



## THE NOMADIC LIFESTYLE: A JOURNEY THROUGH TRADITION AND FREEDOM

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### **Abstract**

*Nomadic communities have existed for centuries, adapting their lifestyles to diverse environments through constant movement and strong cultural traditions. This article explores the lifestyle of nomads, focusing on their daily routines, social structures, economic activities, and relationship with nature. It examines how mobility shapes their identity, values, and survival strategies while highlighting the challenges they face in the modern world, including urbanization, climate change, and loss of traditional lands. The study also discusses the cultural richness of nomadic societies, emphasizing their resilience, independence, and deep connection to heritage. By understanding the lives of nomads, readers can gain insight into alternative ways of living that differ significantly from settled societies yet continue to influence human culture and history. Under the interpretivism paradigm, by using qualitative research method, case study approach was employed to explore the viewpoints, traditions, lifestyles, and challenges of nomads' life. The sample of two nomad families from the southern area of Lahore were interviewed. The one week observations and unstructured interview (30 questions; close and open-ended) were used as instruments in the study. The study found that nomadism remains a deeply rooted traditional way of life in which nomadic communities survive under harsh physical and biological conditions with very limited access to modern technologies. Despite these challenges, nomads were observed to be highly skillful, hardworking, and self-reliant people who prefer earning through labor rather than begging. A strong sense of solidarity and unity was also evident among the community members, as they closely follow traditional norms, remain connected with nature, and resolve conflicts through the guidance of elders and community decisions.*

**Keywords: Nomads, Life-style, Traditions, challenges, Norms, Society, Begging.**

### **Introduction**

The word Nomad is used for the person or persons belonging to wandering pastoral community. The nomads can be divided into two groups. One group of nomads wander from one place to the other for grassland of their animals, and the other group are the migrant fisher-folks, they earn their living from the sale of fish, they are still poor, hungry, degrading environmental. Basically nomadism includes the persons who repeatedly shift in search of survival and the movement is focused around temporary areas of operations, those areas contain food supply and the technical availability for resource utilization and adjusting in the labor market. Simpson and Weiner (1989) maintained that nomads are roaming rural community. The invasion of nomads into stable civilizations obvious in the early history of ancient Egypt and Babylonia and extended with the numerous Mongol incursions of West Asia and Europe in the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and early 15<sup>th</sup> century, especially under Genghis Khan and Taimur (Rubel, 1976). Nomadic communities have movement type of culture which have been mostly suitable to their environment and conditions of mobility as well as to the demands and possibilities of their life style (Akbar, 1981).

Today, nomadic populations are confronted with critical challenges to their present survival, future sustainability, and mainly to their cultural identity in all over the regions of the world, including Lahore, Pakistan. Many nomads are suffering from the degeneration of their traditional social structures and poverty from marginalization. According to said, (1983) nomads are flexible and opportunist persons in finding several resources for supporting themselves and for trade. The author maintained that by travelling, they exploit the differences in the seasons, to rural areas, grow crops, or to gather natural produce.



The city nomads are not aimless wanderers. They are involved in various activities for their life routine like making handicrafts, dealer of second hand goods, and picking over a garbage and even begging. Nomadic people live like a separate group and support themselves by occupations that require systematic travel. Some nomads travel with their animals for grassland and water. Others sell their services or goods, traveling in search of customers and raw materials; and they are more common in city areas (Akhtar, Akhtar, Maheen, 2013).

The four types of nomad movements are observed in the different countrywide areas of the world; by means of weekly, monthly, quarterly and half-yearly. The most common movements are of last mentioned two types. The quarterly movements are impelled by such reasons as search for grasslands, water availability, new hunting grounds and participation in festival like livestock markets and fairs. The half-yearly movements are normally cause for such reasons as protection against severe cold overcoming at high above sea level and agriculture work availability like harvesting of crops in the grasslands. This type of movement could not be exactly recognized to nomads belonging to a particular caste or tribe. The contemporary definition of nomads referred to any kind of existence categorized by the absence of a secure domicile. The researcher identified three categories of nomadic groups as: hunter/food gatherers, peripatetic (wandering) fisherman, and pastoralists. In Nigeria there were six nomadic groups: the Fulani, the Shuwa, the Buduman, the Kwayam, the Badawi, the Fisherman who concentrated in rivers, lakes, and ponds (Okonkwo & Alhaji, 2012).

