

## Evolving Family Dynamics And Marriage Systems Among The Gujjar Tribe: A Study Of Rajouri District, Jammu And Kashmir

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Cite this paper as: Bushra Nizami, Dr. Keshlata, (2025) Evolving Family Dynamics And Marriage Systems Among The Gujjar Tribe: A Study Of Rajouri District, Jammu And Kashmir. *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14 (8s), 177-187.

### ABSTRACT

The study explores the evolving family dynamics and marriage systems among the Gujjar tribe in Jammu and Kashmir, addressing a significant research gap regarding how modernization influences these structures. Utilizing a qualitative research design, the study employed in-depth interviews and surveys to gather data from 30 purposively selected respondents, including a slight female majority. Findings reveal notable changes in family size, with a shift towards nuclear arrangements influenced by economic pressures and cultural transformations. The research highlights a diminishing significance of extended family roles and a rise in women's participation in economic activities, reflecting changing gender dynamics and a move towards gender equality. The study also identifies a growing emphasis on education among Gujjar youth, fostering aspirations for improved futures and prompting shifts in traditional marriage customs. While arranged marriages remain prevalent, there is increasing openness to individual choice, alongside discussions on dowry practices. The research contributes valuable insights into the contemporary social dynamics of the Gujjar community and underscores the interplay between tradition and modernity in shaping family and marriage systems.

**Keywords:** Family Dynamics, Gujjar Tribe, Marriage Systems, Rajouri District

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Gujjar tribe, an influential ethnic group in northern India, particularly in the Jammu and Kashmir region, has experienced notable changes in its family structures and marriage customs in recent decades. Traditionally, the Gujjars led a nomadic lifestyle, but socio-economic changes and modernization have prompted a more settled existence. The shift has significantly transformed their traditional practices and redefined family structures, transitioning from extended kinship networks to more nuclear family arrangements. In Rajouri district alone, the Gujjar population is estimated at around 200,000, making them a significant demographic within the region's socio-cultural framework (Khatana, 1976<sup>i</sup>; Hussain & Hussain, 2018)<sup>ii</sup>. In addition, the Gujjar tribe holds an important status in Jammu and Kashmir, recognized as a Scheduled Tribe under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution. The status was granted in two phases, initially in 1989 and later in 1991, when further communities were included (War & Dar, 2022)<sup>iii</sup>. According to the 2011 Census, Jammu and Kashmir's total tribal population was 1,493,299, accounting for 11.9% of the Union Territory's population. The Gujjar tribe alone made up 71.86% of the state's tribal population, with the highest concentrations in districts such as Rajouri and Poonch, where traditional pastoralism thrives due to abundant pasture lands (Kehan, 2024)<sup>iv</sup>. The research focuses on examining how contemporary factors are reshaping marriage practices and family roles within the Gujjar community. Historically, marriages among Gujjars were arranged by parents, following endogamous traditions to ensure unions within the community. However, recent trends show a gradual shift towards individual choice in selecting life partners. Factors like increased education and improved economic opportunities for women are driving the change. Young Gujjars are increasingly expressing their preferences in marriage, marking a departure from strict parental arrangements (Behera et al., 1999<sup>v</sup>; Zutshi, 1981)<sup>vi</sup>. Also, the effects of globalization and modern communication have introduced new perspectives on relationships and family life, challenging long-held customs. While polygamous marriages are rare, most families are opting for monogamous unions, reflecting broader social transformations.

