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Exploring Communication Gaps in Pakistani Desi Families: A Comparative Analysis of Joint and Nuclear Settings and How the Existence of a Communication Gap Impacts the Emotional Wellbeing of Members in Either Settings

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Rehman, M. (2024). *Exploring Communication Gaps in Pakistani Desi Families: A Comparative Analysis of Joint and Nuclear Settings and How the Existence of a Communication Gap Impacts the Emotional Wellbeing of Members in Either Settings* (Unpublished undergraduate project). Institute of Business Administration, Pakistan. Retrieved from <https://ir.iba.edu.pk/sslace/315>

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**Exploring Communication Gaps in Pakistani Desi Families: A Comparative Analysis of
Joint and Nuclear Settings and How the Existence of a Communication Gap Impacts
the Emotional Wellbeing of Members in Either Settings**

By

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Culminating Experience Research Project submitted to the Department of Social Sciences
and Liberal Arts in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Bachelor of
Science Social Sciences and Liberal Arts

Completed under the supervision of

Dr. Saima Bint e Saif

Institute of Business Administration

Karachi, Pakistan

15th Sept 2023

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking the Almighty, Allah for granting me the ability to complete this research in the allotted time. I am grateful to Him for guiding me towards the correct resources, ideas, and instilling the right words in me to formulate my thesis in a comprehensive manner. I would also like to thank my Parents who have supported me throughout the journey of writing this research, from understanding that I, sometimes, needed to prioritise this over family commitments, and to just making sure that I am working with a clear conscience and not overworking myself.

I am eternally grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Saima Binte Saif whose guidance, support, and knowledge has allowed me to conduct and write this research in a professional manner. Dr. Saima has shown great support and patience to me over the past months and her confidence in me and my research topic has only motivated me to work harder and produce a well thought and properly researched document.

My friends have been a huge support during the past few months and as we have gone through the journey of writing our theses, we have exchanged ideas, tips, and helped each other out with any problems that we would face. From stressing over deadlines together, to sending each other any resource we would find that we would think would help the other person's thesis, my friends have been a solid support. Lastly, I would like to thank the participants who volunteered to take part in my study and deemed my research topic interesting enough to give an input on. I would not be able to acquire the results that I did, without my participants' honest and open answers.

Abstract

Exploring Communication Gaps in Pakistani Desi Families: A Comparative Analysis of Joint and Nuclear Settings and How the Existence of a Communication Gap Impacts the Emotional Wellbeing of Members in Either Settings

By

Maria Rehman

Institute of Business Administration, 2024

Dr. Saima Bint e Saif

This qualitative research explores the existence and impact of communication gaps in Pakistani, desi families and compares joint and nuclear family systems by delving into the nuances of family dynamics. It explores how the presence of a communication gap impacts the emotional well-being of family members. It was aimed to uncover the manifestations of communication gaps, the comparison of that between joint and nuclear families, and how it has an emotional, psychological effect on family members. A sample of six young women were recruited and divided into two groups based on the family they belonged to i.e., joint or nuclear. Semi-structured interviews were carried out and their family dynamics in relation to communication gaps were studied as well as the emotional impact these gaps had. A thematic Analysis was conducted whereby six preconceived themes were applied regarding the existence of family communication gaps. The six themes identified were Communication settings and Context, Openness and Encouragement, Decision making and Autonomy, Handling disagreements and Conflicts, Encouragement of Self-Actualization, and

Relationship Quality and Communication gap. With the help of thematic analysis, further sub-themes were extracted under each theme. There is limited research on the communication gaps in families, specifically in Pakistan and this research aims to fill that gap as well as pave the way for future research to be conducted on this topic. It can promote better communication patterns within family and account for a better expression of emotions as well as emotional health of family members.

Key words: family communication, communication gap, joint family, nuclear family, emotional wellbeing

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Chapter 1- Introduction

Background

As of the year 2023, Pakistan has an upwards population of 241.49 million people and an annual growth rate of 2.55%. (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023) the number accounts for the rapid increase in population and hence, households containing 6 or more people from different generations. (*Central Intelligence Agency* 2023) Being a collectivist society, many households in Pakistan are based on extended families, living in joint family systems, where members of multiple generations live under the same roof, usually headed by a patriarch, the older male member of the family who has the most control over important decisions and finances. Factors such as globalisation, urbanisation and even generational shifts have resulted in a shift in family dynamics where individual families move out of joint family systems and form nuclear families where only children and their parents live under a roof.

Through my own observation, I believe this shift in trend can be due to various reasons like career opportunities, expansion of the family in terms of new births or marriages etc. In either setting, joint or nuclear, I believe there is an existence of communication gap. This gap can manifest in multiple forms such as assumptions, lack of active listening, emotional barriers, unspoken expectations, generational differences, power dynamics or lack of feedback to name a few. This communication gap can occur in familial discussions, dinner table conversations, conversations trying to resolve familial conflicts or even everyday discussions between different members of the family.

Rational

I have recently moved out of a joint family system to a nuclear family system. Having lived in a joint family, I have always witnessed and felt a communication gap in discussions and believed it to be a result of too many of my family members, of different ages, living in the same house. However, I was surprised to notice that even after moving out of a joint family and living with only my immediate family members (i.e., my parents and 2 unmarried elder siblings), I have noticed that the communication gap still exists. This led me to believe that the problem may not be the number of people having a discussion, but rather, the type of discussion being carried out (the parameters of communication gap that I have mentioned above are solely assumptions and I aim to research on whether these exist or not). Having been a part of both family systems, I have been affected by communication gaps in both settings (I will include how it has affected me personally in terms of my decision-making power, my perceived self-efficacy, and my perceived ability to take up on responsibilities). I believe this situation is not only applicable to me but millions of Pakistanis living in set family settings where they might face certain gaps in their family conversations. This topic comes into play, more so in this situation, due to the social stigmas attached to expressing emotions or being vulnerable in front of one's parents, out of fear of being judged or laughed at by other family members.

Research Question:

R 1: Identify key factors of communication gap and how they manifest within a joint and nuclear familial setting

R 2: Draw a comparison of how these manifestations of a communication gap differ for joint and nuclear family

R 3: Analyse the psychological, emotional, and relational consequences of the existence of a prolonged communication gap within a family

Key words: family communication, communication gap, joint family, nuclear family, emotional wellbeing

Key Terms

1. **Joint Family:** A consanguineal family unit that includes at least two or more couples, (where at least one couple is parents in law), and their children, share a common residence and are subject to common social, economic, and religious regulations.
2. **Nuclear family:** One couple (two parents) and their children but does not include extended family members such as aunts, uncles, grandparents.
3. **Conversation orientation:** Extent to which the families provide the grounds where family members are encouraged to act freely and comfortably in their interactions, discussions, and communications on a wide range of issues (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 1997)
4. **Conformity orientation:** Extent to which the families emphasise on the similarity of attitude, values, and beliefs (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 1997)
5. **Communication gap:** The communication gap happens due to different views and needs of children vs. parents. Research found that most of the time, it is the children that are not happy with the relationship – they feel pressured, not understood, or patronised. Parents, on the other hand, feel left out, not cared for, and unheard of by their children.
6. **Eudemonic well-being:** As opposed to hedonic well-being that focuses on the need for pleasure and avoidance of pain, eudemonic well-being is a relatively layered concept of measuring well-being over multiple factors like self-acceptance, positive relationships,

personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery and autonomy (Ryff and Singer, 2008)

Theoretical frameworks

I am using theoretical frameworks to support my research as it provided me with existing structure and foundation to understand and analyse advanced elements of quality research regarding interpersonal communication, family communication and dynamics, and emotional well-being. The established frameworks mentioned below have helped me hypothesise and formulate my research question in an objective lens. Moreover, in the light of existing theoretical frameworks, the findings of my study can be connected to larger bodies of literature and applied to a broader context.

Interpersonal communication - McCormack (2013)

The type of communication carried out in familial settings falls under interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication differs from regular communication on many levels and is defined by McCormack (2013) as a dynamic form of communication between two or more people where the messages are sent and received in a way that significantly impacts their emotions, thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and relationships. This form of communication is always changing and takes from the receiver hence is called transactional where the two people conversing are spontaneous and may allow their moods and emotions to lead the conversation. Information shared through verbal words, written words, nonverbal cues, or expressions are all the forms taken by interpersonal communication. Lastly, McCormack also highlights that the impact interpersonal communication produces is irreversible and has a lasting impact from the onset of the conversation to the later stages of the interaction. Therefore, Interpersonal communication in the context of familial conversations is important as it can bring about and promote change. This change can take

many forms from breaking negative generational patterns, resolving misunderstandings, forming deeper emotional bonds with family members. Interpersonal communication is relevant to my research topic as it is the main form of communication followed in family settings. Since the prolonged effect of this transactional communication can leave lasting effects on mental health, my study aims to decipher how the difference in such communication, in different family settings, can impact the family members' mental health in a positive or negative way.

Family Communications Patterns Theory- Fitzpatrick and Richie (1994)

The family communication patterns theory put forth by scholars Fitzpatrick and Richie (1994) is a framework on the communication patterns followed by different types of families. Communications within families vary based on the dynamic relationships of the family members. The interpretations of the interactions taking place within family systems can be of two types: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Families in conversation orientation have open discussions. Family members are comfortable in sharing their opinions, accept others' opinions and feelings, and can easily discuss uncomfortable topics too (Fitzpatrick and Ritchie 1994). Members of a family that is low in conversation orientation may hesitate to share their opinions within the family, would only discuss very limited topics that they and the other family members are comfortable with, and may keep their private and personal details to themselves (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2006).

Conformity orientation is the level to which communication patterns in the family adhere in the family's hierarchy and follow the natural order of generations and births within that family. Beliefs, values, and attitudes may differ intergenerationally and there are certain expectations associated with the relationship's family members share with each other. These can differ in the types of relationship too, parents to children, between couples, grandparents

to grandchildren etc., For example, children are expected to be obedient to their parents and parents always tend to hold an authority over the children, regardless of their age. Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994) believe conformity orientation is the level of prioritisation of obedience to parental authority and their decisions to avoid conflict. Members of Families with higher levels of conformity orientation will avoid conversations and behaviours that disturb the harmony between the family, especially if it accounts to conflicts due to disagreement with parents or anyone with authority (Koerner, 2006). Individuals from a family with low conformity orientation hold their own opinions and are open to disagree with other members of that family, if necessary.

The family communications patterns theory posits that families can be categorised into four main types, based on their levels of conversation and conformity orientation. The four types are: consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire.

Consensual families show high levels of both conversation and conformity orientation. Their priorities are balanced between encouraging open communication and adhering to traditional family systems and hierarchy (Fitzpatrick and Ritchie 1994). Communication taking place in consensual families is diverse in topics and transparent, and parents encourage children to openly discuss their feelings and express their opinions. However, they equally expect the traditional family values and hierarchy to be followed where while children may have opinions of their own, they must adhere to parental authority and share similar values over time. Consensual families may have a sensitive space where challenging conversations are encouraged and taking place but simultaneously, parental values are not compromised.

Pluralistic families are high in conversation orientation but low in conformity orientation. These types of families encourage freedom of speech the most and children feel

extremely comfortable about discussing broader topics with their parents. The parents may not necessarily agree with their children, but always hold their children's independent thoughts and opinions in high regard (Koerner, 2006).

Protective families have low levels of conversation orientation and higher levels of conformity orientation. In this type of family, obedience to parental authority is prioritised over members, especially children's, own opinions (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2006). Disagreeing to parental authority or holding an opinion of your own may give rise to conflicts in protective families, hence, children tend to avoid difficult and open conversations around their parents and hesitate before engaging in general conversations as well.

