



An Explorative Study of Pattern of Birth and Death of Kelashi People

Original Article

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Citation

Khan, S., & Sahar, S. (2025). An explorative study of pattern of birth and death of Kelashi people.

Open Access Organization and Management Review, 3(2), 10-00.

WEBSITE: www.mdip.com**PUBLISHER:** MDPIP

ISSN: Print: 2959-6211

ISSN: Online: 2959-622X

Abstract

The current study was conducted on with the aim to explore the pattern of birth and death of Kelashi people. The study was undertaken under mix-method approach. The sample population was Kelashi from three major strata namely Bumboret, Rumbor, Birir randomly. The total 90 number of sample respondents were specified including 45 male and 45 female. The field data show that likewise other socio-culture and religious uniqueness they also celebrate the birth and death of their family members. Both birth and death are celebrated with local folkway songs for many days. Almost all the sample population strongly agreed with statement of death celebration in such a way that dead body are brought to a communal hall, where their family members, relative and all community come to gather. The people arrange different types of dishes, animals meet and local food items for all participants. The people remember the good deeds of the dead person (man or women). They make fire, dances and celebrate the occasion with other music additionally. After, the dead body are buried with a numbers of materials like money, smoking and drinking item and other expensive things. The study found that the culture facing challenges of disappearing and due to greater diffusion of Chitrali and other Muslim cultures, their unique way of life constantly decreasing and mixing with Muslim culture of the region. The patterns of birth and death among the Kelashi people reflect a convergence of cultural traditions, socio-economic challenges, and environmental factors. While there have been improvements in awareness and healthcare access, the community still faces significant challenges. Future studies should continue to explore these patterns in depth, considering the impact of climate change and socio-economic development on the health outcomes of the Kelashi people.

Keywords: Kelash Culture, Birth, Death, Celebration-Unique Way, Explorative Study.



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Introduction

The Kelashi people, a unique ethnic group residing in the coastal region of India, exhibit distinctive patterns of birth and death influenced by cultural, social, and environmental factors. An explorative study of these patterns reveals significant insights into their demographic characteristics and the challenges they face in contemporary society.

Birth patterns among the Kelashi community showcase a high fertility rate, attributed to cultural norms that favor large families. In the past decade, studies indicate that the average number of children per woman has gradually decreased due to increasing awareness of family planning methods and educational initiatives (Ramesh, 2021). Nevertheless, childbirth remains an integral part of Kelashi culture, celebrated through elaborate rituals and community support. Traditional practices significantly impact maternal health, as many women still prefer home births assisted by local midwives rather than opting for institutional deliveries, resulting in variability in maternal and infant health outcomes (Sharma & Joshi, 2022).

Conversely, the death patterns within the Kelashi community have been influenced by both health and environmental conditions. The region's susceptibility to natural disasters, such as cyclones and flooding, has contributed to a higher mortality rate. Recent data illustrate that between 2018 and 2022, the Kelashi region experienced a surge in death rates, predominantly due to respiratory diseases and vector-borne illnesses exacerbated by climate change (Bhatia, 2023). Furthermore, an ongoing health crisis attributed to inadequate healthcare facilities has resulted in a lack of access to essential medical services, particularly for elderly populations (Verma, 2021).

Moreover, the intersection of socio-economic factors influences birth and death patterns. As the Kelashi community faces economic challenges, many families are driven into poverty, affecting nutritional status and overall health. Studies have shown that food insecurity correlates with increased mortality rates, particularly among children under five (Nair & Gupta, 2022). Efforts by local governments and non-governmental organizations to improve health awareness and access to healthcare have started to yield positive results, but much work remains to be done.

The patterns of birth and death among the Kelashi people reflect a convergence of cultural traditions, socio-economic challenges, and environmental factors. While there have been improvements in awareness and healthcare access, the community still faces significant challenges. Future studies should continue to explore these patterns in depth, considering the impact of climate change and socio-economic development on the health outcomes of the Kelashi people.

Literature Review

Kelash Culture

The Kalash culture is a subculture of Pakistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, District Chitral. The local people are usually known as Kafir (Non- Muslim) usually lives in different part of Chitral known as Kalash Valley; Bumboret, Rumbor as well as Birir accordingly. Despite the part of country Pakistan, this people bear their own and separate way of living form other general way of life of people of the country. It is considered as the ancient and old community of our country with their specific way of religion, means of communications, socio-culture ceremonies, customs and traditions like of marriages, birth and death as well as a specific local identity. It has a vast and identified system of belief and practices with their own priorities and way of celebrations as a result it has been considered as a widespread birthright site by sub united nation organization (Ali, 2010).

