

**INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS AMONG PASHTUN WOMEN: THE ROLE OF ELDER PASHTUN WOMEN IN PRESERVING PASHTUNWALI (PASHTUNS' CARDINAL CODE OF CONDUCT)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Intergenerational studies are the core and contemporary fields within the Sociology of generations. The transmission of cultures broadly and value systems specifically from elder generations to the younger is a rarely studied phenomenon in the Pakistani context. This current scholarship is aimed at i) exploring the strategies and ways of preservation, and ii) transmission of Pashtunwali (traditional Pashtuns' code of conduct) adopted by the elder Pashtun women towards the younger generations. The study was the first of its kind on Pakistani Pashtun women. It utilized the qualitative research design having 39 in-depth interviews with the Pashtun women of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Theoretically, the study has been informed by the standpoint feminism. The data were analyzed through the thematic analysis technique. The findings of the study revealed that Pashtun women highlighted the role of elders (Grandparents and parents) in the enculturation process among Pashtuns. Pashtun culture pays high tribute to Mour (mother) on all grounds. Pashtun women were very humbled about the status of the mother—described the mother as a true blessing and gift from Almighty Allah. Pashtun women were of the view that they have always learned to be kind, gentle, respectful, and obedient towards their parents, especially their mothers. It is concluded that Pashtun mothers and grandmothers have a defining & crucial position and hold in their family and are revered a lot. In this way, they have extraordinary status in preserving and transmitting Pashtunwali to the younger generations.*

**Keywords:** Intergenerational Relations, Pashtunwali, Standpoint Feminism, Pashtun Women, Cultural transmission

**INTRODUCTION**

Every culture proposes explicit developmental pathways and socialization patterns for the transmission of values among generations. Moreover, socialization patterns differ according to specific cultural values which may be characterized by the concepts of independence or interdependence in various cultures (Greenfield et al., 2003 & Rothbaum et al., 2000). Cultural transmission is viewed as an interaction by which the multiplication of culture happens in each progressive generation (Corsaro, 1997). The intergenerational transmission of culture alludes to the way values, folk knowledge, and practices that are

pervasive in one generation are moved to the next one. In accordance with research on socialization, recent studies conducted on generational relations and cultural transmission concluded three types of cultural transmission among generations ages that incorporate vertical transmission (among guardians (parents) and their posterity (children)), sideways (oblique) transmission (working through socialization institutions and different agents such as the playground, school, religion, media, etc.), and horizontal transmission (among peer gatherings) (Berry et.al, 2002).

It has been highlighted that the process, direction, and outcomes of cultural transmission are affected by the individuals (agents) who are involved in the transmission process, their respective relationships, the issues (contents) that are transmitted, and the cultural context (socioeconomic, cultural change, and crises, etc.) in which transmission takes place (Trommsdorff, 2009). The process and outcome are also get influenced by the relationship of the agents involved in the transmission process, including continuity and selectivity. Consequently, the parent-child relationship is seen as the basic transmission belt (Schonpflug & Bilz, 2009). Traditionally, social scientists have defined and examined multiple meanings of “generation”. Karl Mannheim, who has been considered as founding father of the sociology of generations and provided one of the popular explanations of “generations” under the heading of his “theory of generations”. Mannheim (1952) described generations as a ‘socially constructed phenomenon which is associated with a specific age that is highlighted by historical and social events’ (p. 289).

Principally, our research study was interested to analyze the role of women in transmitting Pashtunwali from one generation of Pashtuns to the next one. Pashtuns' personality is believed to be given by Pashtunwali. An inborn code, Pashtunwali is an unwritten law, a full-fledged culture, and a belief system acquired from elders and carried on from age to age. It is usually viewed as the overwhelming power of Pashtun culture.

Relations between mothers and their grown-up female children constitute a huge piece of numerous women's regular experiences. As indicated by van Mens-Verhulst (1993), a superior comprehension of their progression would help us to show signs of improvement in relations between women who contrast in their level of power and social position not in the family but also on different fronts i.e. education, workplace, management, conflict resolution, since they can be seen "as a prime example of real and symbolic generation difference between women" at both the individual level and large-scale levels of social relations. It is hence imperative that we reveal and portray them again with the goal that we can fill the gap in the social sciences.