Laissez-faire families have low levels of both conversation and conformity orientation (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2006). Parents and children in Laissez-faire families tend to interact to a smaller extent, leading to a lack of transparency and candidness. Instead of partaking in difficult topics that may lead to conflict within the family unit, members of this family decide to not converse at all. Familial interactions can lead to either approving or unfavourable outcomes which disturb the whole family as a unit (Russel, 2013). Laissez-faire families avoid this by avoiding conversations altogether.

To understand communication gaps in familial conversations, it is important to investigate the communication patterns prominent within different types of families: consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire. By categorising families into these four types, we can understand how and why a communication gap may exist and lead to problems like loneliness, stress, or emotional detachment from other family members to name a few. For the purpose of this research, I will be focusing on the conversation and conformity orientation and how it impacts the family dynamics while eventually having an effect on its member's emotional well-being.

Eudemonic well-being – Ryff & Singer (2008)

Mental and psychological well-being can be categorised into two parts, Hedonic and eudemonic well-being (Ryff and Singer, 2008). Hedonism is primarily concerned with the maximisation of pleasure and minimization of pain as it is relatively short-term satisfaction over seemingly tangible things like senses. On the other hand, Eudemonism is derived from Aristotelian philosophy which emphasises on the deeper sense of self-realisation through individual growth, self-actualization, and living in agreement to one's true self, principles, and identity. It is derived from recognizing one's innate potential and living a profound life. According to Ryff and Singer (2008), Eudemonism can be categorised into six distinctions: self- acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relationships, personal growth, life purpose, and autonomy.

In eudemonic well-being, self-acceptance involves having an optimistic approach towards yourself and recognizing as well as embracing the fact that an individual's personality is multi-layered, consisting of both, positive as well as negative traits. In the context of mental and emotional well-being, self-acceptance plays a significant role in personal development. Through my research, I aim to touch upon themes of self-acceptance in the context of family communication like handling criticism or receiving and comprehending feedback from family members.

Environmental mastery is the ability to manage oneself as well as the environment in a balanced way by maximising your potential on opportunities that align with one's surroundings as well as their inner values. Ryff and Singer emphasise on the importance of environmental mastery and its effect on mental health as it allows individuals to feel in control of themselves and their surroundings by taking charge of their lives and feeling competent. Environmental mastery is especially relevant to the context of my research

question because communication in a familial environment can act as a support system or even a barrier to an individual managing daily tasks.

To reach the full potential of positive emotional well-being, it is important that one focuses on the quality of relationships they have with the people surrounding them.

Eudemonism emphasises on the quality of relationships, with family members in this case, as being meaningful and supportive. Through the interviews of this research, I will investigate how the essence of positive relationships with family members can prove to be a source of emotional support, especially during times of conflict.

Personal growth or working towards achieving self-realisation to reach one's full potential, is a dynamic process which can be completed by constantly improving oneself and accepting new experiences (Ryff and Singer, 2008). In terms of well-being, someone striving for personal growth will make an active effort to step out of their comfort zone by seeking new challenges and prospects to evolve themselves into a progressive individual. In the context of my research question, family acting as an environment for the development of personal growth is a crucial theme that I aim to cater to.

Ryff's research indicates that individuals who believe that their lives have a purpose and are meaningful, are more likely to be psychologically well (2008). Hence, having a purpose in life acts like an essential indicator of eudemonic well-being. It is of utmost importance for a person to find meaning in their life and have the adequate encouragement from their family members to achieve that purpose. Through my interviews, I aim to decipher whether the participants consider their family to be a source of encouragement to achieve their life's purpose, through family communication.

Lastly, Autonomy, according to Ryff and Singer, is an individual's ability to make their independent choices and base their behaviours and decisions over personal expectations

rather than any external standards. Autonomy accounts for self-determinism and independence, both being a crucial element of eudemonic well-being. In the context of Pakistani families, independence in terms of decision making can vary in different family settings. I aim to see the level of independence and autonomy individuals hold in different types of family settings and if their autonomy is not respected by family members in any way.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Family Communication Patterns and Mental Health

Zarnaghash et al. conducted a study titled "The Relationship Between Family Communication Patterns and Mental Health" (Zarnaghash et al. ,2012) to analyse the relationship between family communication patterns and Mental health and explored how various family communication patterns, especially the conversation and conformity orientation (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2006) affect the mental health of adolescents. The research shed light on the importance of family communication and psychological well-being.

It is a descriptive, correlational study design that consisted of a sample of 114 high school students based in Shiraz, Iran. The sample was generated through cluster sampling from three different high schools and the researchers used the Family Communications Patterns Questionnaire, which was developed by Fitzpatrick and Richie, based on their family communications patterns theory in (1994). To assess the psychological well-being variable, the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) was used (Goldberg, 1972). Data was analysed using regression analysis and Pearson correlation to determine the intensity and direction of relationships between variables. The results indicated a positive relationship between mental health and family communication patterns. The researchers implied that Conversation orientation is a positive predictor of mental health and that families which converse in open, honest, and frequent communication, tend to have members with better mental health. The results also showed that the Conformity orientation had no significant effect on mental health and adherence to family norms and values did not necessarily suggest better psychological well-being.

The first limitation of this study is that it is based in Shiraz, Iran and hence, its results cannot be applied to the Pakistani concept which is what my study is focused on. It is quantitative research only analysing the correlation between variables. Meanwhile, I have conducted an in-depth thematic analysis which has given me better insights into the minute details of everyday lives of people living in different family settings. Moreover, I look at the broader context and examine both, joint and nuclear families in the Pakistani, desi context which provides a thorough understanding of family communication across different living arrangements. Zarnaghsh's study focuses too narrowly on adolescents and overlooks the older age group that my study caters to. The age group of my target sample is older and mature in age which allows them to comprehend as well as tackle communication gaps in a better way. Lastly, This study used the General health questionnaire, meanwhile I used the Eudemonic well-being framework and the Questionnaire for Eudemonic Well-being (Ryff and Singer, 2008) which provides an expanded view on emotional well-being across different dimensions. By addressing these limitations, my research has the potential to provide significantly towards the literature associated with family communication in the Pakistani context.

Family Communication and Family System as the Predictors of Family Satisfaction

The study, "Family Communication and Family System as the Predictors of Family Satisfaction in Adolescents" by Aneesa Akhlaq, Najma Iqbal Malik, and Noreen Aslam Khan (2012) investigated the role of joint and nuclear family systems and communications in predicting family satisfaction between adolescents in Pakistan. It emphasised on the need for positive communication during the adolescent stage as they go through major biological and emotional transitions.

The study follows a survey research design with a sample of 120 adolescents recruited through purposive sampling. 60 adolescents from joint and 60 adolescents from nuclear families, aged 14-19 years were equally divided between boys and girls. A criterion was set to select the participants e.g., their education level must be up until matric, and they must be living in either a joint or nuclear family. The study uses three instruments to collect its data. The first being, a demographic form which collected their basic information. The second was the Family Communication Scale (FCS) which measured the quality of family communication. The last instrument used was the Family Satisfaction Scale (FSS) that measured the level of satisfaction within the family. The data collected from these instruments was analysed with the help of SPSS as correlation and multiple regression analysis were conducted to analyse the relationship between family systems, family communication, and family satisfaction. A sample of a T-test was also performed to compare the results between nuclear and joint family systems. The results of this study indicated that there was a strong positive relationship between family communication and family satisfaction among adolescents but family setting (being joint or nuclear) was not an important predictor for family satisfaction. In other words, a communication gap was observed in both types of families, joint and nuclear.

The first limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design which makes it difficult to establish a causal relationship between the variables, family communication, satisfaction, and system. Not only does my study overcome this limitation by keeping a qualitative approach where I ask participants about their lived experiences in a more in-depth way, I also focus on a different age group than adolescents.

The Psychological Well-being Among Joint and Nuclear Families

This study, "The Psychological Well-being Among Joint and Nuclear Families: A Comparative Study" by Ramesh O. Prajapati (2013) explores the difference of psychological well-being of people living in different family settings i.e., joint and nuclear. It is based in India where urbanisation and an increase in industrialization has accounted for a shift in family trends and an increasing number of joint families have transitioned into nuclear families. By comparing the experiences of people living in joint and nuclear families, this study explores their psychological well-being.

A quantitative research design was employed, and a sample of 200 individuals from the Ahmedabad district of India were selected randomly. It consisted of both, married and unmarried participants and the number of participants from each family setting were unequally divided where 111 individuals lived in a nuclear family while 89 individuals lived in a joint family system. A personal datasheet was administered for basic demographic information, after which, a Psychological Well-Being Scale was administered. It was developed by Bhogle and Prakash in 1995 and consists of 28 "yes" / "no" items. The results were procured through t-tests that compared the scores of psychological well-being between the two different groups, nuclear/joint families, and married/unmarried participants.

The results of this study indicated that there was no significant difference in psychological well-being of individuals coming from either type of family setting. I believe the results to be the same for my study as well, i.e., I believe that a communication gap exists between both, nuclear and joint families and while the manifestations of that gap may differ, it surely has an impact on the emotional well-being of its family members. The mean psychological well-being scores for this study were 17.11 for joint families and 18.02 for nuclear. The t-value was 1.61, not significant to the 0.05 level. Similarly, there was no

significant difference in the psychological well-being of married and unmarried people (mean score 17.83 and 17.33 respectively, t-value 0.87, not significant to 0.05 level). Overall, the study indicated that family structure (nuclear/joint) and marital status (unmarried/married) do not have an important effect on the individual's psychological well-being.

Prajapati's study had various limitations which my research covers. Firstly, this study was conducted on a sample of 200 participants, all hailing from Ahmedabad. The results for it are not applicable to Pakistani society. Moreover, the research design used a basic, fairly simple and straightforward yes/no scale which might have not truly depicted the nuanced factors of psychological well-being. I have used the Questionnaire for Eudemonic Well-being to draft my interview questions as it covers psychological well-being on multiple aspects, making it a better tool to measure emotional and psychological well-being. This study also lacks other potential factors that can influence psychological well-being for example, politics, religion, conflicts etc., which I have covered in this research through the interview questions. The research is also cross-sectional as it requires the participant to reflect on their psychological well-being at one point in their life, living in one family setting i.e., either joint or nuclear. However, in my sample, I have included two participants who have transitioned from joint to nuclear family and vice versa. Including their point of view has allowed for an in-depth analysis of family structure and how much it really influences an individual's emotional well-being over a certain period.

Quality of life and Family Systems

With the rise of nuclear families and the debate over the type of life joint and nuclear families provide, Researchers, Fahad Saqib Lodhi et al. decided to conduct a study titled, "Factors Associated with Quality of Life Among Joint and Nuclear Families: A Population-Based Study". The study employed a cross-sectional design, conducted across all 52 Union

Councils of District Abbottabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Over a period of six months, March through August, cluster sampling technique was used to select 2,063 participants hailing from either type of families, joint and nuclear. Out of the total sample, 51% of participants were from joint families and 49% were from nuclear families. The data was collected via the Urdu version of the World Health Organization Quality of Life Questionnaire-Brief Version (WHOQOL – BREF) (2020) which measures quality of life over four dimensions: physical, psychological, social relationships and environmental. Two additional questionnaires were also administered that gathered demographic data and social capital data of the participants through Demographic questionnaire and World Bank's Social Capital Integrated Questionnaire (SC-IQ) (2004) respectively. Univariate and multivariate analyses were used to explore association between sociodemographic variables and quality of life in both family systems.