In addition to shifts in marriage customs, the evolving family dynamics among the Gujjars highlight changes in gender roles and household responsibilities. Traditionally patriarchal, with men holding primary authority over family matters, there is a growing trend towards more egalitarian relationships (Kango & Dhar, 1981)<sup>vii</sup>. Women's increasing participation in economic activities outside the home is reshaping their roles in both family and society. These changes have significant implications, not only for individual families but also for the broader discourse on tribal identity and cultural preservation in the context of modernization (Puri, 1957<sup>viii</sup>; Daswani, 1993)<sup>ix</sup>. Therefore, the study seeks to investigate how these changing patterns in family structures and marriage systems among the Gujjar tribe in Rajouri District.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature is essential as it provides a comprehensive understanding of existing research, identifies gaps in knowledge, and contextualizes the current study. It helps establish a foundation, guiding the research direction and ensuring scholarly rigor. The Gujjar tribe follows a patriarchal family structure, predominantly nuclear, with marriages arranged by elders, emphasizing strict endogamy. Bride price is commonly practiced. Thakur et al. (2023)<sup>x</sup> explored modernization's impact on the Gujjar community, noting a shift from joint to nuclear families due to industrialization and urbanization, with families maintaining traditional values. Lone and Gurna (2022)<sup>xi</sup> studied the Gujjar and Bakkerwal's family structures, highlighting the "Dera" system and marriage customs like "Bata-Sata." They observed a slow transition to permanent lifestyles while retaining strong ties to customs. Sawhney (2022)<sup>xii</sup> examined Gujjar marriage rituals, noting influences of Islamic traditions such as Mangni and Nikah. Marriages were arranged early, and dowry customs persisted despite modernization. Zameer and Padiyar (2021)<sup>xiii</sup> found that most Gujjars had shifted to nuclear families, with modernization affecting family structures, yet traditional values persisted. Dar and Suneet (2020)<sup>xiv</sup> revealed a move from extended families to nuclear structures, driven by education and economic changes. Arranged marriages decreased as individual autonomy increased, with social media playing a role in changing family dynamics. Dwivedi (2018)<sup>xv</sup> explored marriage traditions, identifying child marriage and dowry as prevalent issues among rural Gujjars, with intra-community unions being the norm. Monogamy was predominant, and marriage functioned as a key institution for maintaining social structures. Sahni (2016)<sup>xvi</sup> investigated Gotra hierarchies and clan associations, revealing the importance of lineage in marriage traditions, with strict exogamy and a clear distinction between settled and nomadic Gujjars. Despite modernization, traditional customs remained intact, particularly among nomadic communities. Roy et al. (2014)<sup>xvii</sup> focused on marriage customs in Rajasthan's Gujjar community, emphasizing the role of traditions in maintaining social hierarchy. Although economic pressures and education impacted these customs, they remained central to the tribe's socio-cultural identity.

**Research Gap:** While existing studies have examined the impact of modernization on Gujjar family and marriage systems, little research has focused specifically on how these changing patterns are affecting family structures and marriage practices among the Gujjar tribe in Jammu and Kashmir, leaving a gap that the study aims to fill.

### Area of the study area

The study area selected for the research is Rajouri district, located in the Jammu region of the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Covering an area of approximately 2,630 square kilometers, Rajouri is renowned for its historical significance and natural beauty, bordered by Poonch district to the north, Jammu district to the south, Reasi district to the east, and Pakistan-administered Kashmir to the west. The district's landscape is dominated by the Pir Panjal mountain range, fertile valleys, and vital water sources like the Tawi River, which plays a crucial role in local agriculture through irrigation. Rajouri's strategic location and geographical diversity make it a key area for studying the socio-cultural aspects of its inhabitants, particularly the Gujjar community, who constitute a significant portion of the population. The district's mixed topography and access to essential resources have influenced the livelihoods of the Gujjars, traditionally semi-nomadic pastoralists, and offer a rich context for exploring the evolution of family dynamics and marriage systems within the community.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative research design to explore the evolving family dynamics and marriage systems among the Gujjar tribe in Rajouri District, Jammu and Kashmir. A descriptive approach was adopted to investigate changing patterns within these social structures. Data was gathered using in-depth interviews with selected members of the Gujjar community, allowing for a deeper understanding of personal experiences and perspectives. The survey method was used to support the interviews, facilitating a comprehensive collection of qualitative data. The study aims to provide insight into the transformations in family and marriage systems, driven by socio-economic and cultural influences in the region.