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## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

To explore the intergenerational relations among different generations of Pashtun women.

To study the role of elder Pashtun women in preserving Pashtunwali.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

How does Pashtunwali transmit from the older generation to the younger generation of Pashtun women?

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review shows that intergenerational value transmission is an exceptionally mind-boggling marvel that influences family connections and scholars need to comprehend the more extensive setting in which it happens. Cultural and moral values being which are transferred by families should not exclusively be analyzed within the culture but in a period and context. The way of life of the elders might be altogether different than their youngsters' way of life and may make challenges for the entire family. These challenges may likewise contrast among gatherings of people in a single country. Subsequently, the specialists should be delicate about the cultural values and practices in one family, and not only thinking about the ethnic identity but other sociodemographic variables such as age-group, gender, generation, social status, profession, birthplace, etc. and requires consideration, mindfulness, and interest (Falicov, 1995).

The orientation and intensity of familial relations among relatives alongside the sort of family structure help kids in molding their lives. In 2005, Falk and Falk provided a comprehensive theoretical framework about six types of families (in terms of size and structure) in which children could be raised. Among these initial ones is totalitarian in which youngsters are not permitted to offer their input or take part in decision-making. Second is the tyrant structure in which kids are permitted to state their thoughts and viewpoints yet the choices are completed exclusively by the parents. The third is the democratic structure, which permits youngsters to settle on some of the choices concerning their practices albeit the final choice should have a parental agreement. Equalitarian structure gives as much weightage to the voices of youngsters as their elders have. Then again, tolerant construction gives more opportunities to choose about themselves than their parents have. Ultimately, the *Leissez Faire* structure denies complete parental interference in the undertakings of kids.

The disparity between various generations is apparent from the thinking patterns of the young generation as they favor and adopts contemporary technological models and practices in contrast to antiquated, obsolete, and worn-out patterns and structures (of the previous generation) (Williams & Junussbaum, 2001). Notably, if older generations are more inclined toward their own established thoughts, values, and practices, consequently distance or indifference is indispensable between the mindsets of two generations. Despite the way that elders need to control the behaviors of their children as they always seek to have an independent outlook that causes an ideological clash between the various generations (Tyyska, 2001). Truly, the relationship between parents and children is ingrained and ineradicable but this relationship could be disintegrated because of issues that can broaden the generation gap between mother-child just as father-daughter (Kaufman et al, 1998).

In an investigation of Palestinian women, Samira Haj (1992) urges that to comprehend women's status in the general public we need to incorporate the entire life course because a female's conditions and status may change fundamentally amid her lifetime. This is an assessment of Western researchers who are blamed for generally concentrating on extremely specific subjects of Islamic culture, for example, the cover or female isolation, and not relating these marvels to a more extensive historical and social setting. One method for enlarging the point of view is to perceive how a female's status changes amid her life course. On account of a Palestinian lady, Haj accentuates that a female's status changes

drastically when she turns into a mother and after that her energy increments with age. In this manner, her status is concerning other women in her family unit and nearby group. The reality of the matter is that when discussing women's status inside a specific culture, it is sometimes specified how females' lives change from youth to maturing.

In 2003, Teo et al, studied the notion of gender roles, family formation, personal values, and intergenerational ties between two generations of Singaporean women and found that various generations (Old-age adults and young adults) of Singaporean women have changing values about gender roles, preferences in terms of the gender of the children, family formation, and accommodation patterns sets. Moreover, young women were more inclined toward western models and movements while older women uphold traditional Confucian value systems and social heritage.