The results of this study found poor quality of life due to rural settings, among the female gender, older generation, living with comorbidities, belonging to a lower socioeconomic background in both joint and nuclear family systems. On the other hand, higher socio-economic status, males, living in urban settings, with greater social capital had better quality of life scores. Moreover, the results also indicated that individuals with better social capital and living in urban settings had better quality of life, regardless of the type of family they lived in.

While this study had multiple limitations, samples being derived from a single geographic location, using a cross-sectional design that does not account for the temporal changes in quality of life over time, there is one limitation that is being directly filled in my research. The researchers did not include the potential variables of family dynamics, and interpersonal relationships between joint and nuclear family systems, in depth. The layered

nuances of family communication and how it differs in joint and nuclear families, and how that impacts the Quality of life, eventually the psychological well-being was not covered. My research aims to focus on these nuances of family communication and how it differs in joint and nuclear settings and how the existence of a communication gap impacts emotional well-being, particularly in the context of Pakistani desi families.

Chapter 3- Methodology

For this study, I conducted a total of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with six participants who were meticulously chosen only after meeting a specific criterion at the time of participant recruitment. The interviews were online as it was the most convenient and efficient way to maintain reliability along all interviews. Moreover, the interview questions I had formulated were based on family relationships, communication gaps, etc., which I believed may be topics that my interviewer might hesitate in touching upon in their own homes, with the knowledge of their family members. With the convenience of an online interview, I believe my participants were at a better, more comfortable headspace where they could be as open with their answers as they wished.

Context

During the early stages of my study, when I was deciding on my target audience and sample, I knew I needed to choose a single gender for all my participants so as to maintain reliability within my findings as different genders have different lived experiences, both, in and out of family settings. I chose to target women as my sample because

I focused on young women, university undergraduate students living in Karachi. Staying within one city allowed me to ensure that the lived experiences of my participants would be somewhat like each other's. during the online interviews, I maintained neutrality by conducting them in English,

The choice of conducting qualitative research was solely due to my own interest in it. I appreciate details, an in-depth insight regarding new findings and this research gave me the opportunity to do just that. Being a girl myself who falls in the same age bracket as my sample, I understand the nuances of family communications and how it affects my gender

and generation. Especially within Pakistani households where major things can go unsaid while many minor things escalate to a major level. There was not much qualitative research conducted to this specific issue which is why I chose to do it.

Sampling criteria:

Sampling criteria was as follows:

- Unmarried women aged 18-25 years
- Living in Karachi
- Enrolled in or completed a university undergraduate program
- Must be living in nuclear or joint family
- Must be unemployed

Since this is comparative research, I interviewed 2 young women who lived in a joint family, 2 who lived in a nuclear family, and 2 who had recently transitioned from either family setting to the other (1 each from joint to nuclear and vice versa).

The criteria of each type of family setting were as follows:

- **Nuclear family:** One couple (two parents) and their children, sharing a common residence
- **Joint Family:** A family unit that includes at least two or more couples, (where at least one couple is parents in law), and their children, share a common residence
- **Transitioned family:** must have shifted from either joint to nuclear or nuclear to joint in the past 5 years

The choice of keeping transitioned family participants was intentional. These participants, having lived in both types of family settings, could provide better insights regarding if and how their family communication has changed with the change in their family setting. Ensuring the participants met the above criteria was crucial for the validity of the findings to effectively compare the difference in family communication of joint and nuclear families.

Sampling technique:

Since my target sample did not need to have very specific factors, I used convenience and snowball sampling to procure my sample. Being an avid social media user, I have most of my university colleagues added on social media sites like Instagram and Facebook. I uploaded my google form (Appendix A) along with a post message (Appendix B) which I used as a recruitment tool on my Instagram where multiple people signed up to be a part of my study. Although I highlighted the sample criteria on the form to attract interested participants, I did not mention the specific details of the criteria e.g., “must be living with family for x number of years”. This confirmed that I got an increasing number of signups after which, I decided after looking at their information, who I wanted to include in my study. Moreover, I circulated the form on platforms like WhatsApp and relied on shared WhatsApp groups like ‘SSLA Class of 2024’. I also forwarded the message and the form to my other friends from different universities who then forwarded it to their friends, allowing my recruitment tool to reach a wider audience.

Data:

Data was collected through a total of 6 interviews which were conducted online, via Zoom. It was up to the participant if they wanted to switch on their camera. I devised the interview brief (Appendix C) with the help of existing questionnaires based

on present theoretical frameworks related to my study. However, the two questionnaires I used were adjusted based on my research question.

The first questionnaire I used was the Revised Family Communication Pattern Instrument: Children's version (RFCP) (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002) (Appendix D). It is a questionnaire with 26- Likert type items which evaluate the two factors of family communication: Conversation orientation and Conformity orientation. The questionnaire is divided into two parts, where each part has questions for either the parents to answer or the children. For the benefit of my study, I only used the items in the Children's version to formulate my interview questions.

Following are some of the questions I formulated with the help of RFCP.

Conversation orientation:

- How often does your family discuss controversial topics such as politics and religion? Can you describe a recent conversation on one of these topics?
- Do your parents encourage you to challenge their ideas and beliefs? How do they respond when you do so?

Conformity Orientation:

- In your family, who usually has the final say in matters? How are family rules communicated and enforced?
- How do your parents handle activities or decisions they do not approve of? Are there any topics they prefer not to discuss?

The second part of my research question explores emotional well-being and how it gets impacted with the presence of a communication gap. For this purpose, I used the Questionnaire for Eudemonic Well-Being (Appendix E) by Waterman et al. (2010). It is composed of items that are categorically chosen based on the six standards of eudemonic

well-being: (1) Self-discovery, (2) perceived development of your best potential, (3) a sense of purpose and meaning of your life, (4) investment of significant effort in pursuit of excellence, (5) intense involvement in activities, and (6) enjoyment of activities as personally expressive. After going over the QEWB myself, I derived major themes within its items that I believed I could apply to my interview questions in the context of my research. I derived the themes (1) self-acceptance, (2) environmental mastery, (3) positive relationship, (4) personal growth, (5) life purpose, and (6) autonomy.

Following are some of the questions I formulated with the help of RFCP.

- How well do you feel you manage your daily responsibilities and environment within your family? Do you find that communication gaps hinder your ability to control your environment effectively?
- When conflicts arise in your family, how are they usually resolved? Do you feel that communication gaps hinder the development of positive relationships?
- In what ways does your family encourage you to pursue your life's purpose? Are there communication barriers that prevent you from fully discussing your aspirations?

Apart from the two questionnaires, I used my own understanding of a communication gap in terms of lack of emotional conversations, misunderstandings, lack of active listening, conflicts, etc., and added these dimensions to the questions I had formulated. Initially, I drafted a total of about thirty-six questions divided on the themes of conversation orientation, conformity orientation, eudemonic well-being, and communication gap. However, to keep my interviews short and concise, I filtered out fifteen finalised interview questions, all of which were followed by a secondary question for better insights. The two questionnaires I

used, the RFCP and the QEWB were used for the formulation of the primary question and the element of a communication gap, in relation to the primary question was added. For example:

- In what ways does your family encourage you to pursue your life's purpose? Are there communication barriers that prevent you from fully discussing your aspirations?

Process (Participant's experience)

The participants came across my google form posted by me on my social media and circulated via WhatsApp, or they were reached out by any of my friends/people who knew that the participant met the said criteria. After they filled the google form, I had their basic information like age demographics, education levels, family settings and email plus contact number.

After choosing my sample, I reached out to each participant via WhatsApp on the contact number they had provided. I chose to contact them on WhatsApp rather than emailing because I believe that the age demographic of my sample spends a good amount of their time on WhatsApp and are likely to reply more promptly as compared to email. On WhatsApp, I asked them about their availability for an online interview via zoom and after mutually deciding on a date and time, I sent them a confirmation email of the said date and time of the interview. Moreover, I messaged them on the decided day of the interview to remind them and emailed them the participant information sheet (Appendix F) and consent form (Appendix G) which they filled and emailed back to me. Once that was done, I shared the link to the online zoom meeting with them via WhatsApp.

Pilot interview:

I conducted one pilot interview and had to make slight changes to my procedure after it. First, I had aimed that my interview will take anywhere between 50 minutes to one hour.

However, I realised after the pilot that the interview could be conducted within thirty minutes or a little over that based on the interview brief, I had devised. Secondly, after conducting the pilot, I came across some issues with the audio recording of the pilot interview on zoom. I realised it is better to have a copy of the audio recording of the interview as a back-up. For my main interviews, I made sure to record them on my computer on zoom as well as on my phone as a voice recording.

Analysis:

The data collected was analysed using Braun and Clark's (2006) six-step model of thematic analysis where I used both, inductive, overarching themes and divided them into sub-themes, allowing for an inductive and deductive analysis. Apart from preconceived themes, the data provided me with newer insights which were identified during the deductive analysis. After closely studying the interview transcriptions of all the participants and keeping the questionnaires I used to formulate my interview questions, Revised Family Communication Patterns Questionnaire (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002) and the Questionnaire for Eudemonic Well-Being (Waterman et al. 2010), I formulated a total of six pre-decided themes.

The six themes were: 1) Communication settings and Context, 2) Openness and Encouragement, 3) Decision-Making and Autonomy, 4) Handling Disagreements and Conflicts, 5) Encouragement of Self- Actualization 6) Relationship Quality and Communication gaps. Using the Braun and Clark's method of deductive analysis, I identified common themes under these overarching themes to produce sub-themes

Since all my interviews were conducted in English, I did not have to translate the data. However, there were some phrases of Urdu that the participants had used which I made sure to translate while transcribing my primary data. I organised the Participants into two

groups; Joint and Nuclear, with each group having 3 participants (J1, J2, J3 and N1, N2, N3) from that family setting, out of which, one of each group had recently transitioned into that family system in the past five years from the other family system (J3, and N3). Going back and forth with the data, and transcribing all the interviews manually, really allowed me to familiarise myself with the data which eventually helped me in conducting the thematic analysis.

For the Thematic Analysis, I used a free version of a coding software called Delve (Alex Limpaecher and LaiYee Ho, 2018). (Appendix H) where I uploaded the transcriptions of the interviews I conducted. The software allowed me to go back and forth between the transcriptions and highlight any patterns that were common into specific codes. I uploaded the seven overarching themes on Delve and associated the common codes under the themes that I deemed fit for that code. Next, I grouped similar codes under the existing themes to produce sub-themes. In this way, I could recognize potential patterns and newer insights from the data. Some codes had to be deleted since they were not so presently common, and some had to be added to refine the existing themes.

Since this is a comparative analysis, I approached both the groups, J and N in a similar manner since their questions were the same, however, I did specifically highlight and try to find common patterns amongst the groups as well as between the groups which will be explained later under the 'Results and Discussion' chapter. This chapter provided a detailed and comparative thematic analysis of the manifestations of communication gaps in familial conversations and their impact on the emotional well-being of its members.

Chapter 4- Ethics

Informed consent

My points of contact with the participants prior to the interviews were the google form and text message I circulated, both of which clearly communicated what my research was based on and the factors of family communication that can impact emotional well-being. The google form required the participants to accept the statement at the end of it which said, *“By submitting this form, I acknowledge that I consent voluntarily to participate, with the understanding that my responses will be recorded and used for research purposes.”*

I formed a consent form (Appendix G) and a participant information sheet (Appendix F) which I shared with the participants prior to the interview. These documents were shared online via email and the participants signed and emailed them back to me. While I did not use a debriefing form, I asked them how they felt at the end of the interview and if they had any sort of confusions or negative feelings. I asked for their permission to record the interview and let them know that I appreciate their honest and elaborate answers and their input is going to help me draft some deep insights regarding family communication and how it can impact emotional well-being in different family settings.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary and participants signed up for it on their own free will. They consented to being interviewed and audio recorded and their answers to be used for research purposes. Moreover, I made sure to let them know at the start of the interview that if, at any point during the interview, they felt uneasy with any question, or did not feel comfortable with anything, they had a right to withdraw and refuse to continue the interview.