### Sampling Procedure

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 30 respondents from the Gujjar community in Rajouri District, Jammu and Kashmir, with 25 general participants. The approach ensured a comprehensive representation of evolving family and marriage systems. The demographic breakdown included a slight female majority (56% female, 44% male), with 48% of respondents married. Educational backgrounds ranged from high school (28%) to illiteracy (12%), and professions varied,

with farming (24%) and small shop keeping (20%) being the most common. Family structures showed that 48% belonged to nuclear families, and 40% had 1 to 5 family members. The diverse demographic information enabled a robust qualitative analysis of social dynamics within the community.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Regarding Changes in the Size of Gujjar Tribal Families in Recent Years**

Response	Number of Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	72%
No	7	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 reveals that a majority of respondents reported changes in the size of Gujjar tribal families in recent years. Of the 25 respondents, 18 (72%) noted changes in their family size, while 7 (28%) reported no changes. It suggests that most Gujjar families have experienced shifts in family dynamics, possibly due to socio-economic or cultural influences. These responses indicate that a significant portion of the participants observed alterations in their family size over time.

### Household Size Comparison over Time

Changes in household size often mirror broader social, economic, and cultural trends. In the past, larger households were common, especially in rural or agricultural settings, due to the need for economic support and family cohesion. Over time, factors such as urbanization, migration, changing birth rates, and the shift to nuclear families have influenced household sizes. It reflects evolving family dynamics and living arrangements. Respondents were asked if their household size had increased, decreased, or remained the same compared to the past. The responses showed varying trends: some households grew due to the inclusion of extended family members, while others became smaller, likely due to economic pressures or modern family dynamics.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents Regarding Household Size Compared to the Past**

Household Size Comparison	Number of Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Larger	10	40.0%
Smaller	8	32.0%
About the Same	5	20.0%
No Opinion	2	8.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 shows that 10 respondents (40%) reported larger households compared to the past, possibly due to economic hardship or cultural preferences for joint families. Meanwhile, 8 respondents (32%) indicated smaller households, likely due to a shift toward nuclear families or migration. Five respondents (20%) noted no change in household size, suggesting stability in some socio-economic groups, while 2 respondents (8%) had no opinion. These trends highlight the impact of both traditional and modern influences on household size.

### Reasons for Changing Household Size in Gujjar Tribal Families

Family size changes are influenced by various factors, including economic conditions, cultural practices, health, and government policies. Among Gujjar tribal families, shifts in household size reflect broader social, economic, and cultural dynamics. Economic factors, such as migration or changes in income, often affect decisions about family expansion or reduction. Cultural influences, including marriage practices and the role of extended families, also play a major part. Health and education factors, such as better access to healthcare and family planning awareness, contribute as well. Lastly, government policies, such as incentives for smaller families, can shape household size. The study explores these factors, categorized in Table 3 into economic, cultural, health, education, and social influences.

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents Regarding the Main Reasons for Changing Household Size**

Reasons for Family Size Change	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Economic Factors	10	40.0%
Cultural Factors	8	32.0%
Health and Education Factors	5	20.0%
Social and Policy Factors	2	8.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 shows that the majority of respondents (40%) identified economic factors as the primary reason for family size changes. Financial constraints, employment, and the need for economic stability drive these decisions, particularly in families with limited resources. Cultural factors, cited by 32% of respondents, also play a significant role. Marriage practices and communal living often influence household structure. Health and education factors, highlighted by 20% of respondents, contribute through access to healthcare and educational opportunities, which can lead to family relocations or adjustments. Finally, 8% pointed to social and policy factors, such as government incentives and welfare policies, as influencing family size. One respondent explained:

*"Our family size decreased because we had to send two children to live with their uncle in the city for better education. We couldn't afford it here, and it was crucial for their future."*

Therefore, economic and cultural factors are the main drivers of family size changes in Gujjar tribal families, while health, education, and social policies also play a role.

#### **Important Family Members**

Family is a fundamental unit shaping personal and social development. Cultural traditions and emotional bonds influence the roles of family members, with parents often seen as the most critical figures. In nuclear families, spouses and children form the core group, while extended family, like grandparents and cousins, hold significance in traditional cultures. Factors such as age, health, and societal influences can alter the importance and dynamics within families. Table 4 compares the current distribution of important family members to the past across five categories.