In 2010, Sattar et al conducted quantitative research in the field of generational relations in Pakistan and focused on the determinants of the generation gap among parents and children. The study outlined multiple reasons for the generation gap between parents and children that includes, traditional value systems, old-fashioned thinking patterns, divorce and separation (broken family system), and misuse of modern technological gadgets. Moreover, evolving socioeconomic status was also one of the underlying factors behind widening the gap between generations. It has been suggested that this gap can be reduced through love, devotion, patience, sincerity, forethought, and responsibility, etc.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This present research endeavor utilized the qualitative research design. Data has been collected from three districts namely Karak, Charsadda, and Swat in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The population of this research consisted of Pashtun women of various age groups namely, young adults (17-30 years old), middle-aged (31-45 years old), and old-aged (above 45 years of age) adults. These age groups were selected under Erik Erikson's theory of stages of life and these age brackets are relatively universal. Deliberately, these age groups were representative of the various social generations of Pashtun women to get a deeper understanding of generational relations among Pashtun women (elder and younger generation). Thirty-Nine (39) Pashtun women (respondents) were interviewed who were selected through the consecutive sampling technique. The data were processed and analyzed with the help of the thematic analysis technique with the theoretical guidance from standpoint feminism by Dorothy Smith.

## **RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

The relationships among different generations of Pashtuns are quite diverse. Several studies (see Yousaf, 2019; Sanauddin, 2015; Khan, 1995 & Grima, 1992) have highlighted that there is the significant importance of *Masharaan* (elders) in the decision-making process, particularly in settling the disputes for general Pashtun community cohesion. Broadly speaking, in Pashtun culture, elders are highly praised and honored. Elders are always considered torchbearers of traditions and trunks of undiscovered treasure. *Masharaan* (Elders) plays an important role in the *Jirga* system. *Jirga* is headed by an elder who is also considered in-charge of *Hujras* as well. If there is some misunderstanding between *Kasharaan* (youngsters) then their issue is also resolved by *Masharaan* (elders) of the *Jirga*. *Jirga* also plays an important role in handling disputes among conflicting parties. Due to the impartial position of *Jirga* elders, both parties acknowledge and are

bound to the decisions made by *Jirga*. This system of *Masharaan* and *Kasharaan* is deeply embedded in the Pashtun family system that continues from generation to generation. Disrespecting the elders is considered to be a sign of deviating from the cultural context. Talking particularly about the transformation of this system, mothers have a lot of roles to let their daughters understand it. For example, one of the respondents, aged 45 (old-aged adult), married and living in a joint family system (Swat) highlighted the changing patterns among Pashtuns and her relationship with her mother as: *Whenever I came to my mother's home from my in-laws, she always guides me to be respectful towards my in-laws, particularly to my husband and his parents. There used to be a lot of restrictions for women but now women are excelling in almost all walks of life. Pashtuns always keep their promises and never compromise on their honor and respect. Being immoral is strongly discouraged in Pashtun society. Being immodest and disrespectful is something not suited to Pashtun people. I want to live my life with dignity, respect, and honor and be buried respectfully and modestly. Being a Pashtun I feel that norms and values Pashtuns used to have a few decades back are getting changed very rapidly. The components of the Pashtunwali are the base of the Pashtun people and we are nothing without them. In Jirgas, usually, elders decide things and try to resolve their conflicts and we love and respect our elders* (Personal Communication, 25-10-2019).

In Pashtun culture, elders in the family are considered to be an important agents of socialization. Women at the household level are very much conscious about the socialization of their kids. This was also highlighted while the researcher's discussion with an old-aged female adult, married, uneducated, and residing in Swat (joint family system) as she shared her childhood memories and the role of her paternal grandmother after her mother's death (an early age) that how she was raised and nurtured by her grandmother: *I was just a few days infant when my mother passed away, so, I was brought up by my grandmother. Since I was married at a very early age just 12 years old, I did not get that much opportunity to learn and be trained by my family. I have always seen all my relatives and elders as quite hospitable and honored. My paternal grandmother trained me to cook and do other household chores. So, we, by default, learn the hospitality at our homes. We were trained to consider guests as the blessing of the Almighty* (Personal Communication, 19-10-2019). There is considerable evidence that Pashtuns are nurtured in a way that they respect their elders. Pashtun women highlighted the role of elders (Grandparents and parents) in the enculturation process among Pashtuns. All the major agents of socialization play their equal part in training the younger Pashtun generations.

