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Research note: Continuity or change: Intergenerational patrilocal residence patterns among Indians in India and abroad (USA, UK, and Canada)

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Abstract

Objective: This paper examines patrilocal residence among Indian women in India, first-generation Indian immigrant women, and second-generation Indian women in Canada, the US, and the UK, analyzing the impact of age, education, and employment on post-marital co-residence patterns.

Background: Patrilocal residence is associated with women's dependence and subordination in societies where it is prevalent. This paper investigates the incidence of patrilocal residence in the parent population and in three major destination countries for Indian immigrants (where it is uncommon), exploring the implications for gender dynamics.

Method: The study presents a comparative descriptive analysis and examines the relationship between post-marital co-residence patterns and demographic variables of age, educational attainment, and employment status, using binary logistic regression. The sample includes Indian women in India (IPUMS, 2009), first-generation Indian immigrant women and second-generation Indian women in Canada (IPUMS, 2011) and US (IPUMS, 2015), and UK (UKLFS, 2008 to 2012).

Results: Across all groups, women are more likely to live with their husbands' parents rather than their own (patrilocal residence). Patrilocal residence decreases with age, varies with education across countries and generations, and is consistently lower among employed women.

Conclusion: The findings highlight the persistence of patrilocal traditions in both India and the Indian diaspora, emphasizing the need to understand cultural norms, socioeconomic factors, and policy implications to advance gender equity.

Key words: gender dynamics, cross-national analysis, post-marital co-residence



1. Introduction

Patrilocal residence/patrilocality is a cultural practice in which women leave their parental home upon marriage and move to their husbands' home to live with their families (Ebenstein, 2014; Grogan, 2013; Khalil & Mookerjee, 2019; Landmann et al., 2017). Patrilocality is a predominant post-marital residence modality in the Indian subcontinent. Evidence suggests that women in patrilocal residence are more likely to face restrictions in freedom of movement, decision making and domestic violence (Hunnicut, 2009; Khalil & Mookerjee, 2019; Seabright et al., 2022). In a study of married women from the Indian state of Haryana, Nadda et al. (2018) reported that 28.9% of the interviewees faced domestic abuse, with higher incidence in rural areas (where traditional family structures are more prevalent). Bentley (2018), studying mothers in Mumbai, reported that 30-40% of household domestic abuse cases involved extended members of the family (especially mothers in law). In addition, Mayer (2022) found that kinship patterns (women migrating at marriage) and the joint family system have a direct impact on dowry-related deaths in India.

Traditional residence patterns evolve over time and are associated with other factors such as education, employment, and partnership status (e.g., Gruijters & Ermisch, 2018; Stone et al., 2013). Research also suggests that urbanisation and economic growth might lead to the adoption of new residence patterns (Ebenstein, 2014; Khalil & Mookerjee, 2019; Landmann et al., 2017).

In addition to internal migration, individuals from low-income countries such as India also seek work opportunities in high income countries in the West, essentially moving from a system where patrilocality is the norm to one where it is no longer the dominant post-marital residence mode. However, in addition to the new cultural environment, structural restrictions (such as not being able to move with the entire family), economic circumstances, and lack of affordable housing could also play a crucial role (Reyes, 2020; Van Hook & Glick, 2007) in shaping residential patterns. While these factors facilitate a shift towards neolocal residence, evidence suggests that co-residence often persists among immigrants. Glick et al. (1997) and Milan (2016) find that first-generation immigrants are more likely to live with their parents or extended families compared to natives. For example, in Canada, immigrants from South Asian and West Asian countries more likely to co-reside with their parents (Landale et al., 2011; Milan, 2016).