**Table 4: Distribution of Respondents Based on Important Family Members**

Important Family Members	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Parents	11	44.0%
Siblings	3	12.0%
Spouse	5	20.0%
Children	5	20.0%
Extended Family	1	4.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 highlights the respondents' views on significant family members. The majority, 11 out of 25 respondents (44.0%), identified parents as the most important. It indicates that in Gujjar tribal families, parental roles remain central, with parents typically holding authority and providing emotional and material support. Spouses and children, each selected by 5 respondents (20.0%), also play an important role, reflecting a growing focus on nuclear family members in managing household responsibilities. A smaller portion, 3 out of 25 respondents (12.0%), cited siblings as important. Although siblings are valued, their role appears secondary compared to parents or spouses. Only 1 respondent (4.0%) considered extended family significant, suggesting a shift away from extended family networks, likely influenced by migration, economic pressures, or changing family structures. It could reflect a move toward self-reliant nuclear households within the community. During the study, one respondent shared:

*"My parents are the foundation of our family. Even though my siblings and I live far away, we always turn to them for guidance on major decisions. They still manage the household and provide us with support, even now that we are grown."*

Therefore, these findings suggest that in Gujjar tribal communities, parents remain the core of family life, in line with traditional values. At the same time, spouses and children have gained importance, signaling the growing relevance of the nuclear family. Meanwhile, the role of siblings and extended family members appears less central, reflecting evolving family structures that prioritize smaller, more independent units.

### Changes in Ancestral Lineages and Inheritance Practices among Gujjar Tribal Families

It investigates whether there have been any noticeable shifts in the way Gujjar tribal families trace their ancestral lineages or handle inheritance. Historically, lineage and inheritance were crucial in preserving family heritage and social structures within tribal communities. However, modernization, migration, and evolving legal frameworks may have altered these practices. The goal is to determine if respondents have observed such changes and, if so, what specific changes they noticed, such as shifts in surnames, changes in inheritance laws, or a diminished emphasis on ancestral lineage. Responses were broadly divided into those who observed changes and those who did not. Table 5 displays the distribution of responses, further classifying the types of changes into three categories: surname changes, inheritance law changes, and reduced importance of lineage.

**Table 5: Distribution of Respondents Noticing Changes in Ancestral Lineages and Inheritance Practices**

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	72.0%
No	7	28.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>
Changes in Ancestral Lineages and Inheritance Practices	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Changes in Surnames	8	44.4%
Changes in Inheritance Laws	6	33.3%
Reduced Importance of Lineage	4	22.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5 reveals that 18 out of 25 respondents (72%) reported noticing changes in how Gujjar families handle lineage or inheritance, while 7 respondents (28%) observed no changes. Of those noticing changes, the majority (8 out of 18, or 44.4%) reported alterations in surnames, with some families adopting new or modified names. Another 6 respondents (33.3%) pointed to changes in inheritance laws, indicating a shift due to legal updates or modern practices. Lastly, 4 respondents (22.3%) observed a reduced emphasis on ancestral lineage, signaling a change in the traditional value attached to lineage within family and social identity. One respondent noted:

*"In our community, we've always passed down our family name from father to son, but recently, I've seen families changing their surnames to appear more modern or comply with legal norms. I never thought I'd witness it, but it shows how times are changing."*

These findings suggest that a significant portion of the Gujjar tribal community is noticing shifts in traditional practices surrounding surnames, inheritance, and the importance of lineage. Such changes reflect wider socio-economic and legal transformations affecting tribal identity and customs.

### Changes in Ancestral Lineages and Inheritance Practices

The Gujjar tribe is experiencing significant changes in their lineage and inheritance customs, reflecting broader socio-economic transformations. Traditionally, inheritance was patrilineal, but modern influences like urban migration and economic pressures are reshaping these practices. Women are increasingly asserting their inheritance rights, challenging patriarchal norms and promoting a more equitable distribution of assets. The evolution highlights a shift towards gender equality and social mobility, as younger generations prioritize financial independence over ancestral customs. The community adapts, merging traditional values with modern principles.