In Pakistan, there is also large number of both types of pastoral and non-pastoral nomads' population are living. In Cholistan dry lands areas, pastoral nomads have been living for many years. The pastoral system was characterized by mass migration of animals and people throughout the year in search of water and food (Soharwardi, Nasir, & Arshad, 2012).

It is generally observed that in Pakistan this marginalized community is not much different with regard in their traditions and customs, and living-style than their counterparts in other countries of the world. Typical nomads persons in Pakistan are engross as moving within a specific time. The extensive Azakhel refugee camp in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where nomads were settled has been washed away in the floods of 2010. Perhaps settling down was their mistake. There was a trend of "Kochis" who used to move freely between Pakistan and Afghanistan with their crowds of goats and camels. Thousands of people camped out along the main road from Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan province, to Sukkur in Sindh Province were living in local conditions. In Faisalabad and Lahore, nomadic population tolerates largely the wandering nomads (Akhtar, Akhtar & Maheen, 2013).

#### **Research Methodology**

The nature of the study was qualitative and descriptive design was used. Case study method was adopted in order to explore the living style of nomad families in Lahore. In order to collect relevant information regarding nomads' living styles, a survey technique was used. Many areas were visited where nomads are living and spending their lives for certain time. The sample for the study was contained on two families of nomad community living in the southern area of the Lahore. In order to achieve detail information, all the members of the nomad families were selected as the sample of the study. The semi-structured interview was conducted and observation was held. In order to attain information and explore the daily routine schedule of nomad, the observation comprised on one week was held. The indicators of living-style which is grasped through the current study were income, skills, traditions, socio-economic status (home, health, education, citizenship), and challenges. The interview comprised on thirty (30) open and close ended questions was covered all the described indicators for the living-style of nomads. The validity of the instrument for the current study was ensured by the expert.



The indicators, described in the current study, are related with the items used to explore the living-styles of nomads, were;

*Income:* this aspect of living-style associated with the basic income, and the source of earning, the nomads are using to live their life. The previous researches on nomads' life indicated that the most common source of earning was begging, labor, and harvesting.

*Skills:* this aspect of living-style comprised on those skills such as juggler, which can be beneficial in spending the leisure time and also using as alternate for earning.

*Traditions:* this aspect of living-style consist on those norms which are the part of the nomads' daily life. They use to practice and follow such traditions in their life such as religious, and wedding norms.

*Socio-economic status:* this aspect of living-style of nomads comprised on home, health, education, and citizenship concerns.

*Challenges:* this aspect of living-style of nomads consisted on the conflicting situations of daily basis, which they are facing in order to live a life like security, self-respect, family-planning, basic facilities of life.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The study aimed to explore the living styles of nomad. The basic purpose of this study was to investigate and explore the daily routine life, the confronting situations from which the nomads are dealing, their earning and means of earning.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the study were as follows;

1. To explore the living-styles of nomads
2. To explore their motives of migrating from one place to another.
3. To study the norms and values of the nomad families.
4. To investigate the source of income of nomads families.
5. To search out the challenges faced by nomadic community.

### **Research Question**

The following research questions were addressed in the study;

1. What is daily routine life of nomad families?
2. What are the migrating reasons of nomads?
3. What are the traditions followed by the nomads?
4. What is the basic source of income of nomads?
5. What are the economic challenges confronted by the nomads?

The nature of the study was qualitative and descriptive design was used. Ethnographic case study method was adopted in order to explore the living style of nomad families in Lahore. In order to collect relevant information regarding nomads' living styles, a survey technique was used. Many areas were visited where nomads are living and spending their lives for certain time. The sample for the study was contained on two families of nomad community living in the southern area of the Lahore. In order to achieve detail information, all the members of the nomad families were selected as the sample of the study.

The purpose of the current study was to explore the living-style of nomads. The semi-structured interview was conducted and observation was held. In order to attain information and explore the daily routine schedule of nomad, the observation comprised on one week was held. The indicators of living-style which is grasped through the current study were income, skills, traditions, socio-economic status (home, health, education, citizenship), and challenges. The interview comprised of thirty (30) open and close ended questions was covered all the



described indicators for the living-style of nomads. The validity of the instrument for the current study was ensured by the expert.