Although patrilocality has received some attention in the academic literature (e.g., Ebenstein, 2014; Goli, et. al., 2022; Gruijters, and Ermisch, 2018; Khalil & Mookerjee, 2019; Landmann et al., 2017; Seabright, et al. 2022) research focused on understanding these patterns—especially in the context of immigration—and the key influencing variables is relatively scarce. Against this background, this research note adopts a cross-national, intergenerational approach to examine the post-marital residence patterns among married women in India and among the Indian diaspora in Canada, the US, and the UK. Due to generational variation, cultural background, and structural constraints associated with family visas and reunification, it is essential to understand the differences in patrilocality between first- and second-generation immigrant women. This is because first-generation immigrants may carry traditional norms and values related to patrilocality from their home country, often resulting in a preference for maintaining patrilocal residential patterns. Conversely, second-generation immigrants, exposed to the cultural dynamics of the host society, balance inherited traditions with new social norms, resulting in a more diverse perspective on patrilocality. If education and economic opportunities are the primary motivations for migration, the extended family may not migrate simultaneously, as the first-generation migrants do not necessarily bring their parents with them at the time of relocation.

The context of immigration from South Asian countries to Western countries provides fertile ground for studying this phenomenon. The juxtaposition of two systems—one where patrilocality is the norm and one where it is not—combined with new economic realities and structural constraints could offer valuable insights on how these structures evolve. Furthermore, previous research highlights the need to investigate variations in intergenerational relations, particularly when examining differences between migrant families based on their origin and level of integration (Huinink et al., 2011). India is especially suitable for this exploration due to its deep-rooted patrilineal culture, where patrilocality is the norm. Additionally, as the world's most populous country with 1.4 billion people, India has an extensive diaspora, especially in popular destinations such as Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. India has the largest expatriate population in the world, approximately 18 million (World Economic Forum, 2019). Of these expatriates, 10.56% reside in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2021), 15% in the United States (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019), and 7.78% in the United Kingdom (Office for National Statistics, 2020). These

numbers highlight the significant presence of Indians in these countries and provide a valuable opportunity to examine co-residence patterns.

This research note investigates post-marital co-residence patterns among women in India and Indian immigrant women (first and second generation) living in host countries using IPUMS international data and UK Labor Force data, with an aim of addressing three research questions. First, what is the prevalence of patrilocality among women in India and Indian immigrant/second-generation Indian women in Canada, the US and the UK? Second, are there differences in patrilocality between first- and second-generation immigrants? Third, how are age, education, and employment status associated with patrilocality?

This study contributes to the literature on family dynamics and cultural norms by presenting a cross-national analysis of intergenerational data. It sheds light on the similarities and differences between first- and second-generation Indian women in three host countries, illustrating how cultural norms are transmitted across generations and adapted to new contexts. Additionally, to the best of our knowledge, it is the first comparative descriptive study of patrilocality among Indian migrants.

2. Data and methods

2.1 Study samples

We used harmonized census microdata from IPUMS-International for India (2009), Canada (2011), and the United States (2015) and labour force data (UKLFS, 2008-2012) for the United Kingdom and compared intergenerational post-marital co-residency patterns (patrilocal residence) across the four samples. We restricted the sample to women aged 25-49 who were married and living with their partner. We further identified first-generation Indian women as those who were born in India, and second-generation women of Indian origin as those who were born in the host country and had at least one parent born in India.

The Indian sample (2009) included 75,042 married women. For first-generation Indian immigrants, the samples from Canada (2011), the US (2015) and the UK (2008-2012) included 3924, 5103, and 1239 women, respectively. For second-generation immigrants of Indian origin, the samples from Canada (2011), the US (2015) and the UK (2008-2012) included 1891, 1958, and 1126 women.

2.2 Analysis variables

In the three host country samples (Canada, US, and UK), we categorized women into two groups: 1) first generation and 2) second-generation. For each woman, we further identified the following information: age, education level, employment status, co-habitation with spouse, and patrilocality/matrilocality (based on whether the individual resides with her partner's parents or her own).