**Table 6: Distribution of Respondents Regarding Changes over Time**

Change Over Time	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Shift in Gender Roles	12	48.0%
Changes in Economic Responsibilities	8	32.0%
Decline in Traditional Practices	5	20.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 6 offers a detailed look at how gender roles and responsibilities within the Gujar community have evolved, based on responses from 25 individuals. Out of the total, 12 respondents (48.0%) reported a shift in gender roles, indicating a notable transformation in how gender is viewed within the community. It may reflect a growing acceptance of women taking on roles traditionally held by men, while men increasingly assume responsibilities typically associated with women, such as caregiving. The change may be driven by improved education for women and shifting economic circumstances that demand greater flexibility in gender roles. Another 8 respondents (32.0%) pointed to changes in economic responsibilities, highlighting the increasing involvement of women in economic activities, crucial for household financial stability. The shift suggests a broader movement toward gender parity in economic participation, contributing to the empowerment of women within the community. Conversely, 5 respondents (20.0%) noted a decline in traditional practices, reflecting concerns over the erosion of customs that have historically defined Gujar identity. Modernization and globalization may be influencing younger generations to prioritize contemporary values over their cultural heritage. Thus, the data reveals a community in transition, grappling with the balance between maintaining traditional roles and adapting to evolving social norms. As these roles evolve, they reshape the identities of both men and women in the Gujar community, impacting social cohesion and cultural preservation. One participant commented:

*“The changes in our roles within the community highlight a growing realization that both men and women can contribute equally. The shift is crucial for our development and adapting to modern times. But it’s also important to maintain our cultural roots as we move forward.”*

In conclusion, the evolving roles and responsibilities of Gujar men and women reflect a complex interaction between tradition and modernity. These shifting dynamics show the community’s readiness to embrace new realities while maintaining a connection to its cultural heritage. Finding the right balance will be essential in shaping the future identity of the Gujar community as it navigates the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

**Table 7: Distribution of Respondents on Reasons for Shift in Involvement of Men and Women in Household and Community Work**

Reasons	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Economic Necessity	6	24%
Changes in Social Norms	7	28%
Increased Education and Awareness	5	20%
Influence of Media and Technology	7	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 7 shows the reasons behind changes in gender roles within the Gujar Tribe. Among 25 respondents, the majority, seven individuals (28%), pointed to changes in social norms as a key reason, reflecting a growing awareness of the need for gender balance in household and community responsibilities. Equally, 28% attributed the shift to the influence of media and technology, indicating that exposure to new ideas has played an essential role in reshaping traditional gender expectations. Meanwhile, 6 respondents (24%) identified economic necessity as a primary driver, emphasizing the increasing requirement for both men and women to contribute financially to their households. Lastly, 5 respondents (20%) noted the role of education and awareness, highlighting that better access to education has encouraged greater involvement of both genders in domestic and community work. These results underscore how economic, social, and educational factors are interconnected in fostering shared responsibilities. As attitudes continue to change, these factors may further enhance cooperation and equality in both domestic and communal spheres. One respondent observed:

*"I've seen men and women in our community more willing to share household chores. It's encouraging to witness the positive change where everyone contributes to improving our homes and community."*

Thus, the involvement of both genders in household and community work has shifted due to various interconnected influences. The data from Table 9 reflects these evolving dynamics in the Gujar Tribe and suggests a move towards a more balanced division of labor. The change is vital for creating an inclusive environment where both men and women can effectively contribute to their families and communities. Adopting these shifts can improve social harmony and enhance the on the whole quality of life in the community.