**Table 1**

*Demographic characteristic of the participants*

<i>Participant no</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Number of children</i>	<i>District of traveling</i>
P1	30	Female	Married	House wife	07	Depalpur
P2	45	Male	Married	Juggler	03	Depalpur
P3	27	Male	Married	Labor	05	Patoki
P4	25	Female	Married	Maid	04	Patoki

### Research Questions

The current research study was guided by the following research questions;

#### Question: 1

What is the daily routine life of nomads' families?

The answer of this question consist on many aspects of nomads' life system. Some of the important aspects that indicate the daily routine life of nomads are;

- i. food
- ii. shelter
- iii. Education
- iv. Sanitation
- v. Security

The participants told that they are no fully providing by the basic needs of life. The insufficient and improper conditions of above mentioned aspects are facing by the nomads, are currently discussed in the study. It is analyzed through observation that the nomads do not have the refine food, and shelter. They are suffering from improper sanitary conditions of that area. The mosquitos, flies, dust, and other environmental harms are making worst their living conditions. They have more than five children in each family of nomad community. But they cannot properly provide the basic needs (food, water, shelter, cloth) to their children. As far as education is concerned one of the four participants explained;

*“Saadey bchey nhi parde, asi school ni bhej skde, pehle is ilaqe ech teacher aandi c, pr aik maheene bad, es tra bche prh ty ni skde”.* [P1]

*“taleem to hasil ni ki, lekin bachon ko qaari sahb se prhvate hen”.* [P3]

Protection is one of the basic aspect of one individual. As far as security conditions are concerned, the nomads have pathetic security conditions. As they are not living in proper homes, the conditions of tents or “Jhugis” are not safe and sound for them, especially for women nomads. One of the female participants explained;

*“Aurtan wastey jhugiyan ech koi hifazet nhi, asi bs Allah da asra kr ke ethe bethey hoye Aan”.* [P1]

#### Question: 2

What are the migrating reasons of nomads?

In the ancient time, the most prominent reasons of nomad migrating is the grassland and proper water supply areas. The participants explained that the basic reason of their migrating from one place to the other that government do not allow them to occupy the specific places for a long



time period on which they are living. One of the major reasons of migrating is to search out the better livelihood. One of the participants said that;

*“asi 2, 3, saal pehle Lahore ech reh k gy c, asi depalpur shehr, zilah okara dy rehn wale saan pehle, 8, 9, maheeney to idr reh rahey aan, ty ethe asi rozi wastey aye taakey apne bchiyan nu khva skiye”. [P2]*

The government actions regarding nomads' societies living in the city are less satisfactory for their welfare. The nomads are treating as step-son by the government. The participants explained that they are not provided with any fund from government. The government officers used to visit and formality data is taken in order to provide them basic facilities of life.

*“Hakumet wlo koi fund ni milda saanu, tsweeran bna k le jande ny, LDA wale andey ne ty saanu etho utha dende, kuch bnde aye c ty Benazir fund wlo glaan kr k chle gy”. [P3, P4]*

### Question: 3

What are the traditions followed by the nomads?

There are some sort of traditions followed by nomads such as traditional marriages, and Jirga or “Punchayet” customs. The participants stated that they have same traditions of marriages as the common people have. They do not have unique kind of marriage traditions, the marriages are held between two families like marriage of son of father's brother with daughter of mother's sister. As far as dowry system is concerned, one of the participants explained that some nomad people demand for dowry and some do not. One of the participants said that;

*“saade ilaqey de jo buzurg honed ny, ohi saade jhgriyan de fesle sundae ny ty asi onha da fesla mande aan. Jis tra koi numberdar Honda ay esi tra saade ve jhgre wastey asi buzurg log nal gl krne aan”. [P1, P2]*

The nomads do not have very much know how about religion. They only know that Muslims do say prayers and fasting, but they do not apply it in their lives. One of the participants have said that he had not been sent to get religious education but he is sending his children for reciting Quran from “Qaari” to nearby mosque.

### Question: 4

What is the basic source of income of nomads?