2.3 Analytical strategy

After the initial descriptive examination, logistic regressions were conducted to predict patrilocality using three independent variables: age, education level, and employment status (all treated as categorical variables) across the samples. Individual residence modality (patrilocality= 1, other residence modes=0) was used as the outcome variable. The age variable was categorized into five-year intervals, spanning from 25 to 49 years (25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49), with "25-29" as the baseline category. Education level was classified into three groups: "low" (less than primary and completed primary), "medium" (completed secondary education), and "high" (completed university), with "low" as the reference category. Employment status was dichotomized into two groups: "yes" and "no", with "no" as the reference category. "Yes" represented individuals employed outside the home, while "no" represented those without employment.

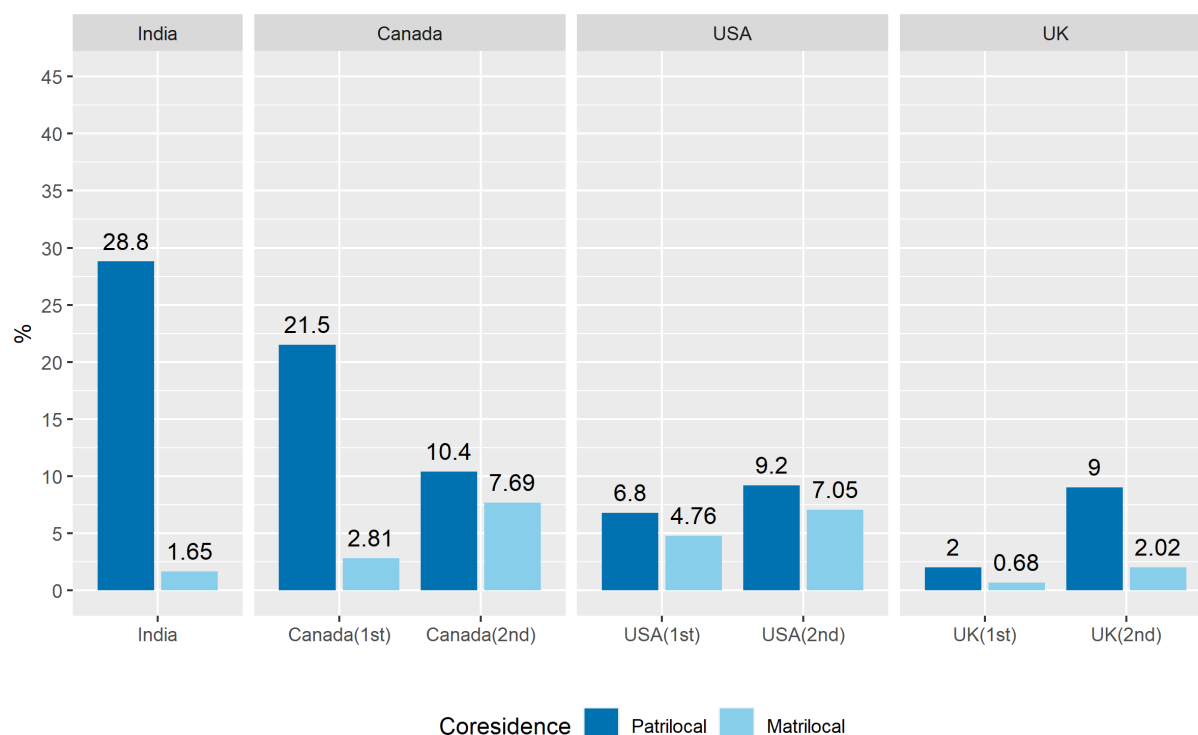
3. Results

3.1 Residence patterns

Figure 1 provides descriptive data on the proportions of women living in patrilocal and matrilocal households in each country. The results indicate that across studied samples, patrilocality appears to be more prevalent compared to matrilocality. In the Indian sample, 28.8% of the women reside in patrilocal households, while 1.65% live in matrilocal households. Among first-generation Indian women immigrants in Canada, 21.5% reside in patrilocal households, while 2.8% reside in matrilocal households. For second-generation Indian women in Canada, there is a shift towards matrilocal residence, with 10.4% women residing in patrilocal households and 7.7% women in matrilocal households. In the US, for both first-generation and second-generation Indian women, the differences in the percentages between patrilocal residence (6.8% and 9.2%, respectively) and matrilocal residence (4.8% and 7.1%, respectively) are less pronounced. In the UK, however, the difference between women living in patrilocal versus matrilocal households is more noticeable for the second generation (9% versus 2%) as compared to first generation (2% versus 0.68%).

