

Fauzia Saleem Alvi\*  
Khalil Ahmad\*\*

## **An Analytical Study on Emerging Adulthood in Lahore City**

### **Abstract**

*'Emerging Adulthood', a concept developed by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2005), is an important phenomenon prevailing world over. The concept explains that with major socio-economic development, youth are spending a longer period of time in education, marrying at a later stage and delaying the process of parenthood. Due to this phenomenon a complex transition is being experienced by the institution of family world over. The paper aims to have an understanding how this phenomenon is occurring in Lahore city and what are its manifestations in the context of changes being experienced within the family institution. Mixed-methodology has been employed to collect primary data from youth and parents. The experiences and opinions given by the two generations provide a lucid and comprehensive picture on the transition being experienced by the institution of family in our country.*

**Key Words:** Emerging Adulthood, Individual economic development, Material progress, Transition in family institution,

### **Introduction**

The present paper aims to analyze the different manifestations of the phenomenon of Emerging Adulthood in Lahore City and how the process of transition is being experienced within the family institution influencing the roles and attitudes of two generations. The concept of "Emerging Adulthood" has been developed by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2005) in his theory of "Global Youth Transition".

According to Arnett, globalization has 'stretched' the period for youth in which they take their adulthood responsibilities like getting a job, marriage and having children. This transition is due to a highly technological and information-based global economy, which has increased the competition among youth to get better jobs. In the pursuit of higher education and greater skilled work experience, adult responsibilities are delayed, which Arnett calls 'Emerging Adulthood'. This is a period from teenage to mid-twenties, when an individual is supposed to have a job, get married, have children and start a responsible adult life. In the developed world this phenomenon is at its rise. Under the influence of globalization it is fast becoming part of the lives of youth in the developing world. Arnett views the spread of 'Emerging Adulthood' being related to the economic development

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\* Dr. Fauzia Saleem Alvi, PhD Sociology, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab Lahore. [fauziaalvi17@yahoo.com](mailto:fauziaalvi17@yahoo.com).

\*\* Dr. Khalil Ahmad, PhD Sociology, Associate Professor of Sociology, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab Lahore. [Khalil.iscs@pu.edu.pk](mailto:Khalil.iscs@pu.edu.pk).

taking place in societies, as it provides opportunities for 'individual economic development' (Alvi, 2011).

According to Arnett (2004), due to the increased inclination towards individual economic development and material progress today young people are more inclined towards attaining a prolonged period of independent role exploration during their late teens and twenties. This has weakened the traditional hierarchies of authority and the young people are moving towards greater individualism, affecting the basic structures of the institution of family. Moreover this phenomenon is fading away the traditional normative values of our society like strong family bonding, respect and authority of the male head of the family and female being treated as a symbol of respect and honour of family confining her to the private domain only.

Family being the primary social institution performs several important functions in the society. The procreation of new generation and regulating its social as well as sexual activities are important functions of the family institution. Besides this it develops the social identity of the young individual along with providing it material and emotional security as well as the transmission of socio-cultural values (Macionis,2012; Schaefer,2017). With such broad spectrum of activities the study of 'Emerging Adulthood' becomes even more important in the indigenous context as it will develop an understanding of the structural changes being predicted in the Pakistani family institution.

Taking the case of Lahore city, the present paper aims to understand the transition in the family institution due to manifestations of the Emerging Adulthood. Today youth is a significant component of Pakistani society as it comprises of nearly 65 percent of the total population (Population Census, 2016). But similar to the Asia Pacific region, here youth in transition has been a relatively under researched area due to lack of conceptual clarity. The reason being that the issues concerning youth and the strategies to address them varies through time and place; from urban to rural and from country to country, even from region to region (Gale & Fahey, 2005).

Arnett (2005) while analyzing the societal dimensions of Emerging Adulthood in the developed countries highlights that this is a phenomenon of the societies where economic development is high and the labor of young people is not urgently needed. The families which have sufficient resources to maintain their standard of living, provide opportunities to their young adults to spend greater time in exploring better job opportunities. The technological advancement has also expanded the variety of specialized job market, providing opportunities to young adults to explore new avenues and recognition within their society. However in some parts of the world due to the lack of effective government policies there are an increased number of students in universities, whereas the job-market is not equipped to provide jobs to all graduates coming out of these universities (Booth, 2002; Nsamenang, 2002). Moreover Arnett explains that the phenomenon of Emerging Adulthood in the developing countries is only for the rich urban class youth, whereas the rural poor lack this experience as at a very early age they have to carry on the adulthood responsibilities like getting married and earning for the family.

## **Methodology**

Mixed-methodology has been employed in this study to have an understanding of the phenomenon. Self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from youth belonging to the age group between 20-24 years. The data was collected from 600 students of two public sector universities of Lahore, using Multi-stage sampling procedure. In the selected sample there were 65 percent female youth and 35 percent male young respondents. The entire sample comprised of youth which belonged to different areas of Lahore. In-depth Interviews were conducted from parents to have a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

## **Emerging Adulthood in Lahore**

In the present research different manifestations of Emerging Adulthood were studied in Lahore city, in order to understand the transition in the family institution through the opinions and experiences given by the youth and parents. The dimensions of Emerging Adulthood studied in the present research are discussed as follows;