This is the most important aspect of nomads' life. Usually nomads do different sorts of work for their livelihood. According to Akhtar, Akhtar and Maheen, (2013), the nomads usually involved in adopting various tasks for their livelihood like making handicrafts, dealer of second hand goods, and picking over a waste tip and even begging. The nomads selected for the study have some source of less than average income which is not sufficient for them. One of the participants is juggler and he used to go daily door to door in “mohallas” and streets for amusing people. He explained that;

*“Bazar, gali ty mohalley ech mai Saanp da tamasha dikhana aan, roz da mai 150, 200 kmaa leyna wan, saanp da tamasha dikhana meri maharat v hai”. [P2]*

One of the participants is labor. And along with this his wife also used to work in others' homes in order to make their livelihood better. She said that;

*“Mai g ghron k kam krti hu. Es wqt 1, 2 ghr pkre huy hn jhan roz jati hu kam krne or maheena 2000 milta hai”.*

Today the time has been changed, and inflation is increasing day by day. The nomads are not satisfied with their source of income. As they could not be able to fulfil the basic needs of their families. Many of the nomads' males are not doing any sort of work. They used to involve some kind of small level crimes such as theft, robbery, and .



The nomads do not have National Identity Card. Some of them have lost their CNIC and they do not renew it. One of the participants explained that they are not treated properly by NADRA, when they visit there for new NIC. He expressed that;

*“Ni g hmara NIC ni bna hua, mushkil to kafi pesh ati hai, lekin jb hum NADRA k dftr m jate hn to yeh hmen tym ni dete. Hmari bat ni suntey, Kabhi inkey khane ka waqfa to kabhi nmaz ka.” [P4]*

**Question: 5**

What are the economic challenges confronted by the nomads?

The nomads are living and spending their lives in less than average conditions. They are facing the poverty, low standards of living, low source of income, and low residency. The nomads are forced to do child labor as it is considered crime in developing countries. One of the participants have explained;

*“Han g majburi h hmari bchon se kam krvana, hum inko ghro m bhejte k kam kren ja kr”. [P3]*

*“Itni mengai hai k khrche ni purey hotey insan k, sirf khana peena e mushkil s pura ho jye to shuker hai”. [P2, P3, P4]*

The some of the nomads adopt the occupation of begging forcefully. But the nomads selected for the study have denied to adopt this occupation. They have strong self-esteem that they do not like to beg in front of any person.

*“Han g is zindgi ki vja se bheeg m izafa hua h lekin hmare m vo rujhan ni h, thori mil jye mgr hum bheeg ni mangte”. [P1, P3]*

The following table display the in-depth thematic analysis by coding, transcribing and interpreting the interviews. And detail descriptions of each research question exhibits the viewpoints of Nomads living in the city Lahore.

**Table 2**

*Thematic Analysis of Participants’ Responses about Nomadic Life-styles*

Research Objectives	Themes Identified	Description of Themes	Participants’ Key Response
To explore the living-styles of nomads	Traditional Lifestyle and Mobility	Nomads follow a traditional and mobile way of life that is closely connected with nature, temporary settlements, and survival through self-reliance.	<i>“Saadey bchey nhi parde, asi school ni bhej skde, pehle is ilaqe ech teacher aandi c, pr aik maheene bad, es tra bche prh ty ni skde”. [P1]</i>
To explore their motives of migrating from one place to another	Seasonal Migration and Economic Survival	Migration is mainly influenced by seasonal changes, search for employment opportunities, availability of resources, and better living conditions.	<i>“Hakumet wlo koi fund ni milda saanu, tsweeran bna k le jandeny, LDA wale andey ne ty saanu etho utha dende,</i>