Data protection & Confidentiality

At the start of the interviews, I asked for their permission to audio record the interview on zoom which was the online platform I used to conduct interviews. After they gave me their consent, I asked for their consent to record it on my phone as a backup but reassured them that both, my laptop and my phone, are password protected, which means only I have access to them. I made sure to use their initials as point of reference during the analysis, so their identities are kept private, and their answers are kept confidential.

Limitations

While I mostly got told by the participants that they were intrigued by my research topic and resonated with the presence of communication gap in their families, they did hesitate to think the topic was quite personal and did not believe in themselves to give honest, unbiased answers. It is only after I explained to them the research topic and the factors present within it, they realised that being uncomfortable with such conversations is more so the reason why they should volunteer to take part in my study and play a part in changing the current dynamics of family communication and its gaps.

With regards to the sample recruitment, I had to rely on my friends and contacts to recruit participants which did not have a great yield. While all my participants met the required criteria, I still would have liked a bigger pool of volunteers to choose from to make the sample even more generalizable.

Chapter 5- Results and Discussion

Organization of Data for Thematic Analysis

This chapter is a combined section for the results obtained through the interviews and the analysis discussed. The two groups of participants, coming from either type of families, were associated with the initials J1, J2, J3 for joint families and N1, N2, N3, for nuclear families where J3 and N3 are associated with participants who have recently transitioned families. As this is a qualitative analysis, I will not be generalising each statement to the whole group, hence the whole family system. The comparative analysis is mainly to identify the difference in the insights and experiences of participants coming from different family systems.

Communication Settings and Context

The communication within families, the family members involved, the content of the topics being discussed as well as the context in which they are being discussed is extremely significant to the research topic. This theme allows us to identify the different manifestations of communication within families and the potential difference in context of said communication.

Setting for Family Communication

This sub-theme mainly identifies the places within family households, where major or most of the family communication takes place. Since Pakistani, desi families have households based on collectivist settings, many places in the house are shared by the whole family, regardless of the type of family: joint or nuclear. Moreover, there are instances where families sit together and discuss certain important things.

This sub-theme majorly explores where and when most of the family communication takes place for our participants. The most common and recurring place and time for all the participants was after dinner, at the dinner table.

“I think that is all done on the dinner table. Like, you know, like, all kinds of discussions take place on the dinner table “ - J2

“Yeah, it's mostly on the dinner table.” – N2

Since the dinner table is commonplace for all family members, that is when most family communication takes place, in the presence of all family members. This is further reinforced by participants who mention that their family conversations take place in the lounge as well, which is also a common place to occupy. Another pattern I observed was that participants from nuclear families shared conversation with their parents and family members, specifically on the weekends when everyone has a “*fresh mind*”.

“So, we do talk a lot about this stuff but usually on the weekend, everybody is a fresh mind.”-

N1

“So usually on the weekends, my dad would just call us to his home if he's missing us.”- N3

This sub-theme mainly sets the tone for the type of communication that I will be talking about for most of the analysis as this is the type of communication that my participants experience the most. This communication is open to most, if not all, family members.

Types of Topics Discussed

Along with the frequency of conversations, it is imperative to identify the common topics that surface during family communication as they significantly make-up the whole interaction between the family members.

It was observed through the interviews that the most common topics that participants from both groups experience revolve around their careers, life choices, future, marriage, religion, politics and daily life. Some of these discussions are subjected to gendered expectations, regardless of their context. For instance, N3 mentioned how the recent shift in her life, from being a student to potentially having a career has influenced the communication between her and her parents.

“I would say regularly because I am graduating soon. And obviously that's a discussion. I'm a girl. So what am I doing with my career? What am I doing with my life? Like when am I getting married? How is my marriage, my career and master's going to align? So I feel like those discussions are almost bi-weekly.” N3

She mentions how conversations regarding her marriage have become more common now that she has graduated. This is also common to N1 who also talks about how the topic of marriage comes up in her family, as well as her extended families and relatives, indicating an involvement of extended family members, even though the participant lives in a nuclear family. J3 also mentioned how the topic of her family surfaces in family discussions in a humorous way. Gendered conversations, specific to my sample, which is young, single women, is common. Regardless of the type of family they come from, the participants have to deal with gendered discourse around marriage and traditional gender roles on a frequent basis.

Conversations around career and future plans are also common between both groups, as well as less frequent discussions around religion and politics. One thing I observed during all the interviews was that all the participants mainly talked about their career, life choices, future, marriage, religion, politics etc. as their top-of-mind recall. They did not delve deeper or

confirm that rather interpersonal, emotionally expressive conversations take place on a regular basis. This indicates a lack of emotional expression in familial conversations, resulting in a potential communication gap in the future.

Openness and Encouragement

This theme explores the different ways people communicate in families, especially following a traditional family hierarchy where the parents have the upper hand over their children and may or may not encourage other family members to engage in open conversation. Similar to the Consensual families (Fitzpatrick and Ritchie 1994), parents encourage children to voice their opinions and take part in family discussions, while also expecting them to follow the traditionally set rules and hierarchy within the family

Encouragement of Open dialogue

This theme focuses on how parents encourage their children to voice their concerns and take a part in family discussions. One theme that emerged was the parents' support or encouragement towards newer ideas is conditional to some extent. N1 says that even if she talks to her parents about a concept that is foreign to them, and potentially goes against their beliefs, they would be open to listening to that but would only “*listen to a certain point*”. She further adds that even though her parents have allowed her to “speak her mind” from a young age, which makes it easy for her to have difficult conversations with her parents and voice any conflict of opinions which they do listen to but may not necessarily understand her perspective. On other instances, J2 also emphasised on how her parents have become more receptive to her engaging in open conversations, now that she has reached an older age. This was not the case for when she was younger. N3, who had previously lived in a joint family

system, also agreed to the fact that her parents understand her in a better way now, as compared to the past.

“So I think since moving into a new family system, it has only positively impacted because if I do go to my parents with certain stuff now, they're more willing to understand me.”- N3

Based on previous literature, we know that parents who encourage open communication with their children, at an early age i.e., adolescence, do tend to form a better bond with their children in terms of understanding their children's' motivations, better and prosocial behaviours, and preventing behavioural difficulties (Hollman et al., 2016). This in turn, also reflects on their academics and allows them to perform better academically, especially if they engage in better communication regarding their academics with their parents (Shochet et al., 2007; Caro, 2011). It is evident that while parents, from both family systems, encourage open communication between them and their children, they only allow it to reach a certain level which can have a long-term effect on how their children communicate within the family.

It was also noted that parents do not *'explicitly'* encourage children to challenge their beliefs, disagree, or voice their concerns and opinions.

“No, they do not encourage me. They discourage me for saying that maybe I'm turning into a rebel”- N2

“they don't explicitly encourage me to have thoughts about this”- N1

“They wouldn't want me, like, they didn't want me to challenge or anything”- J2

This indicates that while parents are open to newer ideas, they are still not ready to encourage it in an apparent manner. However, the reception of newer ideas differs between parents as mothers were more open towards newer conversations on differing beliefs and values. Participants from both family systems confirmed that they are more comfortable talking to their mother about certain topics, as compared to their father.

“if I tell her, mom, you shouldn't have said that, she will understand, she will try to work on it, if I explain it rationally. But that's not the case with my dad. I mean, what happens with him is that he's just like that.”- J1

“ I think my mom's still more receptive than my father.”- N1

The role of Maternal responsiveness is highlighted here and supported by past research that communication with mothers that includes active listening, feedback, and empathetic exchange of words, significantly allows the children to be more comfortable talking to their mothers, as compared to their fathers who often are perceived to be less emotionally available (Ijeoma, 2022). With frequent communication that includes empathy and active listening, allows children to have better self-esteem and an advanced sense of self-development in the future (Ijeoma, 2022).

Expression of Emotions and Needs

This sub – theme explores the expression of emotions and needs by the participants to their family members, specifically, their parents. It covers all the ways the participants might or might not be able to express and convey their emotions and appear vulnerable to their parents. After engaging with the primary data thoroughly, I found out that there was a lack of

emotional expression between both groups. Participants gave multiple reasons as to why they prefer not sharing their emotions and voicing their needs to their parents and these were reoccurring within both the groups.

One reason that emerged was that the expression of emotions and needs are influenced by childhood experiences. Adverse childhood experiences (ACE), which include instances like physical abuse, separation/divorce of parents, or humiliation by adults, to name a few, are positively related with an individual's likelihood to develop anxiety and depression (Landa-Blanco et al., 2024). It can lead to emotional trauma, impaired emotional regulation, and can impact how these children express emotions as adults. N3, who had previously lived in a joint family and had recently shifted to a nuclear family, confirmed how certain childhood experiences had been unpleasant due to some extended family members in the joint family.

“I feel like growing up as a child, I did not know it was exactly this, but I feel like while growing up in a joint family system, I felt like this a lot. I had certain negative experiences with my grandmother, where I felt like my parents did not understand my emotional needs and what I needed from them at that moment. I needed protection. I was a kid. I wanted more localization about the fact that I was not being treated right, but obviously because it was by the elders of the house, they didn't really provide me with the safety I needed. And they would often push me to just suppress what I was feeling and be a happy, smiley kid and respect the elders, even if the elders weren't treating me right. So I feel like that really impacted me in my childhood and obviously that stayed with me”- N3

The traditional, hierarchical structures of joint families significantly played a role in N3's childhood experiences with her elders and she expected her parents to support her. When they did not manage to provide her with that sense of security, she had to resort to herself in managing those feelings, either through suppression or dismissing her feelings entirely. She goes on to add that this has persisted over time as she has confided in her parents about certain things which have been brought up again by them in arguments which have made her feel unsafe to express her emotions again. However, N3 acknowledged that while certain experiences with her family regarding certain negative emotions have been present over time, she does acknowledge the fact that her communication with her parents has improved ever since she has shifted from a joint family system to a nuclear family system. Her family is still very close to her extended family as they live on the same street, the physical and relational distance has not changed much with the transition, which "*complicates things a bit*". This indicates the involvement of extended family members even if the space is not being shared with them physically, anymore.

Another common reason most participants gave for not being emotionally expressive with their parents was that they consider themselves to be slightly reserved due to their personality being a certain way. They prefer sitting with their own feelings first, trying to resolve their issues themselves, and then take some time to discuss their emotions with their parents, if they feel it is appropriate.

But I think it does take me some time to open up.- N1

I'm the sort of person who does not resort to people at my share- J3

I've never really, like, been someone who's expressive. - J2

This indicates personal struggles of the participants and their potential fear of appearing vulnerable in front of their family, which can be taken as a sign of weakness (Bariola, 2011). Encouragement of open communication and expression of all, positive and negative emotions, at an early age can significantly help individuals in being expressive of their needs and sharing how they feel as adults.