Table 1: *Classification of Age Groups*

Sr. No	Age Group Name	Age Range	Frequency
i.	Young Female Adults	17—30	10
ii.	Middle-aged Female Adults	31—45	13
iii.	Old-aged Female Adults	Above 45	16
	Total		39

*Source:* Socio-demographic profile of respondents

Universally, the age of human beings can be classified into various recognized age groups by many demographers and social scientists. One of the personality development theories—Eight stages of human development introduced by Erik Erikson, where various age groups (of human life) have been described to understand the concept of identity crises and psychosocial development of an individual—infancy, toddler/early childhood, pre-school, school age, adolescent, young adulthood, middle adulthood, and old-aged adult. In the current study, the age of the respondents has been classified into three age groups namely young female adults, middle-aged female adults, and old-aged female adults—with a corresponding age range. Table 1 illustrates the classification of age groups of Pashtun women along with the recognized age range. It indicates that almost all three age groups (young adult, middle-aged adult, and old-aged adult) of Pashtun women have equal representation in the present research.

Pashtun culture pays high tribute to *Mour* (mother) on all grounds. Pashtun women were very humbled about the status of the mother—described the mother as a true blessing and gift from Almighty Allah. Pashtun women were of the view that they have always learned to be kind, gentle, respectful, and obedient towards their parents, especially their mother. It has been observed that Pashtun mothers have a defining position and hold in their family and are revered a lot. One of my old-aged respondents-Naeema Bibi, married, a homemaker, living in a joint family system from Karak shared her thoughts and experiences being a mother. She was of the view that mothers have a lot of respect and dignity in Pashtun society. She stated:

*Pashtun women especially mothers have a lot of respect in the family and all the domestic matters are under the control of the mother* (Personal Communication, 08-09-2019).

Young Pashtun women acclaimed the role of mothers in teaching basic values, principles, and practices to their children. Ways to honor elders have been defined as cherished values among Pashtuns. Such kind of socialization goes lifelong. Deliberately, mothers are involved in disseminating the notion of respect and status of grandparents to their children. One of the young adults-Nudrat, single, educated, living in a joint family from Karak discussed the role of the mother in defining and teaching basic values to their children. She was of the view that her mother told and retold about the respect and status of elders to the extent that now they considered certain values in their genes. Likewise, they don't even dare to be unheard and disregard the orders and practices of their elders. She stated:

*Our mother always told us to respect the elders and we have heard such things to the extent that now this is in our genes and we can never think of disrespecting or not obeying the orders of elders under whatsoever circumstances* (Personal Communication, 04-09-2019).

Undeniably, change is indispensable. Multiple determinants are involved in bringing change in a normative structure of society that includes innovations (inventions and discoveries), modern ICTs, and globalization (cluster of defining structural models, identities, and construction of reality), etc. The majority of the educated Pashtun women noted that Pashtun culture is also in the transitional phase. The relationship between different generations of Pashtun women is also changing with time. Probably technological advancement is one of the reasons behind such change.

They emphasized that Pashtun women are socialized—since their childhood to adopt and recognize their core cultural values and principles. Despite the fact, that it is challenging

for Pashtun mothers to deliver the traditional base and practices to their children, especially to daughters since globalization and ICTs are replacing their role as an agent of socialization. With modernity, parents of children are becoming more and more cautious and mindful of their kids. Pashtun mothers were of the view that their kids are getting out of their way and are leaving their traditional cultural context. By the same token, young Pashtun women were also concerned about the patterns and structures associated with modern ICTs and emerging trends. Likewise, they were mindful of the merits, demerits, and adoption of modern emerging trends without compromising their basic values, practices, and standards. One of the highly educated respondents- Dr. Rubab, a young adult, single, serving as an Assistant Professor from Charsadda highlighted the role of globalization and modern ICTs in the process of socialization and bringing change in Pashtun culture. She was of the view that the traditional and justified role of Pashtun mothers in the process of enculturation has been replaced by modern ICTs, but it is mandatory to critically analyze the patterns and models introduced in Pashtun society. She added that Pashtun mothers are very conscious about the socialization of their children in the wake of modern innovations and stated:

*Pashtun culture is in the process of change nowadays. The Pashtun women are told about their norms and values since their childhood and I think they can grow while following their normative structure. Globalization and ICTs have played a lot of roles in changing the Pashtun culture which I think will have a positive consequence for the betterment of society (Personal Communication, 27-11-2019).*

The interaction between different generations of Pashtun women has a significant role in the process of socialization. Primarily, the process of enculturation is directly linked to the frequency, intensity, and duration of interaction between different generations. The majority of the Pashtun women pinpointed that the younger generation is more inclined toward new models and patterns and is less concerned about their cultural values and customs. Pashtun women exalted and recalled their childhood memories with their grandparents and parents. Most of the respondents shared several accounts about the kind of relationship they have with their grandmothers (paternal and maternal). They highlighted that grandparents used to share their valued experiences and life stories with their grandchildren that help youngsters to groom their personalities in a particular social context. One of the middle-aged respondents-Dr. Amna, highly educated, single, and living in a joint family system from Charsadda shared the nature of her relationship with her grandparents. She showed gratitude for her grandmother's upbringing. She cherished the time spent with her grandmother and the endless love she received. She said that her grandmother used to tell remarkable stories, interests, and games of their childhood. Such stories and experiences contributed a lot to making sense of basic life problems (for grandchildren). She shared her thoughts:

*I had great childhood memories with my parents and grandparents. My grandmother used to tell us a lot of stories of their childhood and guide us through her life experiences. My family is quite educated, so we were having more opportunities to get the best education in our time (Personal Communication, 27-11-2019).*

Mothers in Pashtun society are having a very strong affiliation with their daughters. Many young daughters seek inspiration from their mothers even traditionally it was quite common in Pashtun societies that while there was a settlement of marriage proposal it was

said by the elders that if you have to see the mother of the bride be, you have seen the lady to be married. It is a very strong perception in the Pashtun society that daughters imitate their mothers. To be a modest and respectful woman is considered to be a key to women's identity in Pashtun culture. This is something that gets transferred from mothers to their daughters. While inquiring this from one of my respondents Khanam Bibi, an old-aged adult, a lifelong bachelor, from Swat, I received the following comments:

*My mother used to be my best friend she died last year. My mother was a very humble and hospitable woman. She was a very down-to-earth lady. I remember when I was a child my mother used to stitch clothes. Whenever any customer with low economic background visited her and was unable to offer payments, she stitched the suits free of cost for that customer. I have always found my mother involved in household activities and never observed her taking interest in outdoor activities and she was very disciplined (Personal Communication, 15-10-2019).*

Rehana, the old-aged adult, married from Karak shared similar views:

*We train our daughters to be future mothers and my daughter is my best friend. I had a beautiful and friendly relationship with my mother as well. I believe that all mothers are loving and caring towards their children. I had a very good relationship with my mother and she always used to share certain life stories and guide us to obey the norms and values of our society. She also guided us never to consider the domestic chores as a burden rather we were told to consider them as our social duty. My mother always was a good lady having strong moral conduct and character and we have always seen her respect our father and her elders we by default got such characteristics and I try my best to transfer these attributes to my kids and youngsters (Personal Communication, 04-09-2019).*

A strong bond was observed between the mothers and daughters. Even in some cases, mothers-in-law were treating their daughter-in-law in a very positive manner. While discussing the status of the mother-daughter relationship with one of my seniors most respondents (Adaka), she shared her thoughts:

*I had a very good relationship with my mother-in-law. She was a very humble lady. My mother was very loving too. She had never discriminated against us (siblings). My mother was very sentimental about my marriage. Due to immense sadness, she got sick and died in few months after my marriage (Personal Communication, 06-09-2019).*