### Changes in Values and Aspirations Among Gujar Tribal Youth

The values, aspirations, and lifestyle preferences of the current generation of Gujar tribal youth display notable differences from those of previous generations. These shifts mirror broader societal transformations, influenced by factors like globalization, better access to education, and evolving social norms. Today, many young individuals place a stronger emphasis on education, recognizing its pivotal role in advancing career prospects and enhancing their generally quality of life. It focus on education represents a significant cultural shift, with education seen as a key to empowerment. Also, there has been a noticeable rise in career ambitions, as more youth aim for professional roles that were previously rare in their communities. While some still hold onto traditional values, the influence of modern lifestyles is evident as they navigate contemporary society. The balance between embracing modernity and preserving cultural heritage reflects a unique blend in their identity. The following categories summarize these changes: emphasis on education, increased career aspirations, adoption of modern lifestyles, and retention of traditional values, as detailed in Table 8.

**Table 8: Distribution of Respondents on Differences in Values, Aspirations, and Lifestyle Choices of Gujar Tribal Youth Compared to Previous Generations**

Categories	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Emphasis on Education	9	36%
Increased Career Aspirations	7	28%
Adoption of Modern Lifestyles	5	20%
Retention of Traditional Values	4	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

The responses shown in Table 8 illustrate the changing values, aspirations, and lifestyle choices among Gujar tribal youth in comparison to earlier generations. Among the 25 respondents, 9 (36%) pointed out that the increased focus on education is the most prominent change. It reflects a growing recognition of education's transformative power, as more youth view academic success as a gateway to future achievements. Similarly, 7 respondents (28%) highlighted the rise in career aspirations, with many youth pursuing professions beyond traditional roles, signaling a desire for upward mobility and self-improvement. The shift indicates an expanded understanding of economic possibilities and success beyond the community's traditional scope. Meanwhile, 5 respondents (20%) acknowledged the adoption of modern lifestyles, reflecting shifts in daily behaviors, consumption habits, and social interactions, influenced by global trends and technology. The blending of traditional and modern practices indicates an evolving social environment. Lastly, 4 respondents (16%) emphasized the retention of traditional values, showcasing a balancing act where the youth maintain their cultural roots while adapting to modern realities. The preservation of traditional values amidst change reflects their awareness of the importance of cultural identity even as they embrace new societal norms. The general trend suggests that Gujar tribal youth are increasingly aspirational and adaptable, embracing both educational opportunities and professional goals while still remaining grounded in their cultural heritage. One respondent explained the shift, noting:

*"Today's youth are more aware of the opportunities available to them. Education has opened doors, and we aim for more than our parents ever could. However, our traditions still matter to us, and it's about balancing both."*

Thus, the evolving values, aspirations, and lifestyle choices of Gujar tribal youth represent a dynamic interplay between educational advancement, career ambition, and cultural preservation. The complex transformation reflects wider societal changes and highlights the proactive role that the youth play in shaping their futures while navigating the balance between tradition and modernity.

### Traditional Marriage Customs in the Gujar Tribal Community

The Gujar tribal community is renowned for its rich cultural legacy, particularly reflected in its traditional marriage customs and rituals. Many respondents noted that arranged marriages are a fundamental aspect of their marital traditions, emphasizing

the family's role in choosing a suitable partner. The practice underscores deep-seated values related to family honor and social unity. In addition, the custom of dowry, although controversial, continues to persist within the community, indicating ongoing complexities in marriage dynamics. Numerous respondents highlighted the significance of various rituals and ceremonies associated with weddings, showcasing the community's commitment to celebrating marital unions with vibrant traditions and collective involvement. However, there was less emphasis on community participation in these celebrations, hinting at a possible trend toward more individualized observances in recent years. The responses can be classified into five categories: arranged marriages, dowry practices, rituals and ceremonies, community participation in celebrations, and emerging trends reflecting changes in traditional customs. Thus, Table 9 displays the distribution of these categories.