Research Objectives	Themes Identified	Description of Themes	Participants' Key Response
			<i>kuch bnde aye c ty Benazir fund wlo glaan kr k chle gy". [P3, P4]</i>
To study the norms and values of the nomad families	Social Solidarity and Cultural Values	Nomadic families strongly follow cultural traditions, community rules, respect for elders, cooperation, and collective decision-making.	<i>"saade ilaqey de jo buzurg honed ny, ohi saade jhgriyan de fesle sundae ny ty asi onha da fesla mande aan. Jis tra koi numberdar Honda ay esi tra saade ve jhgre wastey asi buzurg log nal gl krne aan". [P1, P2]</i>
To investigate the source of income of nomads families	Livelihood and Traditional Occupations	Nomads depend on traditional occupations, daily labor, livestock rearing, handicrafts, and small-scale trade as major sources of income.	<i>"Ni g hmara NIC ni bna hua, mushkil to kafi pesh ati hai, lekin jb hum NADRA k dfr m jate hn to yeh hmen tym ni dete. Hmari bat ni suntey, Kabhi inkey khane ka waqfa to kabhi nmaz ka." [P4]</i>
To search out the challenges faced by nomadic community	Marginalization and Lack of Basic Facilities	Nomadic communities face poverty, lack of education, poor healthcare, social exclusion, insecurity, and limited governmental support.	<i>"Han g majburi h hmari bchon se kam krvana, hum inko ghro m bhejte k kam kren ja kr". [P3] "Itni mengai hai k khrche ni purey hotey insan k, sirf khana peena e mushkil s pura ho jye to shuker hai". [P2, P3, P4]</i>



## Discussion

The nomads are the persons who migrate from one place to the other in search of better living. There are many nomads community living in Lahore city. The large community of nomads living in southern side (Expo center, Johar town) of Lahore were selected as participants for the current study. The current study explored the living-styles of the nomad families living in Lahore.

The living-style of nomads is explored by some indicators and the current study is based on identifying those indicators in nomads' life such as;

The nomads usually migrate in search of better livelihood. The current study explored the basic reasons of nomads' migrating from one place to the other. The major reason of migrating is to earn better living. Some of the nomads migrated to Lahore in order to stay here forever. Some of the nomads migrated due to lack of physical facilities in their native residence area.

The basic and major source of income of nomads is labor. They used to work on daily wages in big buildings and plazas. However, they are less paid, but they do not adopt the occupation of begging. Child labor, however crime is, but normally adopted by the nomads' community as they cannot send their children to get education. Many of the nomads are adopted juggling as their occupation. Some of the females are also doing work in others' home in order to share the burden of daily routine expenses with males.

The nomads' community, like others, have specific norms and values. They used to follow some trends and traditions regarding their marriages. The nomads do marriages between families. The joint family system, however, is followed by some of the nomads' families. The dowry system, however it seems to be not followed, exist in some nomads families.

Generally, the nomads, selected for the study, have called themselves Muslims, but they do not have accurate understanding of religion Islam. They only know that prayer and fast are the basic rules of Islam to be followed. The nomads have some sort of skills, which they use as their occupation also. Some of the nomads are jugglers. They used to exhibit snakes in order to amuse people. Some of the nomads are called the snakes' demonstration is their forefathers' occupation. That is why they have this skill. They himself catch the snakes from the forests and use them for juggling. The nomads are confronting severe economic challenges in their daily life routine. They are facing the poverty, low standards of living, low source of income, and low residency. The nomads are forced to do child labor as it is considered crime in developing countries.

## Conclusion

As a result of this study and the necessary discussions on the findings, the researcher has reached the following conclusions;

1. Nomadism was truly a traditional way of life. Nomads confront the worst physical and biological environment with least support from modern technologies.
2. They are skillful persons, as they believe in hard-working instead of begging.
3. There was a great sense of solidarity among the nomads community. It seemed they were tied with invisible threads of nature. They followed the rules set by their community. They accepted the decisions of their elders in resolving their conflicts and problems.
4. The education system of nomads was found to be invisible as they cannot send their children in the schools due to low level of income.
5. The current study concluded that there is lacking of governmental actions regarding nomads' welfare. They are not considered as the citizens of the country.

The current study had similar finding with the findings of the previous research study "a study of nomads in district Faisalabad" conducted by Akhtar, Akhtar and Maheen, (2013), in which



the nomads' life, occupation, economic conditions, physical conditions were discussed in detail.

### Recommendations

- Policy makers should develop plans in order to utilize the nomads' skills. This will help them to polish their talents and enable them to earn money to live a good life.
- NGOs should work for the betterment of nomadic people, such as helping them to bring their problems into the notice of government official and other responsible people.
- Since the nomads cannot send their children to schools because they do not have enough money for their educational expenses so the policy makers should consider these points while making plans for their development.

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