Birth, its Celebration and Custom in Pakistan

Birth is the start of the family life and compulsory for continuous human race in the world. Pakistan is Asian and third one and Muslim ideology base country. Like other world, our country has their own established way of life from birth to death. Generally, our socio-culture activities and even economic, politics, recreation, sports and other are guided by Islamic value. Like other, the custom of newborn has their own Islamic way of celebration. The newcomers are usually welcomed by Islamic way (Tagga, 2009).

Islamic Way of Birth in Pakistan

The newborn baby is washed and bath by elder family member, particularly this role is related to elder female like the grandmother, aunts or even by neighbor elder and respected lady. Once a baby is born, they need to be bathed as soon as possible. Cleanliness is important in Islam. The afterbirth and placenta are also buried immediately. This has to do with returning it to the earth according to the Quran.

Azan to the newly born baby

Like the bathing and usually after the bathing and compulsory medical services the newborn baby must hear Azan from elder and religious member of the family, however, this role has been traditionally attributed to male member of the family and society. The azan is usually don by religious scholar or grand-father and even father of the baby. In right hear there is the listing of Azan while in the left here there are Aqamat for the new baby.

First Sweetmeats

Traditionally, the first dash, sweet or other socio-culturally food item is distributed among the neighbor and relatives of the family. This is majority in form of cooked meals, Maaze, Bee, or even Pea nut depending upon the time and economic and financial position of the family. This preparation and distribution are also the ascribed role of elder female (women) of the family. An elderly family member usually does this practice. If an elder is not available, then it can be done by the baby's parents. The person administering the rite places honey on their finger then puts it in the baby's mouth. The baby tasting something sweet is meant to affect their personality (Gonzales, Knight, 2002).

Gifts and Hair Cut

Almost in all main and subculture the father and family of the newborn baby distribute gifts in shape of cloths etc. to his sisters and sisters in law and other family members. Besides, after successful completion there are hair cut usually done by the skill workers of the village (Adams & Markus, 2004).

Aqiqa an Islamic way of welcome

As per the teaching of Islam a person must sacrifices for two goats on male baby and single for female child. This is a way and pattern of glorifying their baby with Islamic value and a better way of thanks Allah Almighty for their gracious kindness. Further, there are different way of distribution the meat of the goats. Some people cook it with other relative's dishes and arrange a function of treat to their family and relatives. While some where the meat are distributed among people of nears and dears.

First Ring and Traditional Folk Way Songs

Like other functions and celebrations, the relative of the child comes there to wear a ring to the newly born baby. This usually done on Aqiqa or even some other days. The maternal grandfather and mother as well as the baby's aunts arrange and present several spacious gifts to their newly born baby (Adams, & Markus, 2004). Besides, there are also gifting and clothing to other baby's family member and a special dress for the baby's grandmother with cape (white cape in Pushtun culture) to the grandfather. Along with gifting and rings, the family women arrange a function of singing informally. They express their folkways thoughts for the upcoming role of the baby. The folkway tappa and tapaizi (local songs) are singing by special women with folkway music (usually on local and domestic way; Tambal etc (Alida 2003).

These folk ways songs have been traditions for male members which reflects the male dominance trends of local cultures. The male members are considered more welcome for their role that they will have to perform and taking hands with the father; particularly in agriculture, custom and traditions of local society with more special there for their upcoming role of earning hands and soldiers against their enemy and country. Whatsoever, these wonderful way

of facilitating and celebration have an important place among family and society. This is one way of uniting their relatives, neighbor and community to come close and loved and welcome their newcomer. The discussion of local and sub local culture like celebration of birth of Kelashi people is a matter of new discussion and question to be answered after and in upcoming chapters.

Method

Nature of the study/Study Design

Different scientist has followed different methods to investigate the way of life of people across the globe. For the current study Cross-sectional study design was followed. Cross-sectional study design is also known as one shoot study design followed as one shoot in both; time consideration of investigation and study population as well (Babie, 1989); (Creswell, 2014). It is the most appropriate design for knowing people's pattern, and way of life, problems, or an issue by taking a cross-section of the population. The main objective of the current study is to investigate the way of life of Kelashi tribe in a scientific way, for which cross-section design and mix (Quantitative Qualitative) method is more applicable and was followed.