**Table 9: Distribution of Respondents on Traditional Marriage Customs and Rituals Practiced in the Tribal Community**

Marriage Customs and Rituals	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Arranged Marriages	10	40%
Dowry Traditions	6	24%
Rituals and Ceremonies	7	28%
Community Involvement in Celebrations	2	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 9 illustrates the distribution of responses concerning traditional marriage customs and rituals within the Gujjar tribal community. A significant majority, 10 out of 25 respondents (40%), indicated that arranged marriages dominate their community. The tradition highlights the importance of family involvement in marital decisions, reinforcing values of family honor, social compatibility, and communal connections. The focus on arranged marriages reflects a broader cultural narrative that favors collective family decisions over personal choice. Also, 7 out of 25 respondents (28%) emphasized the significance of rituals and ceremonies associated with weddings. These practices are vital for marking the transition to marriage, showcasing the community's cultural richness through elaborate celebrations that often feature music, dance, and community participation. The inclusion of extended family and community members in these ceremonies fosters a sense of belonging and strengthens social ties, enhancing the collective identity of the Gujjar tribe. However, the dowry custom was mentioned by 6 out of 25 respondents (24%). While historically significant in many cultures, the practice raises concerns about gender equality and the commodification of women. The continuation of the tradition within the Gujjar community highlights ongoing socio-economic challenges and complexities surrounding gender roles in contemporary society. In contrast, only 2 out of 25 respondents (8%) mentioned community involvement in celebrations, indicating a potential shift towards more individualized or family-centered observances. The change may reflect broader societal trends towards modernity and individualism, where personal preferences increasingly shape traditional practices. Generally, the responses illustrate a community navigating the balance between tradition and modernity, facing the implications of adhering to customs while responding to contemporary values. One respondent expressed:

*"Our marriages represent not only our love but also our family's legacy. While we respect our traditions, we also feel the influences of modern life, which sometimes leads to confusion."*

Therefore, the traditional marriage customs and rituals within the Gujjar tribal community exemplify the interaction between cultural heritage and evolving societal norms, highlighting a dynamic cultural landscape that adapts while preserving core values.

### **Evolving Tribal Marriage Customs and Norms**

**Table 10: Distribution of Respondents on Reasons for the Evolution of Tribal Marriage Customs and Norms**

Reasons for Evolution	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Increased Education and Awareness	9	36%
Changing Social Values	6	24%
Economic Pressures	5	20%
Influence of Media and Technology	3	12%



Migration and Urbanization	2	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 10 shows the factors driving the evolution of tribal marriage customs. Increased education and awareness, cited by 9 out of 25 respondents (36%), emerge as the leading factor, indicating the community's recognition of education's role in shifting traditional perspectives. Changing social values, mentioned by 6 respondents (24%), reflect a shift towards modern beliefs over established norms. Economic pressures, noted by 5 respondents (20%), emphasize the financial challenges that influence a rethinking of marriage customs. The influence of media and technology, reported by 3 respondents (12%), highlights the role of external cultural exposure in shaping views on marriage. Lastly, migration and urbanization, mentioned by 2 respondents (8%), underscore the impact of relocation on traditional practices. One respondent expressed:

*"Education has broadened our horizons beyond tradition. While I respect our customs, I also see the need for change to meet today's realities."*

Thus, the evolution of tribal marriage customs reflects the community's balancing act between maintaining cultural heritage and adapting to modern influences. The factors of education, changing values, economic realities, media, and migration collectively shape a dynamic cultural landscape where tradition and modernity coexist.

**Table 11: Distribution of Respondents on the Influence of Transformations in Marriage Customs on Family Structure and Dynamics**

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	20	80%
No	5	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 11 illustrates respondents' views on how changes in marriage customs have affected family structure and dynamics within the Gujjar tribal community. A majority, 20 out of 25 respondents (80%), indicated that evolving marriage practices had influenced family roles, relationships, and authority structures, leading to changes in household decision-making and responsibilities. Conversely, 5 respondents (20%) did not perceive any significant impact on family dynamics, suggesting that traditional family structures had remained intact for them. These findings suggest a majority of respondents see a link between shifting marriage customs and broader changes in family dynamics.

#### **Evolving Perspectives on Marital Arrangements in Tribal Communities**

The attitudes of tribal community members towards marital arrangements reflect a broad spectrum of views, highlighting generational differences in acceptance. While some respondents favor traditional norms, others express mixed or uncertain views, demonstrating diverse beliefs. The data indicates that younger generations tend to be more open to changing marital practices, pointing to broader societal shifts. Table 12 summarizes these perceptions across four categories: positive, neutral, negative, and unsure.