### **1- Trend of Delayed Marriages**

With the socio-economic development there has been a delay of marriages among youth. Age at first marriage has risen from 20-24 years to 26-29 years in all most all regions of the world. The main reason for this delay has been pursuance of specialized education for attaining better employment opportunities (Quah, 2003; DeSilva, 2003; Nossier, 2003 & Rindfuss et. al, 2004; NIPS, 2008). A new trend which has influenced the late marriage phenomenon especially in Asia is that there has been an increased number of females who are acquiring higher education in order to empower themselves by attaining economic independence. The same situation lies in Pakistan's urban communities (PES 2012-13). In the surveyed population a similar trend was seen. There were 97.5 percent young respondents who were unmarried and plan to remain single until they qualify for a 'good job'. Interestingly the proportion of male and females respondents was almost equal. From the In-depth interviews of parents, mothers were of the view that ;

*Today we are living in a competitive era. Economic stability is the first thing we want to have for our young child.*

Moreover mothers were of the opinion that in their time it was acceptable to marry children young but now the right age to marry girls was 20- 25 years and for boys 28-32 years, when they could handle their family responsibilities appropriately. One mother who was a medical doctor by profession insisted that she wanted to send her children abroad for better economic opportunities. The fathers' views were that young children can decide themselves where they can make a good future. Therefore, searching better economic opportunities before marriage has become a practice.

### **2- Female's Economic Independence**

Pakistan is traditionally a patriarchal society where female's place is considered inside her home and male is considered to be the economic support of the family (Agarwall, 1994; Afshar, 1996; Donnan, 1997 Allan, 2000; Munawar, 2006). Contrary to this in the surveyed population 59.1 percent young males approved

economic independence of females and out of the total, 52 percent male respondents were of the view that earning females made wiser decisions in household affairs as compared to the non-earning females. Both parents were of the view that having a job makes their daughter's married life more secure. This shows a transition in the family institution, where due to Emerging Adulthood female's emancipation capacity is gradually enhancing.

### **3- Erosion of Traditional Values**

Due to the prolonged period of independent role exploration during their late teens and twenties, the youth is gradually gaining individualism, weakening the traditional hierarchies of authority and apparent erosion of traditional values. In Pakistani society, caste system was the result of the amalgamation of Muslim and Hindu culture before the pre-partition period. It is a borrowed trait and many social and behavioral modifications regarding 'caste attitude' have been experienced by the Pakistani society (Khalid, 2003). In the present study there were 74.4 percent young males and 72.9 percent females who opined that caste was an important factor for one's social recognition and respect within society. However, the response rate was very low (5.8 percent among young males and 9.2 percent among young females), in case of marriage within their own caste. This transition in the marriage custom was affirmed by the parents also, as told by a mother;

*During the time when we were young, our elders gave great importance to the caste of the family in which they intended to marry us. But today material status has become more important while deciding marriages.*

Moreover parents also elaborated that in the past marriages were mostly decided on the basis of caste and nobility of the family but today due to materialism, economic status of the boy and in case of the girl, her family's material status is considered.

### **4- Importance of Children**

In the traditional Pakistani culture getting married early and having five to six children is a custom (PDHS 2012-13). However with the influence of globalization not only the age of marriage has been delayed, but desire to have a large family size has also somewhat decreased. According to the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18, the maiden range of married age of females is 25- 49 in which they have their first child. Majority (60 percent) of the young respondents were of the opinion to have two to three children. However in case of having one child, the youth was of the opinion that parent's with one girl face more difficulty then with one boy, due to the economic factor. Although after getting married delaying parenthood was not considered acceptable by both parents and the younger generation.

### **5- Nucleation of Family**

There were 71.0 percent respondents who belonged to nuclear family. Mostly this nucleation of family was due to search of better employment opportunities and providing higher education to young children. Therefore it can be inferred that

nucleation of family is an outcome of the phenomenon of Emerging Adulthood spreading in Lahore city.

### **Conclusion**

Similar to the other developing countries Emerging Adulthood is a fast prevailing phenomenon in the urban regions of our country due to its growing technological and information based economy. Out of 50 million youth in the age group of 18-19 years, 55 percent is urban youth and only Lahore and Karachi comprise 50 percent of the total youth population of the country, which is highest in the world after Yemen (IPRI, 2014). In the present study conducted in Lahore city, visible manifestations of Emerging Adulthood are to be seen. Marriages at an older age are becoming a norm. Parents as well as youth are more perused towards the individual economic development through higher education and better employment opportunities for the youth. Marrying in teenage or early twenties has started to become an eroded traditional value. Marrying within ones own caste has also gradually losing its significance in the Lahore city population. Parents are more interested in searching a mate for their young children who can ensure material progress and comforts in life to their child. In connection to this reality female employment is no more considered a violation of traditional norms in the urban settings of our country infact the young males consider them more effective in managing household affairs as compared to the young females who do not earn. With delayed marriages, the delaying of parenthood has also become an acceptable norm in our society. However, delaying this process after marriage remains to be a taboo in Pakistani society. The idea of having large number of children for economic support is gradually changing. The youth prefer to have not more than two to three children and nucleation of family is also rapidly increasing where hierarchy of authority within family is gradually being replaced by individualism.

The present research will be a major contributor as it will help different government and non-government institutions in developing a baseline strategy to channelize the bulk of youth in Pakistan experiencing transition. The present research is an exploratory study which will guide the policy makers that how the traditional role of family is gradually changing (especially in the urban population) and what type of institutional support is required to harmonize this change. The present research will also provide an understanding that how the traditional definition of Patriarchy needs to be redefined with the changing attitudes of both young females as well as males towards the role and status of females within family and in society at large.

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