Participants also acknowledged the presence of a generation gap between their parents and themselves, regardless of their family system. However, participants from joint families had older siblings who were married and living with them. For example, J1 mentioned that there is a “*huge generation gap*” between her and her parents, especially since she is the youngest and her siblings are married so she “*can’t talk to them about every single emotion*”. J2 also shared this feeling and mentioned how her parents say that she is going to understand them once she reaches their age. J3 adds to this that since her parents have reached a certain age, there is no point in expecting them to change because they are set in their ways. If things do not go their way, there is always a chance of a potential emotional outburst from her parents’ side which gets “*projected*” on her, causing her mental stress. Participants from the nuclear families, however, did not have any married siblings living with them. In fact, N3 mentioned how she is the eldest so her parents are relatively younger, but she still feels that there are certain things she cannot talk to them about due to their age difference and the fact that they have lived a different life, with different experiences and so, have a different perspective of what they expect from her as opposed to what she expects of herself. N2 seconded this by agreeing that there is a “*difference of thought*” between her and her parents which exists due to a generational gap. While this generation gap is present in both types of families, it can be a significant reason why young women hesitate in sharing their feelings.

One thing I noticed in the theme was the fact that all participants resorted to justifying their lack of expression, as soon as they mentioned it. Either by mentioning how they have a certain personality where they do not open up easily, or that they feel the age gap between them, and their parents do not allow them to be that transparent. This indicates that these participants know that they should be expressive with their emotions but still do not feel fully comfortable doing so.

Decision Making and Autonomy

This theme explores the nuances of joint and nuclear family systems in the context of decision making and authority in traditional family settings. Since our data suggests that the conversations taking place do include decisions that are taken together as a family, the communication gaps between these conversations can greatly impact how the participants perceive their autonomy and believe their personal space is being respected.

Decision-Making Dynamics

This sub theme majorly focuses on familial decisions that are taken that are applied to all members of the family. It includes rules, regulations, communication of said rules, and unsaid expectations that the participants believe that their parents hold. Keeping the participants from the joint family in mind, we know that their families follow the traditional hierarchical family system where elder members of the family have more power than the younger ones and this power manifests in various ways e.g., division of housework, and even major decision making (Hu et al., 2016). A pattern was noticed in the responses of participants living in joint families, J1, J2, J3. They all confirmed that the major decisions of the family are taken by multiple family members as a combined effort. These can include

grandparents, or even older siblings of the parents. When decisions are taken by the elders, it does obtain a certain firmness which can sometimes have adverse effects on the younger members of the family. J1 mentions that rules and decisions regarding serious topics like religion are usually set by her father but mostly communicated by her mother to her and her siblings. J3 adds that similarly, the major decisions are taken by the older family members, in her case, her elder brothers who are “*breadwinners*” and her mother. However, she believes there is a “*lack of proper fixed communication channel*” which can imply that the power dynamics can be blurred in certain families.

For Nuclear families, it was noted that there was relatively more flexibility and the presence of autonomy of every family member during the decision-making process. N3, who has previously lived in a joint family system, explained how her grandparents and extended family members used to have a significant say in the family decisions which were taken by them collectively. Ever since she has moved, while she still lives rather close to her grandparents who are still a part of the decisions being taken, their involvement in every decision has decreased now that she lives in a nuclear family. Now, she engages with her parents in a more transparent manner, where both parties are receptive to what is being said. Her parents still play an important role in the decisions being taken, often, a discussion around it happens where she gets a chance to put forward her opinion as well. It may not be necessarily followed but it is always “*respected*”.

Additionally, N1 and N2 also share a rather similar approach where their personal decisions, such as education or career, are left mainly for them to decide. For example, N1 shared a particular instance regarding a time in her life when she was working while completing her undergraduate degree and said that she had full autonomy regarding the

decision to continue working on that job, on that career trajectory, or not. The feeling was shared by N2 who also mentioned that her family supports her career choices.

“even when I was doing a job during my university, they did say that it's up to you if you do that. Otherwise, there is no pressure from our side for you to do that job. So I think they have given me enough reign of my own life” – N1

“We are not forced to pursue a certain career. We are free to pursue whatever we like.” - N2

Nuclear families providing an increased flexibility in decision making and individual autonomy can account to a better sense of self-esteem and emotional well-being. These individuals are emotionally regulated in a better way and show signs of better social competence (Eisenberg et al., 2003).

Autonomy and Personal Space

This sub-theme revolves around the personal autonomy and sense of individuality the participants feel within their family context. It does not limit only to the personal decisions they take, but also explores factors like their boundaries and private, personal space, in the physical and temporal environment of their family.

After engaging with the primary data, it was noticed that the sense of autonomy and personal space is more frequently prevalent in nuclear families. While participants from both groups did believe they hold some autonomy and their boundaries are respected to some level, the sub-theme was relatively more recurring within participants living in nuclear family

systems. However, it is more likely to be present when the participants are vocal about their boundaries in a proper manner.

And it also helps to feel like my boundaries are respected if I enforce them in a proper way.- N3

I have to explicitly say, you know, just leave me alone for a while and give me my space and everything. So, then they do understand that- N1

I feel like I do have it on me, like when it comes to my decision. And it's not always that certain things are enforced upon me. But when they are enforced, I am like, I know for sure that it's not like I have to do that and there's nothing else. Like, I know I can argue, I know I can make my case, and I know I will be listened to if my case is strong enough. And I've seen so many times that my parents do change their mind if I say certain things to them. And they do come around and they, it's like, so I feel like I can take my own decisions.- N3

N3 makes a point about how her need to make her own decisions is respected by her parents if she approaches the matter in a proper manner. The apparent role of interpersonal communication is visible here since it can influence thoughts, beliefs, and feelings in the familial context to potentially bring about a change, McCormack (2013). When N3 communicated with her parents in a certain way, they understood her perspective in a much better way, and have also changed their decisions to accommodate her in a healthy manner, in the past. Participants of nuclear families share this feeling and acknowledge that the way they convey their boundaries and practise their autonomy, has a significant impact on their

communication dynamic with their parents and their parents are more receptive to their perspective, while also staying in line with the cultural and certain familial boundaries.

Joint families, on the other hand, have slight troubles regarding the concept of personal space. J1, J2 and J3, all shared that they struggle with finding their own space after certain negative conversations with their family due to lack of privacy. This makes it difficult for them to maintain emotional boundaries. For example, J1 mentioned that her room is close to her parents' room which makes it difficult for her to stay in it for prolonged time as someone is bound to cross her room which can get awkward. However, living in a safe neighbourhood allows her to go out for a walk on her own which clears her mind and helps her regulate her emotions. While this issue of the navigation of space is prevalent in Joint families, it is not completely absent from nuclear families. N3 explained how, even though she has her own room, she still occupies common places within the house with her parents and siblings. After certain negative experiences with them, running into each other can get uncomfortable.

We conclude that family environments in both family systems, and the navigation around common spaces of the house is inevitable. Not only is it necessary for the social development of individuals, but also plays a huge part in shaping the quality relationship and experiences between family members. Occupying that space in a healthy manner is pertinent to having an overall healthy family environment which is not easily disturbed by unpleasant conversations. When sharing spaces, it eventually gets easier for the participants to let go of certain things that were bothering them.

Autonomy within the family differs between family systems where joint families may have traditional hierarchical roles influencing the decision-making dynamics of the family, as

well as individual autonomy of family members. The pattern is slightly visible in nuclear families too, but can be managed properly if dealt with, in a healthier manner. The occupation of shared and personal spaces within the household is common in both family systems and participants from both systems can have awkward encounters with their family members after negative or emotionally draining conversations.

Handling Disagreements and Conflicts

Conflicts and disagreements are an integral part of family communication and impossible to avoid in interpersonal communications. Different family settings present different ways of navigation of conflict which have either positive or adverse reactions on family members, owing to good or bad emotional health.

Conflict Avoidance

Previous research shows that people avoid expressing their emotions to prevent conflicts from arising between them and their family members. In collectivist societies like Pakistan, where families live together under one household, and often follow the traditional familial hierarchy, disagreements can surface which are avoided by the family members as they can disturb the harmony of the household. However, when this avoidance towards expressing emotions to prevent conflict increases over time, individuals can become emotionally distant within their close relationships (Bariola, 2011).

Across the two types of families, I noticed that the participants were following a pattern while in a situation with conflict with their family. The participants entirely avoided certain topics or discussions that could potentially raise conflicts or arguments.

here's no rush to be getting married, and there's no rush to be getting your master's only by 25 and then getting married or stuff like that. So I feel like that just prevents me from talking to them because I'm like, what's the point? – N3

some other goals that I know that they wouldn't agree with, but I have and I already got an answer to it. I decided not to discuss it with them- j2

if I know that they won't agree to something then it doesn't matter to me. Even thinking about it is just a waste of time- J1

But there are a few things that, you know, you start thinking, okay, they won't, they just, no matter what I do, they won't get this. So I don't speak about those things. I don't, I try to avoid those things. I try to avoid those topics. And I try to deal with those particular things on my own- J1

However, there are exceptions to this too that are greatly influenced by the type of person you are. For example, J2 mentioned how she had become a “*confrontational person*” who always confronts the other person, especially in a family setting, to avoid any “*misunderstandings*”. “*talking it out*” really helps her in feeling better. This brings us to the second pattern I investigated i.e., conflict resolution.

Unresolved Conflicts

Long term suppression of emotions can potentially develop depression and anxiety in individuals. While the immediate short-term peace of avoiding conflict does provide a sense of relief, it can form multiple psychological and emotional regulatory issues over time

(Bariola, 2011). Lastly, suppressing issues to maintain relationship and household harmony allows issues to go unresolved, creating emotional barriers between family members.

N1 and N3 mentioned that disagreements regarding particular life decisions like marriage are always unpleasant and go unresolved. Sometimes unresolved conflicts can turn into silent treatments after which they eventually fade away but can surface in other arguments.

“I think a lot of times disagreements do not get resolved. it does creep up again and again but sometimes reaching middle ground is very difficult. They just like transition into some silent treatments”- N1

Another thing participants from the nuclear family emphasised on was that to resolve a conflict, a ‘middle ground’ must be reached, and it takes a combined effort from both parties to solve it. While disagreements are inevitable, the right communication between families can help in resolving conflicts. Often, a role of a mediator is also included who acts as a third party and mediates the argument between two family members. While this can be beneficial for many cases, it is not always the best route to solve communication issues as it is indirect communication and can create misunderstandings while also potentially disturbing family dynamics. N2 mentions that her older sister often acts as a mediator between her and her brother

“Alright, so let's say the conflict is between me and my brother so since there is a communication gap, we won't be communicating directly or face to face. There will always be a third person involved who is going to resolve our matters and that person is always my elder sister and it's like she's playing football where the ball keeps passing

from my brother to her, from her to me and then again the cycle repeats. So this is the way how we resolve our conflicts but never by having some conversation face to face because we can never have a, even if we try to have a face-to-face conversation, the conflict turns into a huge one. So yeah, a third party is always involved to resolve our conflicts. “- N2

N2 mentions how she ends up having a heated discussion with her brother if they have an argument over something which needs to be mediated by her elder sister. This feeling was shared by J1 who also mentioned that she does not discuss certain disagreements or resort to resolving them directly with her family members, for example with her dad. She prefers to communicate her issue to her mother who acts as a mediating force between the two. This indicates the lack of openness between certain family members. While it can produce a better outcome in terms of conflict resolution, it takes time to come about.

Both groups reported unresolved conflicts and acknowledged that there is a negative emotional experience caused by them, especially when they resurface in other future disagreements. While there was a presence of silent treatments and avoidance in nuclear families that led to frustrations, similar emotional responses were experienced by members of the joint family as well, eventually hindering healthy relationships within families.

Encouragement of Self-Actualization

This theme is based on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs which he identifies to be the highest level of psychological development (Maslow, 1971). It involves achieving one's full potential which can be highlighted through self-worth, personal growth, and achieving life's purpose in this research. Additionally, Ryff's research confirms that

individuals are more likely to be psychologically well off if they believe that they have a purpose in life to accomplish and that their self-worth is significant (2008). Hence, this theme was included in the analysis to understand and explore if and how participants have a sense of self-worth and believe that their life has a purpose, and how they navigate that belief in their family's context. Specifically, how does their family accept them as a person and encourage them towards personal growth to achieve their life's purpose.

