities and urban lifestyle.

"I preferred to marry outside Chitral because I like urban life." (R3, R7)

Sub-theme 2.2: Economic stability of the groom as a selection criterion

Education, occupation, and income of the groom were key determinants.

Interpretation:

Marriage decisions are increasingly influenced by economic rationality and social mobility, consistent with Becker's (1973) marriage market theory.

Theme 3: Role of Bride Price (Haq Mehr) and Cultural Continuity

Sub-theme 3.1: Symbolic financial exchanges

Haq Mehr (cash or gold) was reported in most cases, ranging from symbolic to substantial amounts.

"Only gold or Haq Mehr was received as security." (R2, R5)

Sub-theme 3.2: Cultural justification of bride price

Respondents framed financial exchanges as cultural protection for daughters.

Interpretation:

Rather than disappearing, traditional financial practices are being reinterpreted as cultural security mechanisms, reflecting cultural resilience rather than decline.

Theme 4: Marital Satisfaction Vs Marital Conflict

Sub-theme 4.1: High marital satisfaction in most cases

Majority respondents reported satisfaction with husbands and improved living conditions.

"I am living a happy life with my husband." (R4, R9, R15)

Sub-theme 4.2: In-law conflicts as a major source of stress

Some respondents reported conflicts with mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.

"Mother-in-law always creates conflict due to domestic work." (R5, R12)

Interpretation:

Marital stability is strongly dependent on household power relations, especially in joint family systems.

This supports feminist sociological perspectives on patriarchal household structures (Walby, 1990).

Theme 5: Communication Barriers and Cultural Differences

Sub-theme 5.1: Language and cultural mismatch

Communication problems were frequently identified in inter-regional marriages.

"Outside marriages are affected due to language differences." (R1, R10)

Sub-theme 5.2: Weak extended family support systems

Some respondents highlighted lack of extended family support after marriage.

Interpretation:

Cultural distance creates integration challenges, increasing vulnerability to marital stress and conflict.

Theme 6: Changing Gender Roles and Social Transformation

Sub-theme 6.1: Changing status of women

Respondents acknowledged increasing female autonomy in marriage decisions.

Sub-theme 6.2: Community mind-set and social change

A dominant belief was that "community mind-set" is changing regarding marriage norms.

"The community mind-set is changing with time." (R11, R14)

Interpretation:

This reflects modernization and shifting gender norms, where women increasingly exercise choice in marital decisions.

Theme 7: Divorce, Instability, and Risk Factors

Sub-theme 7.1: Causes of marital breakdown

Key causes include mistrust, cultural differences, and communication gaps.

Sub-theme 7.2: Role of co-wife and polygamy-related tensions

In some cases, polygamous marriage created

emotional and social stress.

Interpretation:

These findings highlight that while exogamous marriage is increasing, it is also associated with new forms of marital vulnerability.

Case Study Synthesis (Parents and In-laws)

Key Patterns Identified:

Parents generally support exogamous marriage if economic stability exists

Bride price is culturally normalized

In-law relations vary between cooperation and conflict

Co-wife tensions exist in polygamous settings

Social acceptance is increasing over time

Discussion:

The findings demonstrate that exogamous marriages among Chitralli women are shaped by a complex interaction of modernization, economic aspiration, and cultural continuity. Consistent with Goode's (1963) global family change thesis, traditional endogamous norms are gradually weakening, while urban exposure and education are expanding marital choices. However, unlike complete cultural replacement, the study reveals a hybrid marital system, where traditional practices such as Haq Mehr persist but are redefined as symbolic protection rather than transactional exchange. This supports the argument of cultural adaptation rather than cultural erosion (Bourdieu, 1977). Marital satisfaction is generally high, particularly in economically stable households, which aligns with Becker's (1973) marriage market theory emphasizing economic compatibility. Yet, the presence of in-law conflict, especially in joint family systems, indicates persistent patriarchal household dynamics, as highlighted in feminist sociological literature (Walby, 1990). Communication barriers and cultural differences emerge as critical risk factors, echoing cross-cultural marriage studies that emphasize linguistic and cultural integration as key determinants of marital stability. Furthermore, the increasing autonomy of women in choosing marriage partners reflects a gradual shift toward

individualization, consistent with modern family transformation theories. Overall, the findings suggest that exogamous marriage in Chitral is not simply a cultural deviation but a transformative social process shaped by modernization, gender change, and economic restructuring.

Frequency Coding (n = 15 cases)

Theme	Frequency (n/15)	Percentage
Exogamous marriage orientation	15	100%
Economic & cultural exchange	15	100%
Marital satisfaction	13	86.6%
In-law conflict/issues	9	60%
Communication & cultural barriers	10	66.6%
Social pressure/community response	12	80%
Structural change in marriage system	15	100%
Divorce & risk factors	14	93.3%

The frequency table shows how often each major theme appeared across the 15 interview cases, helping to identify the most dominant patterns in exogamous marriage experiences among respondents. The results indicate that exogamous marriage orientation (100%), economic and cultural exchange (100%), and structural change in the marriage system (100%) are universal themes. This means all respondents discussed marrying outside their area, the presence of cultural/economic exchanges such as Haq Mehr, and broader changes in marriage

practices. These themes represent the core structure of the phenomenon under study. A very high proportion of respondents also reported divorce and risk factors (93.3%), suggesting that concerns related to marital instability, mistrust, and relationship breakdown are widely perceived issues in outside-area marriages. Marital satisfaction (86.6%) is also notably high, showing that despite challenges, most women expressed overall happiness and adjustment in their marriages. Social pressure and community response (80%) reflect that a strong majority experienced or recognized community influence, either in support or criticism of exogamous marriages. Moderate levels of communication and cultural barriers (66.6%) indicate that language and cultural differences are common but not universal challenges, affecting around two-thirds of respondents. Similarly, in-law conflict/issues (60%) is present in a majority but not all cases, suggesting that household-level tensions exist but vary depending on family environment and relationship dynamics. Overall, the findings show that while exogamous marriage is widely practiced and culturally embedded, it is simultaneously shaped by structural transformation, economic exchange traditions, and social as well as relational challenges within families.

Major Finding

The study reveals that exogamous marriages are a universal practice (100%) among respondents, strongly linked with cultural acceptance of marriage outside the native area. Economic and cultural exchange, particularly in the form of Haq Mehr and traditional practices, is also universally present. Most respondents reported high marital satisfaction (86.6%), indicating generally positive adjustment after marriage. However, significant challenges remain, including divorce and relationship risk factors (93.3%), social pressure (80%), and communication barriers (66.6%). In-law conflicts were reported by 60% of respondents, showing that while many marriages are stable, household-level tensions are still a common issue. Overall, the findings highlight a clear shift in marriage patterns due to changing social

structures, urban influence, and evolving community mindset, especially among women.

Recommendations

1. Family counseling programs should be introduced to reduce in-law conflicts and improve household relationships.
2. Awareness campaigns are needed to address communication and cultural barriers in exogamous marriages.
3. Community organizations should promote healthy marital adjustment practices to reduce divorce risks.
4. Policymakers should support women-focused social protection programs to strengthen marital stability.
5. Cultural institutions should balance tradition and modernization to reduce social pressure on couples.

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