The patterns in the immigrant samples, although generally consistent with the parent sample (India), do show some variations. In the Canadian sample, the patterns are more consistent with those of the parent sample, especially among first-generation immigrants. However, the incidence rate of patrilocality and the differential between patrilocality and matrilocality decrease in the second-generation immigrants. In the US and UK samples, the incidence of patrilocality is lower among first-generation immigrants, and higher among second-generation immigrants. This difference could be attributed to structural constraints and immigration policies.

Figure 1: Women in patrilocal and matrilocal residence

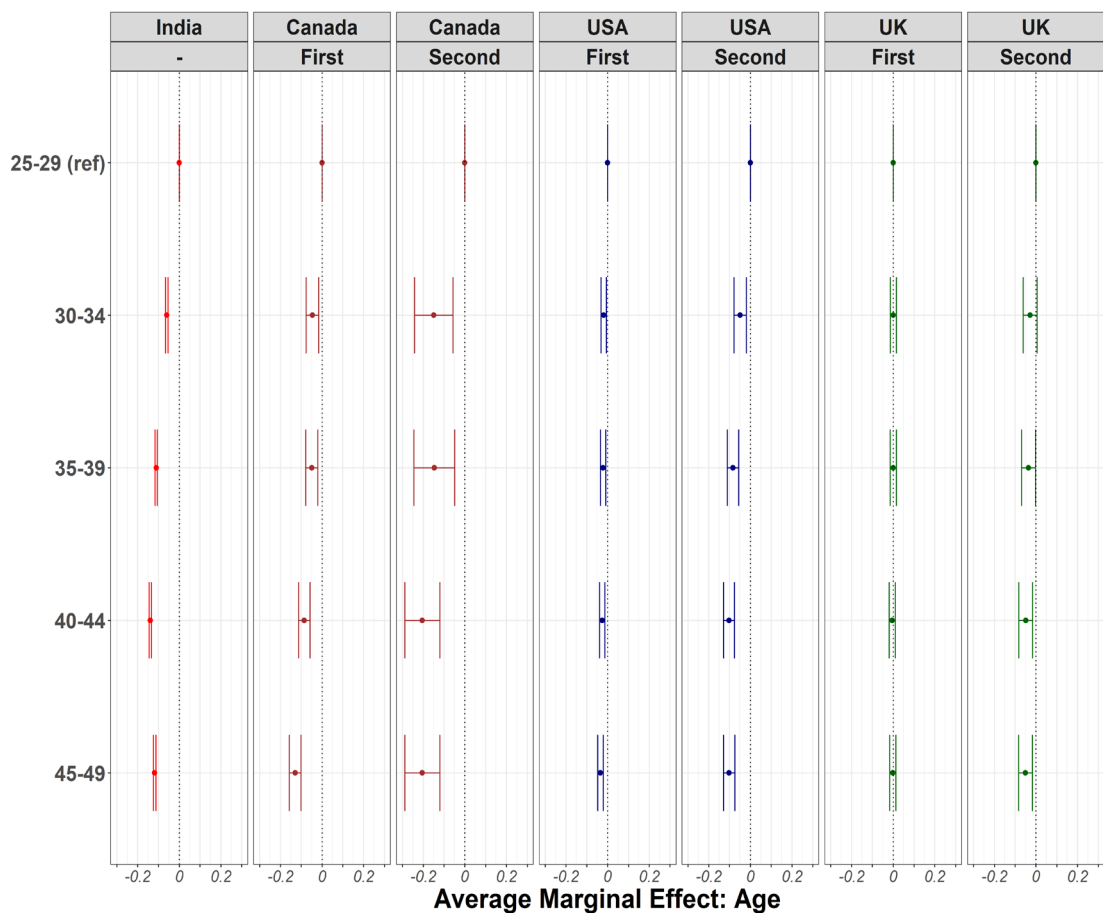


Source: Authors' own elaboration, with data from the IPUMS International and the UK labor force data