Self-Worth Shaped by Family

This sub-theme explores the notions of family acceptance and communication and how it has an impact on an individual's perceived self-worth. Past research confirms that individuals who live in an environment where their family members understand them on a deeper level to the point that they feel heard and supported by their family members, those individuals report significantly better emotional well-being and higher levels of self-esteem (Miller et al., 2003).

The interviews conducted, highlighted the varying experiences of participants with their perceived self-worth and acceptance within the family and the role of communication over it. Particularly for Nuclear families, N3 mentioned how effective communication with her parents has positively impacted her self-worth to the point that she feels “*heard*” and “*understood*” by her parents. She acknowledged how better communication with her immediate family, after moving out of a joint family system to a nuclear family, has helped her and her parents in conversing about topics in a much better way. N3 also mentioned the frequency and duration of the conversations as she made a point about how it has taken her multiple conversations and instances of communication to reach this level of understanding with her parents where she feels accepted and heard and believes that she has a significant

self-worth. However, N2 acknowledged that there is a communication gap between her and her family which feels like an “*elephant in the room*” in certain conversations. It reaches a point where she gets unfazed by it and dismisses her feelings regarding her need to be heard.

“So, this way I have accepted it and maybe the communication gap doesn't feel abridged anymore or like elephant in the room anymore because I feel like I have a greater sense of greater duty to perform and it's by being less emotional and feeling too much that maybe hey, I'm not getting all the attention, or my needs being fulfilled.”

This indicates the presence of a communication gap in N2's family which leads her to not discuss certain issues with her family, for example, the fact that she believes there are certain needs of hers that need to be met. Out of fear of conflict as mentioned earlier, she does not feel herself to be worthy enough to have a difficult conversation leading to potential conflict and would rather dismiss her feelings. N1 also feels accepted by her family but struggles with feelings of inadequacy as she believes that she has not done enough to repay her parent's kindness and contributions towards the person she is today. N1 had previously mentioned how she believes that her parents are “*understanding*” towards her and that she can talk to them “*easily*”, indicating easy communication in the family, hence a positive experience of her regarding feeling accepted.

For Joint families, it was noticed that the weight of societal pressures and expectations regarding gender and family hierarchy have influenced participant's self-worth. J3 mentions how gender differences have played a significant role in her feeling accepted within her family. She discusses how growing up as the only girl among four brothers has made her feel less capable and that feeling of inferiority does get voiced at her home by certain families and takes a toll on her emotional wealth. J2, however, mentions that as she has grown up, her

suggestions are “taken into consideration” and have provided fruitful results due to which she has been applauded by her family. J1 shares the feeling by saying that she is taken more “*seriously*” now that she has graduated and does feel that she has a “*pretty great*” space and position in the family now. Both J2 and J1 acknowledged that age has played a significant role in their acceptance of their self-worth within the family. As they have grown older and achieved certain milestones like completing their education, their opinions have been taken into much more consideration which makes them feel good about themselves and boosts their self-worth and self-esteem.

Participants from both families reported that their self-worth is linked to how heard and accepted they feel within the family. In joint families, the process is largely influenced by societal and gender and hierarchical roles whereas in nuclear families, it is fairly direct communication within the family based on participant’s individual achievements and what they offer.

Encouragement of Personal Growth and Achieving Life’s Purpose

This sub-theme was inspired by Maslow’s hierarchy of Needs (1971) which explores the role of family encouragement of personal growth of participants in joint and nuclear families. Previous research suggests that family support plays a huge role in the personal development of an individual. However, the manifestations of family support differ between family systems. Collectively, the family support is influenced by familial, cultural, and traditional values and families that promote autonomy and provide their children a space where they can make their own decisions, tend to grow up with better confidence in their personal growth (Rowell et al., 2022).

Participants were asked about their need to grow personally to achieve their perceived life's purpose. All the participants had certain personal purposes e.g., being financially independent, having a professional career, or simply completing their higher education, preferably from abroad.

It was noted in both types of families that the participants' life purpose was heavily expected to be in line with their familial expectations. Parents provided levels of encouragement but did not explicitly engage in conversations regarding achieving life's purpose. In joint families, it was noted that the participants' life's purpose was expected to fulfil traditional gender roles. Past research confirms that in collectivist societies, similar to Pakistan, individual's living in joint families experience their life purpose to be closely aligned with family roles and expectations of society; meanwhile in nuclear families, the focus on autonomy is still present (Mortazavizadeh et al., 2022).

In both types of family systems, personal growth and purpose was promoted to some level. The participants were encouraged by their parents to achieve personal growth in their own ways. Taking nuclear families for an instant, N1 described how she has been planning to apply for master's programs abroad and has been actively searching for scholarships. She believes it is necessary for her to achieve this milestone in her education as it will help her grow professionally and personally. N1 mentioned how her mother, usually not explicitly showing support towards her decision to move abroad for master's, still indirectly sends her resources and opportunities she finds online regarding master's programs and scholarships. Her elder sisters also actively encourage her to keep working hard and pursue her goals.

The experiences of participants of joint families varied between the groups. J2 mentioned how her parents' encouragement towards her in terms of growing personally was

largely based on their values and what they approve of. While they would not show explicit support for her to pursue a master's degree abroad, they do however, fully support her if she wants to start a business of her own. She added how some of her personal goals do not align with her family's values which act as a hurdle between her achieving her personal growth. J1 had a different experience as she believes that growing up, her parents would prioritise her education and extracurriculars and all activities that made her grow personally as well as academically. However, as she has grown up, her parents' focus has shifted and they expect her to conform to more traditional roles, even if sometimes she does not agree to it.

“Think for the longest time, at least, you're young and you're growing up. Your education, your extracurriculars, all of those things are your parents' priority. Especially for girls, you come to a certain age where all of these things just become secondary. It starts feeling like now their priorities have changed. Your personal growth is actually not their priority anymore. It's more like now you're somebody else's responsibility.”- J1

Both the groups that were studied showed some common things that were consistent. It is common in both joint and nuclear families, that during the early life of individuals, especially girls, personal growth is encouraged in the form of better education, even better career choices. However, it does not take away from the fact that after a certain age, girls are expected to conform to traditional, gender, and societal roles. In nuclear families, even if the encouragement to personal growth is indirect in the sense that parents do not explicitly encourage certain personal goals, they are still accepting and receptive to it. Whereas in joint families, this support is conditional and often surfaces only when the parents' goals align with the participant's goals.

Through this theme, it was found that both family systems play a significant role in shaping the participants' self-worth and encouraging them to pursue their personal growth and life's purpose. However, this is done differently for both family systems where joint families reinforce gender-based expectations and nuclear families provide an independent space to grow. It is noted that communication plays a huge role in how support is conveyed to foster a positive self-worth, personal growth, and achieving life's purpose.

Relationship Quality and Communication Gaps

This theme explores how a presence of a communication gap between family members can hinder their quality of relationship with each other. Previous studies confirm that the communication patterns between families have an impact on the quality of relationship between family members (Đurišić, 2018). Moreover, the emotional closeness in families is also tied to the communication they share and families with open, frequent, and empathetic communications are relatively cohesive in nature, as opposed to those that experience a communication gap (Mortazavizadeh et al., 2022).

Quality of Relationship

To understand the meaning of the quality of relationship in the context of this research question, this sub-theme was added to identify how joint and nuclear families vary in terms of being close to one another and the type of communication that they have.

In nuclear families, participants indicated that a healthy communication between her parents and siblings does account for a positive relationship with her immediate family.

While some disagreements do persist, she experiences an overall healthy environment with

the right type of communication which fosters a good relationship between her family members. This feeling was shared by J2 who described that she shares a fairly good relationship with her mother and brother and highlighted how communication plays a key role in creating and holding those bonds.

“instant communication or, like, you know, talking it out. And that's what I've seen is, like, you know, it always ends up making, uh, disagreements or, you know, like, arguments, like, settle down instantly. So I feel like communication is, like, the greatest key to, like, solving any sort of argument and stuff. So with my mother, like, with communication, she understands me. With my brother, I feel like I have the most strongest bonds,”- J2

She goes on to mention how she also has a good relationship with her father, but the communication method she takes with him is different to how she communicated to her mother or brother. She has to sit him down and explain certain things with patience to be taken seriously which has a positive impact because he understands her this way and hence, shares a good relationship with her.

“as compared to her, my dad, I have to, like, sit down and explain to him where I'm coming from and how, you know, like, uh, I think, because I feel like he might not take me too seriously, which is why I feel the need to, you know, like, sit down and address a specific situation to him. Uh, but then it works out”- J2

This indicates that both family types show strong relationships when the communication between them is done in a positive way. This has an impact on the relationship they share ie., better communication allows for better relationships. The communication style does not have to be the same for all family members or types of

families. As long as the communication is based on respect, mutual understanding, and openness, family members do feel close to each other because of it.

Impact of Communication Gaps

This sub-theme explores how the manifestations of certain gaps in communication like lack of understanding, can account for emotional distances to grow between family and the individual impact on the participants caused by the lack of proper communication between family members.

In nuclear families, N2 described how she believes that when there is a lack of understanding between her and her family or some sort of unresolved conflict, it does have an effect on her. It hinders her ability to perform certain tasks and carry out certain responsibilities effectively. This disrupts her mood and her productivity levels

“so communication gap does hinders my daily routine or my daily responsibilities because I'm able to perform my tasks that are totally dependent on me but when there is a partial dependency in between, my tasks do get disturbed”- N2

Similarly, N3 mentions that there are times when she does not feel particularly close to her family members because they misunderstand her or do not communicate properly. That takes a toll on her emotional health and creates distances between her and her family. This indicates that nuclear families do have instances where an emotional distance can be formed between family members due to a presence of communication gap.

“If there are times where I feel like I can't, then obviously during those periods of time, I feel like my relationship isn't as good or I feel bad or negatively about the relationship and it affects my overall emotional well-being as well, if I don't feel close to my family members.” - N3

In joint families, J3 discussed how there is a lack of understanding between her and her mother which eventually affects her relationship with her and causes her to “*rebel*” against her mother’s expectations. This inability to communicate properly within family and voicing issues instead of acting out on them like rebelling have caused an emotional distance between her and her mother and negatively impacted their relationship. J1 follows by reiterating how indirect communication between her and her parents is a manifestation of a communication gap and causes unresolved issues.

The interviews suggest that both family systems face negative emotional effects from a communication gap which creates an emotional distance and allows for misunderstandings to grow and negatively affect relationships. While the manifestation of communication gaps can differ between family systems, for example, nuclear families are inclined towards issues due to generational differences which can be resolved directly. However, Joint families are often based on hierarchical structure and traditional expectations so indirect communication is present which creates misunderstandings and potentially strain relationships. This is backed by previous literature that confirms that communication barriers play a significant role in the emotional closeness between families and their presence can lower relationship satisfaction (Bariola, 2011). To overcome this barrier, open communication between families should be promoted so as to increase relationship quality.

Communication Barriers affecting Discussion of Aspirations

This sub-theme explores the role of communication barriers in discussing life aspirations of the participants. It reflected how certain issues with communication inhibits the participants in both family systems, to discuss their life aspirations fully and openly with their family members. Previous studies explore how communication barriers influence how family members discuss their Aspirations. Communication barriers are commonly associated with generational and cultural differences in family dynamics. Joint families tend to potentially limit discussions on personal autonomy and career goals whereas, nuclear families encourage individual expressions of autonomy and aspirations (Rowell, 2022).