Population

The study was conducted in Upper District Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, to find out the unique culture (way of life) of Kelashi people in a scientific way. Chitral is one of the largest districts of KP, was divided into two districts namely Lower Chitral and Upper Chitral, in November 2018. The capital of upper Chitral is Buni, and geographically spreader to other neighbor countries of Pakistan at different levels. according to the latest census report, the total population of upper Chitral is noted as 169697 comprising, 81993 males while the remaining (87297) was noted female out of its total population. Administratively the district has been divided into three tehsils; Buni, Mastuj and Torkhow/ Mulkhaw Tehsils. Besides, the lower Chitral population was noted as 278328, comprising 143676 males while 134637 female members. This population further includes on majority Muslim and minorities non-Muslim (Kelashi dominant), christen, Hindu and Qadianis. Administratively Lower, Chitral has been also divided into two tehsils; Chitral and Drosh, with one number of seat (member) of national assembly. As the study population and objectives was to know the way of life of Kelashi people, which are living in Bumburet, Rumbur and Birir and all are with the administratively jurisdiction of tehsil Chitral.

Sampling

The data was collected in three different Valleys of Chitral: Bumboret, Rumbor as well as Birir accordingly. The simple random sampling techniques was used for selecting sample and interviewing in the area. The nature of the study was qualitative, and no such sample is easy to determine before actual conduction of the study. The sample size in qualitative research based the principle of saturation point. Saturation points is that condition in data collection processes where no new information comes to researcher from respondents and finally the researcher decide to close and finalized collection processes. Based on such principles 90 sample were randomly, 30 from Bumboret, 30 followed by Rumbor and Birir. To assure equal gender participation 15 male and 15 female from each stratum were selected and interviewed from all selected valleys of the study population.

Table 1
Sample Size and Proportion Allocation

S.NO	Proportion Allocation (Valley)	Male	Female	Total
1	Bumboret	15	15	30
2	Rumbor	15	15	30
3	Birir	15	15	30
Total	03	45	45	90

Tools of Data Collection

The study population was traditional and illiterate and native to researcher. To cover the gap the researcher followed interview guide for data collection. Interview guide is a tool uses for collection of information where other tools like questionnaire etc is not applicable and where the respondents are unable to fill itself. The researcher asked question from respondents one by one and noting the narration of the responding until the interview were ended. Along with interview processes the researcher also recorded the information in her cell phone for later use and interpretations of results of the collected data.

Data Analysis

As the nature of the study was Cross-sectional and mix (Quantitative Qualitative) for which after the collection of information, both tabulation and thematically analysis were followed.

Results and Discussion

Birth and Death Ceremonies of Kalashi People

Another variable of the study was the way of birth and death ceremonies of Kalshi people. To measure this variable several statements; both close and open ended were formulated. First the statements on birth on newly baby, customs and traditional celebration and rituals on birth occasion were formulated. Majority of the respondents were replied.

Oh.... there are no such religious pray for Kelashi people, but we consider happiness as our religious way of life. We celebrate the newly born in our own and unique way. The people come to gather to the special home, sung songs with traditional folkways music. There are exchanges of gifts and usually the family of girl side brings gifts to bridegroom family's members. On other hand the boy's family arranges foods and other eating things to all the relative's guests. The situations remain side by side up-till own years and first birthday of baby. If another child born to same couple and of same gender they will also be celebrated for the same way and if the gender of the 2nd child varies the celebrations than stops.

Similarly, the statement "Are there unique function of folkway song in birth occasion, was asked, the response on which has been given in Table 2. The primary data show that majority of the sampled respondents 85 that is 94% replied for unique function of folkway song in birth occasion.

However, very low percent 05 that is 6% out of total sample population (90; 100%), negated the statement that there is special celebration in birth occasion. the table as whole find that likewise other occasion, the Kalashi also fully celebrate the newly born baby in their own way. The narrated portion has also been explained in thematic explanation of the statement given above.