**Table 12: Distribution of Respondents on Perceptions of Marital Arrangements and Generational Differences in Acceptance**

Perceptions of Marital Arrangements	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Positive Attitudes	10	40%
Neutral Attitudes	8	32%
Negative Attitudes	5	20%
Unsure	2	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 12 shows the distribution of respondents' attitudes towards marital arrangements. A notable 40% (10 out of 25 respondents) expressed positive views, indicating majority openness to diverse practices and evolving customs. Another 32% (8 respondents) held neutral views, reflecting a careful balance between tradition and new ideas. Meanwhile, 20% (5 respondents) conveyed negative attitudes, suggesting resistance to changes that might disrupt cultural norms. Lastly, 8% (2 respondents) were unsure, possibly due to uncertainty about the evolving customs or internal conflicts between personal and community expectations. These responses reveal that while many in the Gujjar community are open to new marital arrangements, generational differences create a need for continued discussion to reconcile tradition with modern influences. One respondent articulated their perspective succinctly:

*"In our community, we have always valued our traditions, but the younger generation seems to embrace new ideas about marriage. We need to find a balance that honors our past while allowing for growth and understanding."*

Therefore, the analysis underscores the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity within the Gujjar community's attitudes towards marital arrangements. The findings suggest that while there is a prevailing acceptance of various practices, the generational divide necessitates ongoing dialogue to navigate the complexities of cultural identity and adaptation in an ever-changing world.

**Table 13: Distribution of Respondents Based on Exogamy Practices**

Practice of Exogamy	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	72.0%
No	7	28.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data in Table 13 shows that a significant majority, 18 out of 25 respondents (72%), practice exogamy, indicating that intermarriage is common within the tribal community. It suggests that many respondents are open to marrying outside their clan or tribe, potentially to expand social connections, gain economic or political benefits, or strengthen alliances. In contrast, 7 respondents (28%) do not practice exogamy, likely reflecting adherence to traditional customs that emphasize endogamy, or marriage within the same tribe. The division highlights the coexistence of both evolving and traditional marriage practices within the community.

### Findings of the Study

Based on the above study, the important findings are as follows:

- The Gujjar community experiences significant changes in family size and structure, reflecting evolving dynamics influenced by socio-economic factors, cultural shifts, and a transition toward nuclear living arrangements amid economic pressures and changing social norms.
- Traditional values emphasize the importance of parents within families, while the significance of siblings and extended relatives has decreased, indicating a notable shift toward nuclear family structures in the Gujjar tribe.
- Increased female participation in economic activities signifies changing gender roles within the community, alongside shifts in social norms influenced by media, leading to shared responsibilities in household and community tasks.
- Arranged marriages remain a cornerstone of Gujjar traditions, highlighting family and community roles in marital decisions, while ongoing discussions about practices like dowry provoke dialogue regarding gender dynamics and evolving marriage customs.
- A substantial portion of Gujjar youth prioritize education to transform their futures, reflecting shifting values and aspirations, while openness to exogamous practices indicates a willingness to form alliances beyond traditional boundaries, showcasing cultural complexity.

### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study highlight significant changes in the family dynamics and marriage systems among the Gujjar tribe in Jammu and Kashmir, reflecting broader socio-economic and cultural transformations. The transition from extended families to nuclear households indicates evolving familial relationships and values, influenced by economic pressures and modernization. Also, the increasing involvement of women in economic activities and shifting gender roles demonstrate a movement towards greater equality within the community. Despite the persistence of arranged marriages, there is a growing openness among the youth to individual choice in marital decisions, driven by education and changing social norms. To

further support these positive developments, it is recommended that community leaders and policymakers promote educational initiatives aimed at enhancing awareness of gender equality and modern marital practices. Programs focusing on economic empowerment for women can further facilitate their participation in decision-making processes. Also, fostering dialogue around cultural practices, such as dowry and exogamy, can help navigate the complexities of tradition and modernity, ultimately strengthening the Gujjar community's identity while adapting to contemporary societal changes.

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