Participants from both types of family systems reported the existence of a communication gap that limits them from discussing their future aspirations with their family members. N3 mentioned how her parents are generally supportive of her, there are times when they clash on certain goals. She recognized this as a difference of cultural background towards her and her parent's upbringing.

“One is age, like obviously there's a certain age gap between me and my parents, and they're relatively younger, but they still grew up in a very different sort of environment. They had different upbringing and schooling, especially my mom, if I were to, like, these discussions often take place with my mom. She grew up with a very strict life planned ahead for her”.- N3

This indicates the role of a generational gap between her and her parents which causes this inability for her to discuss her aspirations with her parents. N1 shared the feeling and described how she feels much more comfortable sharing her aspirations with her siblings as compared to her parents due to the age gap between them.

Participants from joint families showed a greater inclination towards not communicating their aspirations to their family. J3 mentioned how it is uncommon for her to discuss her future plans with her family because their certain expectations do not align with those of her parents.

“I feel like there definitely is a communication gap because I don't find myself discussing what my aspirations are with my family members. I wouldn't know, I think. Because, it's not a conversation that I've ever had with them, I think.”- J3

Similarly, J2 also mentioned that she feels it is better if she does not engage with her parents regarding her goals as she already knows that they will not be accepted by them.

“some other goals that I know that they wouldn't agree with, but I have and I already got an answer to it. I decided not to discuss it with them rather than just work on it and see where that leads me towards.”- J2

This highlights how participants in joint family systems have collective family expectations associated with them which prevents them from fully discussing their aspirations. Both families experience communication gaps inhibiting the discussion of aspirations, often due to generational gaps and traditional familial expectations. In nuclear families, personal aspirations are discussed relatively openly, with some limitations and in joint families, there is a greater reluctance to discuss aspirations due to stricter adherence of family expectations.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was conducted on an undergraduate level with only six participants, hence a small sample size. The results do not represent the experiences of all Pakistani families, nor do the results specific to joint and nuclear families, represent the experiences of all joint and nuclear families. The sample consisted of all female participants, hence producing gender-specific results. Interviews were self-reported which can account for biases and are based purely on subjective interpretation of family dynamics of the participants.

All participants implied that they were excited but nervous for this interview due to the personal and sensitive nature of the interview questions which may have accounted for self-reporting bias and social desirability within their answers. The research focused only on one aspect of interpersonal communication where only the subjective experiences of the children were studied. Future research can be conducted through the lens of the elder members of the family to gain a holistic view of family communication and emotional well-being. Moreover, families hailing from different socio-economic classes may have different communication patterns due to the difference in living standards which can be explored better in the Pakistani context.

This study paves the way for the future of research on communication patterns of Pakistani families and their impact on emotional well-being. Future research can expand on the topic by including an extensive participant pool from different areas of Pakistan to produce generalizability. Longitudinal studies can also be conducted which can provide better insights of joint and nuclear families over time. This is qualitative research which does not produce results generalizable to the whole Pakistani society. But rather, explores the deeper nuances of family systems and communication gaps to identify specific issues that account for emotional well-being to be disturbed. The addition of a quantitative approach to this

matter can further provide an objective comprehension of the topic. With the growth of society, the role of technology in the family can also help provide a different outlook.

Conclusion

Overall, the major role of communication and its setting in the Pakistani familial context was studied. It was found that family discussions commonly take place in the presence of all family members, usually on the dinner table or in shared spaces like the lounge or living room. The conversations that take place usually revolve around participants' careers, marriage, future plans, and life choices which are usually shaped through gendered expectations. Across the sample, there was an absence of emotionally expressive conversations which indicated a potential communication gap, later confirmed by the participants, that affected the family dynamics and emotional well-being of the family members.

The encouragement of open dialogue between family conversations was present in both family settings but only to a certain extent. Parents are likely to be more receptive as their children grow older, however, there is still a level of hesitance in accepting challenging or different ideas. Mothers are generally more receptive than fathers and openly communicate with children. It was noted that emotional expression is limited in both family settings where joint families emphasise conformity and traditional values while nuclear families do give space for independence. Moreover, the generational gap affects the family communication by contributing to emotional distance and unresolved family conflicts in both family systems.

In terms of decision making, As mentioned above, joint families operate under traditional hierarchical values that can limit personal autonomy and decision-making independence in the younger members of the family since decisions are mostly taken in a collectivist approach. On the other hand, nuclear families tend to offer relatively more flexibility in terms of personal autonomy and decisions are mostly collaborative.

Conflict avoidance and unresolved conflicts are common in both family settings but the reasons for each differ across the families. For joint families, conflicts are likely to be mediated by a third party which causes indirect communication and unresolved issues. As nuclear families offer more autonomy, the family members still avoid conflict which has emotional consequences and unsettled conversations. These patterns, present in both family settings cause emotional strains within relationships.

Participants acknowledged that their parents and family members significantly shape their self-worth, personal growth, and life purpose but have their own ways of showing support. In joint families, traditional values and societal expectations are expected to be in line with individuals' self-worth and ideas of life purpose whereas nuclear families allow relatively more space to grow even if sometimes that support is indirect. Both family systems foster personal development but nuclear families foster a relatively flexible environment for it.

In both joint and nuclear families, communication greatly influences the quality of relationship between daily members, emotional closeness, and the ability to discuss aspirations. As nuclear families have relatively direct communication, generational differences still persist that foster emotional distance. Joint families, based on traditional hierarchical values, often struggle with indirect communication that hinders open discussions and individual autonomy, leading to more communication gaps. When open communication is practised on certain instances, it does allow for personal growth, better self-worth, and life purpose in both family systems.

The research concludes that communication gaps exist in both joint and nuclear family systems in the Pakistani, desi culture. There are differing factors accounting to these

gaps in each setting. In nuclear families, the communication gap is linked to personal experiences like autonomy and personal space whereas in joint families, the gaps are often based on traditional hierarchical structures of the joint family. In both family systems, communication gaps have a direct effect on the emotional well-being of individuals in terms of their self-worth, personal growth, discussion of aspirations, expression of emotions, conflict avoidance or resolution, to name a few. These communication gaps have an overall effect on an individual's psychological and emotional health. Feelings of frustrations and emotional detachment become common in both family systems. This research highlights the need for open communication between family members to promote better emotional health.

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Appendices

Appendix A- Google Recruitment Form



Exploring Communication Gaps in Pakistani Desi Families: A Comparative Analysis of Joint and Nuclear Settings and How the Existence of a Communication Gap Impacts the Emotional Wellbeing of Members in Either Setting

Hello!

My name is Maria Rehman and I am a Social Sciences and Liberal Arts student at Institute of Business Administration (IBA).

I am conducting a research for my final year thesis project which explores areas such as **family systems** (joint and nuclear), **communication patterns** and **gaps** within family, and **emotional well being**. Please read the following details thoroughly if you are interested in participating in my research project.

Seeking individuals who fulfill all the following criteria:

1. Gender: **Women**
2. Age: **18-25 years**
3. Residence: **Karachi**
4. Relationship Status: **Single**, never married
5. Education level: **Enrolled in / completed a university undergraduate program**
6. Living status: **Must be living with immediate or extended family**

Please Note:

- This research requires an in-depth conversation and privacy, for which, I would like to meet participants for a **45 - 60 minutes long online interview**.
- Rest assured, your personal details like name, age, and contact will not be shared with anyone. Your responses will only be used for research purposes.
- Participation in this research is entirely **voluntary** and you can choose to **withdraw** your participation at any given point in time.

Please be aware that this form is being used as a recruitment tool for the main study, which involves conducting online interviews with selected participants.

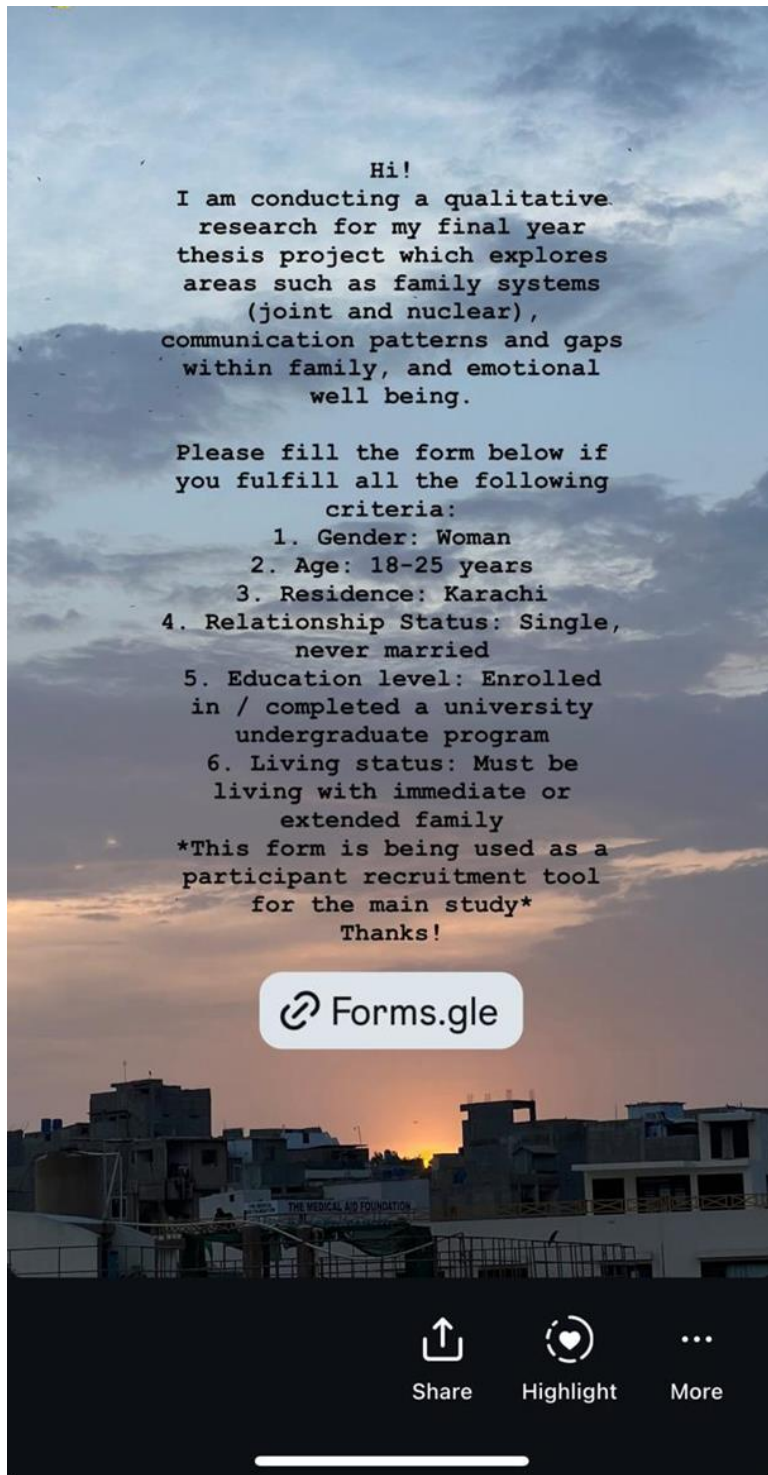
Please proceed if you meet the criteria outlined above and consent to participate in this study by clicking "next."

rehmanmaria66@gmail.com [Switch accounts](#)