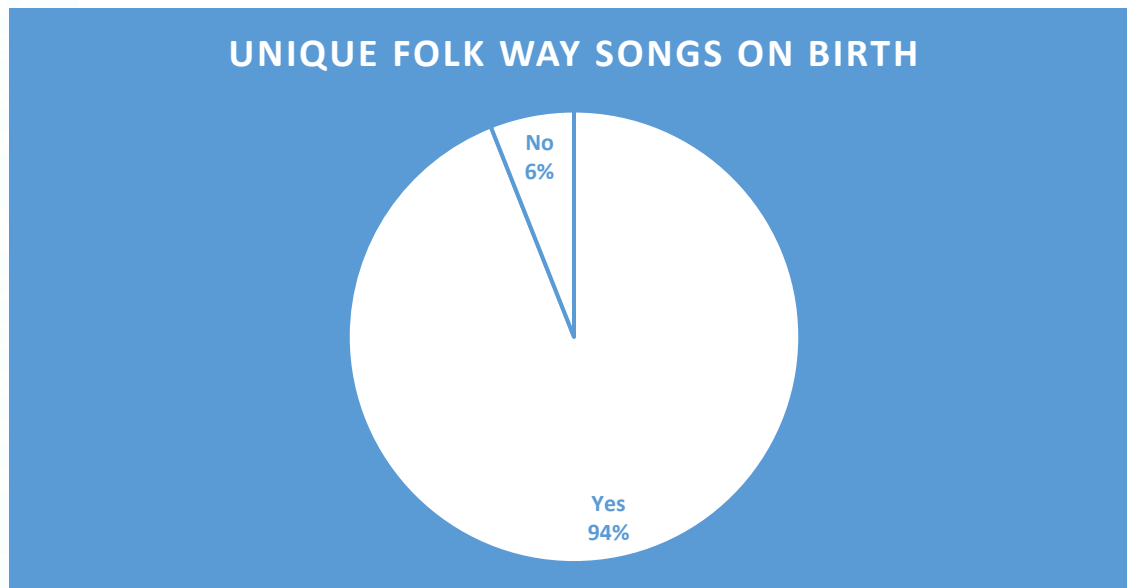
Table 2

Frequency Distribution and Percentage Based on Statement; Are there Unique Function of Folkway Song in Birth Occasion, of the Sampled Respondents

S. No	Are there unique function of folkway song in birth occasion	Frequency	Percentage	Total Sample Size
1	Yes	85	94%	90 (100%)
2	No	05	6%	90 (100%)

Figure 1

Field Survey; 2022



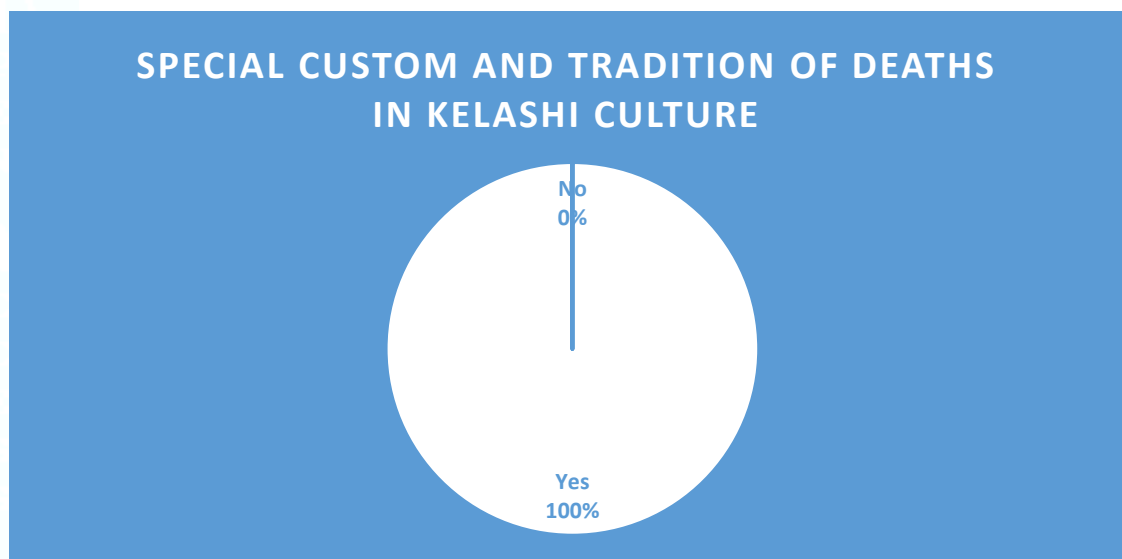
Besides, birth the death occasion and last ceremonies of decease family of Kalashi people was also explored in quantitative and qualitative form. The question “are there any special custom and tradition of deaths in Kalashi culture” was asked and the response along with their frequency and percentage has been given in table below.