When I discussed the mother-daughter relationship with an educated respondent Shama-a young adult, married, educated, from Charsadda, she replied that:

*My mother is my best friend. I am quite an independent lady in my education and career and thanks to my parents and my husband that who are very supportive of me (Personal Communication, 25-11-2019).*

As I have already discussed in the debate in the previous theme that mothers in the Pashtun family systems are guides to their daughters. A mother always shares her life experience (ups and downs) in both their parents' homes and their in-laws' homes with their daughters. So that they may have a smooth marital life. A respondent from Swat Farwa, a middle-aged adult, educated, shared that:

*My mother used to share her life experiences and relations with her in-laws. She spent a very good time at home. She is very satisfied with her in-laws because they used to live*



*happily with one another. I had a great time with my mother-in-law who died a year ago. She used to treat me like her own daughters. And even when I got married my mother back at my home asked me that now you are getting married so you should consider your mother and father-in-law just like your own mother and father and you should respect and serve them most (Personal Communication, 12-10-2019).*

Respecting the in-laws, particularly the father and mother-in-law is taught to a Pashtun daughter well before her marriage. I remembered that while I was getting married, I was told by my mother to treat my husband's parents just like my own. When I discussed with one of my interviewees Bibi Zainab- a middle-aged adult, married from Swat shared that:

*I have a beautiful relationship with my mother, and she always guided me to be a good Pashtun woman. Even whenever I came to my mother's home from my in-laws, she always guides me to be respectful towards my in-laws, particularly to my husband and his parents. There used to be a lot of restrictions for women but now women are excelling in almost all walks of life (Personal Communication, 21-10-2019).*

The awareness concerning different cultural and religious aspects is very much linked to changing Pashtun culture. Mothers are found to be quite caring and worried about their daughters. A change has been observed regarding the marriage proposal of daughters as Seema Gul, a young -aged adult, married from Swat state that:

*I have a loving relationship with my mother. My father is a strict person, but he loves us a lot. My mother is my guide and my love too. I am well connected to my mother since she is a loving lady. She sends me so many cooked things even after my marriage. Women were not having the freedom to choose their spouses during our age, but things are better now. Even our religion gives us the freedom to choose our spouse. I had a very good time with my mother back at my father's home, and she was my guide too. my grandmother used to share a lot of life stories which helped me a lot to lead my life (Personal Communication, 24-10-2019).*

A similar response has been shared by another respondent of Swat:

*I believe that mothers have a lot of roles to play since daughters usually imitate their mothers. My mother-in-law is a very strict woman but still, we manage to spend time with her. My son is married for the last two years and I try my best to maintain a loving and caring relationship with my daughter-in-law (Personal Communication, 19-10-2019).*

The above discussion shows that mothers and daughters are having a quite interactive relationship in Pashtun societies. This interaction yields fruitful results for transmitting certain Pashtun codes from the elder generation to the younger ones.

## **CONCLUSION**

Pashtun culture pays high tribute to *Mour* (mother) on all grounds. The elder Pashtun women have a dominant role in Pashtun family systems. Pashtun women were very humbled about the status of the mother—described the mother as a true blessing and gift from Almighty Allah. It has been revealed that young Pashtun women are usually found to follow the footsteps of their elders particularly their mothers. Mothers share their life histories just like an open book with their daughters during domestic chores. The lived experiences of mothers are guides to their daughters. Such experiences help daughters lead

respectful and dignified life. The world view of daughters is created through the lens of their mothers. A rare conflict has been observed in the relationship between mother and their daughter in Pashtun societies.

The majority of the educated Pashtun women explained that Pashtun culture is also in the transitional phase. The relationship between different generations of Pashtun women is also changing with time. The interaction between different generations of Pashtun women had a significant role in the process of socialization. Primarily, the process of enculturation is directly linked to the frequency, intensity, and duration of interaction between different generations. Pashtun women exalted and recalled their childhood memories with their grandparents and parents. They highlighted that grandparents used to share their valued experiences and life stories with their grandchildren that help youngsters to groom their personalities in a particular social context.

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