Not shared

Family setting	
<p>Name *This answer will not be published anywhere*</p> <p>Your answer _____</p>	<p>Please keep the following in mind while answering the upcoming questions. Nuclear family: One couple (two parents) and their children, sharing a common residence Joint Family: A family unit that includes at least two or more couples, (where at least one couple is parents in law), and their children, share a common residence</p>
<p>Age *This answer will not be published anywhere*</p> <p>Your answer _____</p>	<p>Are you currently living with your family? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes (Nuclear family) <input type="radio"/> Yes (Joint family) <input type="radio"/> No, I do not live with my family</p>
<p>Email address *This answer will not be published anywhere*</p> <p>Your answer _____</p>	<p>Who do you currently live with? * Please select all those that apply</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Siblings <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparent(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Sister-in-law (Brother's wife) <input type="checkbox"/> Niece(s) (Brother's daughter) <input type="checkbox"/> Nephew(s) (Brother's son) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>
<p>Phone number *This answer will not be published anywhere*</p> <p>Your answer _____</p>	
<p>Gender *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say</p>	<p>How long have you been living in the family setting chosen above? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Less than 2 years <input type="radio"/> Less than 5 years <input type="radio"/> Less than 10 years <input type="radio"/> More than 10 years</p>
<p>Education *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Currently enrolled in an undergraduate program <input type="radio"/> Graduated university <input type="radio"/> Other: _____</p>	<p>Do you participate in your family discussions? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Sometimes <input type="radio"/> My family does not frequently engage in discussions</p>
<p>Employment Status *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Student (not employed) <input type="radio"/> Student (employed) <input type="radio"/> Graduated (employed) <input type="radio"/> Graduated (not employed) <input type="radio"/> Self-employed</p>	<p>I agree to be contacted for the interview if I match the criteria for the main study *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p>Marital status *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Single (never married) <input type="radio"/> Engaged <input type="radio"/> Married <input type="radio"/> Other: _____</p>	<p>Consent *</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> "By submitting this form, I acknowledge that I consent voluntarily to participate, with the understanding that my responses will be recorded and used for research purposes."</p>
	<p>Want to know more? If you have any questions or would like to learn more about this study, please feel free to reach out to me! m.rehman.22696@khi.iba.edu.pk</p>
<p>Back</p>	<p>Submit</p>
	<p>Clear form</p>

Appendix B- Recruitment Post Message



Appendix C- Interview Brief

Before starting the actual interview

- Obtain informed consent through pdf readers/ word online, prior to the interview
- Ask permission to audio record
- Thank participant for volunteering to take part
- Explain to participants that This research aims to explore key factors of communication gap in familial conversations and how they differ in Nuclear and joint family settings, and its impact on the mental wellbeing of young adults.
- Remind their right to withdraw
- Let them know that their answers will be used for research purposes only and kept confidential
- Ask if they have any questions

General Questions

1. How are you doing?
2. How do you feel about this interview? (I will reassure them that there is nothing to be nervous about)
3. Please tell me a little bit about your family e.g. who do you live with and how long has it been since you have been living in this family setting?

Interview Questions

1. Where and when do most of your family conversations take place? are they usually on the dinner table, or after certain times e.g., dinner?
2. How often does your family discuss controversial topics such as politics and religion?
Can you describe a recent conversation on one of these topics?

3. How often does your family talk about your plans and hopes for the future? Do you also discuss your daily experiences and activities as a family?
4. Do your parents encourage you to challenge their ideas and beliefs? How do they respond when you do so?
5. In your family, who usually has the final say in matters? How are family rules communicated and enforced?
6. How do your parents handle activities or decisions they do not approve of? Are there any topics they prefer not to discuss?
7. How are disagreements typically resolved in your family? Are there specific things your parents often say during arguments or discussions?
8. How comfortable do you feel expressing your emotions and needs to your family? Have there been instances where you felt your emotional needs were not understood or addressed?
9. How do you perceive your sense of self-worth and acceptance in your family? Can you share an instance when family communication positively or negatively impacted your self-acceptance?
10. How well do you feel you manage your daily responsibilities and environment within your family? Do you find that communication gaps hinder your ability to control your environment effectively?
11. How would you describe the quality of your relationships with family members? Are there any communication gaps that affect these relationships, either positively or negatively?
12. When conflicts arise in your family, how are they usually resolved? Do you feel that communication gaps hinder the development of positive relationships?
13. Do you feel that your family environment encourages personal growth? Are there specific communication issues that either support or hinder your development?

14. In what ways does your family encourage you to pursue your life's purpose? Are there communication barriers that prevent you from fully discussing your aspirations?

15. How autonomous do you feel in making decisions about your life within the family context? Does your family respect your need for autonomy and personal space? Or do communication gaps affect your ability to assert and maintain your boundaries?

Appendix D- The Revised Family Communication Pattern Instrument (Children's Version)

The Revised Family Communication Pattern Instrument (Children's Version)

Conversation Orientation

- 1) In our family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some persons disagree with others.
 - 2) My parents often say something like "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions."
 - 3) My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something.
 - 4) My parents encourage me to challenge their ideas and beliefs.
 - 5) My parents often say something like "You should always look at both sides of an issue."
 - 6) I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things.
 - 7) I can tell my parents almost anything.
 - 8) In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions.
 - 9) My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular.
 - 10) I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree.
 - 11) My parents encourage me to express my feelings.
 - 12) My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.
 - 13) We often talk as a family about things we have done during the day.
 - 14) In our family, we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future.
 - 15) My parents like to hear my opinion, even when I don't agree with them.
-

Conformity Orientation

- 1) When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey without question.
 - 2) In our home, my parents usually have the last word.
 - 3) My parents feel that it is important to be the boss.
 - 4) My parents sometimes become irritated with my views if they are different from theirs.
 - 5) If my parents don't approve of it, they don't want to know about it.
 - 6) When I am at home, I am expected to obey my parents' rules.
 - 7) My parents often say things like "You'll know better when you grow up."
 - 8) My parents often say things like "My ideas are right and you should not question them."
 - 9) My parents often say things like "A child should not argue with adults."
 - 10) My parents often say things like "There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about."
 - 11) My parents often say things like "You should give in on arguments rather than risk making people mad."
-

Appendix E- The Questionnaire for Eudemonic Well-Being

The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-Being.

1. I find I get intensely involved in many of the things I do each day.
2. I believe I have discovered who I really am.
3. I think it would be ideal if things came easily to me in my life. (R)
4. My life is centered around a set of core beliefs that give meaning to my life.
5. It is more important that I really enjoy what I do than that other people are impressed by it.
6. I believe I know what my best potentials are and I try to develop them whenever possible.
7. Other people usually know better what would be good for me to do than I know myself. (R)
8. I feel best when I'm doing something worth investing a great deal of effort in.
9. I can say that I have found my purpose in life.
10. If I did not find what I was doing rewarding for me, I do not think I could continue doing it.
11. As yet, I've not figured out what to do with my life. (R)
12. I can't understand why some people want to work so hard on the things that they do. (R)
13. I believe it is important to know how what I'm doing fits with purposes worth pursuing.
14. I usually know what I should do because some actions just feel right to me.
15. When I engage in activities that involve my best potentials, I have this sense of really being alive.
16. I am confused about what my talents really are. (R)
17. I find a lot of the things I do are personally expressive for me.
18. It is important to me that I feel fulfilled by the activities that I engage in.
19. If something is really difficult, it probably isn't worth doing. (R)
20. I find it hard to get really invested in the things that I do. (R)
21. I believe I know what I was meant to do in life.

(R) Item is reverse scored.

Appendix F- Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Exploring Communication Gaps in Pakistani Desi Families: A Comparative Analysis of Joint and Nuclear Settings and How the Existence of a Communication Gap Impacts the Emotional Wellbeing of Members in Either Setting

Researcher: Maria Rehman **Ethics number:** _____

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

This research aims to identify the manifestations of communication gaps in familial conversations and how they differ within different types of families i.e., joint, nuclear, transitioned. This study also looks into how the communication gap impacts the emotional well being of young adults in the said families.

Why have I been chosen?

Participants have been chosen based on their age, demographic, gender, and most importantly, the type of family setting they live in.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Participants will identify certain elements of communication gaps within their families and how answer questions about how certain factors of that gap impact their emotional well being

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

By taking part in this study, participants are helping a greater cause i.e., eliminating communication gaps in different types of families in Pakistan to promote open interpersonal communication in families, and positive well-being of family members

Are there any risks involved?

No

Will my participation be confidential?

Yes

What happens if I change my mind?

Participants can refuse to answer any question they are uncomfortable with and have the right to withdraw from the study at any given point

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the case of concern or complaint, you can contact the Institute of Business Administration-Karachi's research ethics committee, rec@iba.edu.pk.



Where can I get more information?

Maria Rehman | 03102232733 | m.rehman.22696@khi.iba.edu.pk

Dr. Saima Binte Saif | saimasaif@iba.edu.pk

[Date] [Version number]

Appendix G- Consent Form

<p> IBA Institute of Business Administration Karachi <small>Leadership and Ideas for Tomorrow</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;">CONSENT FORM</p> <p>Study title: Exploring Communication Gaps in Pakistani Desi Families: A Comparative Analysis of Joint and Nuclear Settings and How the Existence of a Communication Gap Impacts the Emotional Wellbeing of Members in Either Setting</p> <p>Researcher name: Maria Rehman</p> <p>Ethics reference:</p> <p><i>Please initial the boxes) if you agree with the statement(s):</i></p> <p>I have read and understood the information sheet (insert date /version no. of participant information sheet) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I am happy for the interview to be tape recorded. (if not applicable, please delete) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I am happy to be contacted regarding other unspecified research projects. I therefore consent to the University retaining my personal details on a database, kept separately from the research data detailed above. The 'validity' of my consent is conditional upon the University complying with the Data Protection Act and I understand that I can request my details be removed from this database at any time. <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p> IBA Institute of Business Administration Karachi <small>Leadership and Ideas for Tomorrow</small></p> <p>Data Protection</p> <p><i>I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.</i></p> <p>Name of participant (print name)</p> <p>Signature of participant.....</p> <p>Date.....</p>
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Appendix H – Delve- Coding Software

3. Decision-Making and Autonomy (0) ▼
Write a description or thoughts about this code

Family Decision-Making Dynamics (11)
Write a description or thoughts about this code

Generation gap (8)
Write a description or thoughts about this code

Autonomy and Personal Space (24)
Write a description or thoughts about this code

2. Openness and Encouragement (0) ▼
Write a description or thoughts about this code

Encouragement of Open Dialogue (12)
Write a description or thoughts about this code

Expression of Emotions and Needs (21)
Write a description or thoughts about this code

1. Communication Settings and Contexts (0) ▼
Write a description or thoughts about this code

Settings for Family Conversations (12)
Write a description or thoughts about this code

Types of Topics Discussed (14)
Write a description or thoughts about this code

6. Relationship Quality and Communication Gaps (0) ▼

Write a description or thoughts about this code

Quality of Family Relationships (6)

Write a description or thoughts about this code

Impact of Communication Gaps (10)

Write a description or thoughts about this code

Communication Barriers Affecting Discussions of Aspirations (8)

Write a description or thoughts about this code

5. Encouragement of Self-Actualization (0) ▼

Write a description or thoughts about this code

Self-Worth Shaped by Family (7)

Write a description or thoughts about this code

Encouragement of Personal Growth (3)

Write a description or thoughts about this code

Encouragement to Pursue Life's Purpose (9)

Write a description or thoughts about this code

4. Handling Disagreements and Conflicts (0) ▼

Write a description or thoughts about this code

Conflict Avoidance (24)

avoidance of conflict, unresolved conflict

Unresolved Conflicts (11)

Write a description or thoughts about this code