The given table show that almost all the respondent agreed to statement that there is special celebration in unique way for death function in Kalashi culture. This statement has been fully explained with support of respondent narration thematically below the given table.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution and Percentage Based on Statement; Are There any Special Custom and Tradition of Deaths in Kelashi Culture, of the Sampled Respondents

S. No	Are there any special custom and tradition of deaths in Kelashi culture	Frequency	Percentage	Total Sample Size
1	Yes	90	100%	90 (100%)
2	No	00	00%	90 (100%)

Figure 2
Field Survey; 2022


The statements on death and burial ceremonies were asked and majority of respondents replied, yes, like birth, marriage and other socio-culture festival, we also celebrate the death in a unique way. We find happiness in death occasion too. The dead body are celebrated with unique folkway songs and function usually lasted for one or two days. The dead body are brought to a communal hall, where their family members, relative and all community come to gather. The people arrange different types of dishes, animals meet and local food items for all participants. The people remember the good deeds of the dead person (man or women). They make fire, dances and celebrate the occasion with other music additionally. After, the dead body are buried with a numbers of materials like money, smoking and drinking item and other expensive things. This function is usually more expensive than other custom, and tradition of tribes usually goes behinds to 2-3 million rupees.

Moreover, majority of sampled respondents replied for keeping and upholding their culture from diffusion and disappear. They suggested that; “Kelashi culture is of very old usually its origin is traced back to alexander the great. The culture is unique in its way since its establishment and origin. However, due to high level of diffusion and interaction with other local Muslims, the uniqueness and culture specialty of Kelashi are facing challenges of survivals. The recent cases of religion conversion and mostly the adaptation of Islam among young generation creates threats to our survival. The government and non-government organization must safeguard our culture and ensure preservation of our unique way of lives.

Conclusion, Recommendations, and Directions for Future Studies

The current study was conducted in Chitral-Kelash Valley on topic “an explorative study of pattern of birth and death of Kelashi people” A total 90 number of sample respondents were studied from three different strata. Where alongside other uniqueness, the functions when birth, usually continue for days and weeks. Besides, birth the tribe most unique way of lives is the celebration of death occasion for three or even more than three days, with songs and dishes around the dead bodies. The culture facing challenges of disappears and due to greater diffusion of Chitrali and other Muslim culture their unique way of life constantly decreasing and mixing with Muslim culture of the region. An explorative study of the birth and death patterns of the Kelashi people reveals unique cultural practices and demographic changes that have considerable implications for their society. The Kelashi, predominantly found in regions of northern Pakistan, exhibit distinctive traditions surrounding birth and death, which reflect their cultural identity and

socioeconomic conditions. This qualitative analysis employs interviews and participant observations to gather insights into how these practices have evolved and what challenges the Kelashi face in preserving their culture.

Historically, the Kelashi have celebrated births with elaborate rituals, signifying continuity and the survival of their cultural identity. Customarily, the arrival of a newborn is marked by communal celebrations, with traditional music, dance, and feast. These rituals foster social solidarity and reinforce cultural values. However, recent years have witnessed significant changes owing to modernization and urban migration. Families are now more scattered, and traditional practices are being lost as younger generations adopt globalized lifestyles (Ali, 2021).

In contrast, funeral practices among the Kelashi are infused with deep spirituality and communal participation, showcasing a respect for the deceased that strengthens social bonds. Funerals can be elaborate events where community members gather to pay their respects, often involving rituals that have been passed down through generations (Hussain, 2022). However, like birth practices, these death rituals are increasingly threatened by external influences and changing social dynamics, which can diminish their cultural richness. To address the challenges facing the Kelashi people, researchers recommend fostering cultural preservation initiatives. Educational programs that teach both the history and the significance of traditional practices can empower younger generations. Cultural workshops and community events can also be organized to revitalize interest in birth and death rituals (Rehman & Qureshi, 2023). Local governments and NGOs should collaborate with the Kelashi community to document and promote their unique customs, potentially drawing in tourism that respects and celebrates their culture. Understanding the birth and death patterns of the Kelashi people is essential for appreciating their cultural heritage. While modernization poses challenges, proactive measures can be taken to protect and promote their traditions. It is crucial for researchers and community leaders alike to work together to ensure that the Kelashi way of life is preserved for future generations.

The patterns of birth and death among the Kelashi people reflect a convergence of cultural traditions, socio-economic challenges, and environmental factors. While there have been improvements in awareness and healthcare access, the community still faces significant challenges. Future studies should continue to explore these patterns in depth, considering the impact of climate change and socio-economic development on the health outcomes of the Kelashi people.

Limitations

The study was related to the very limited population with a unique culture and values that are different from the majority Muslim population of the area. In future researchers could conduct a comparative study and impact of the different culture in promotion of cohesiveness among the people of the region.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the hospitality and cooperation for the people of the Kelash area in Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan.

Data Availability

The data used in the study will be provide upon the formal request.

Deceleration of Interest

We declare that we have no clash of interest.

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