3.2 Logistic regression

We conducted logistic regression analyses to predict post marital co-residence patterns for the four samples. The analysis aimed to explore the relationship between the binary outcome variable Y , where a value of 1 indicated that individuals co-residing in patrilocal households after marriage, and 0 indicated that they did not. Predictor variables included age, educational attainment, and employment status. Separate analyses were conducted for first- and second-generation Indian women in the selected host countries. Figures 2a, 2b and 2c present the average marginal effects (AMEs). The results for each independent variable are detailed below.

Figure 2a: Logistic regression results for living in patrilocal residence (1: yes; 0: no), across countries and generations, average marginal effects (AME): Age



Source: Authors' own elaboration, with data from the IPUMS International and the UK labor force data

3.2.1 Age

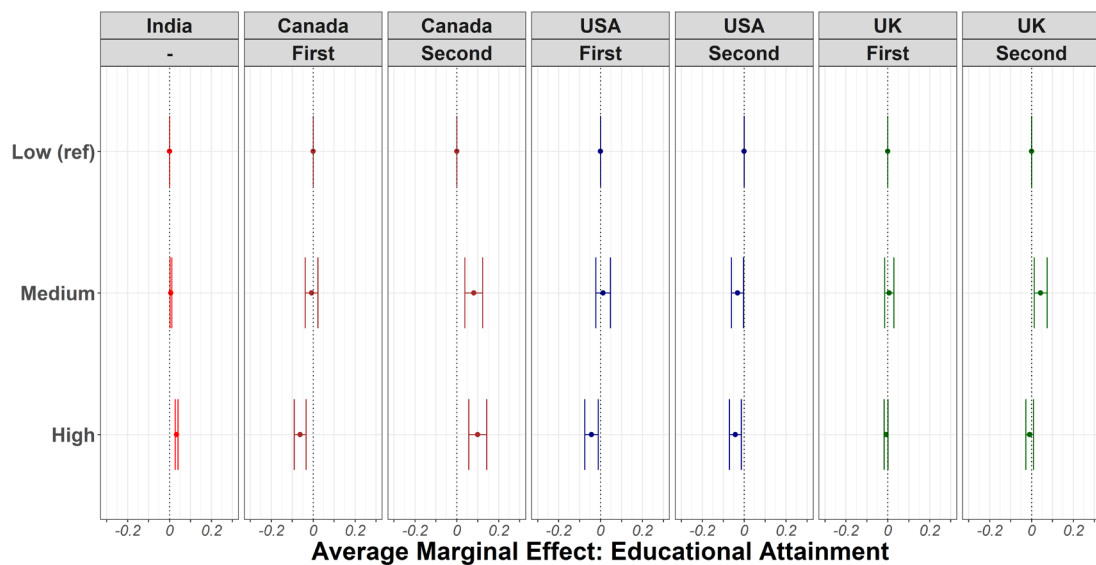
Across countries and generations, age has a significant association ($p < 0.05$) with the likelihood of residing in patrilocality. In general, higher age groups are associated with lower probabilities, with a few exceptions (see [Appendix, Table 1](#)).

3.2.2 Educational attainment

In the Indian sample, the odds of patrilocality increase slightly with educational attainment, and this increase is relatively more pronounced among women with high education. Women with high and medium educational attainment are 3.3 ($p < 0.001$) and 0.6 ($p < 0.001$) percentage points more likely, respectively, to live in a patrilocal residence than women with low educational attainment. A similar, but stronger pattern is observed among second-generation women in Canada. Women with high and medium levels of education

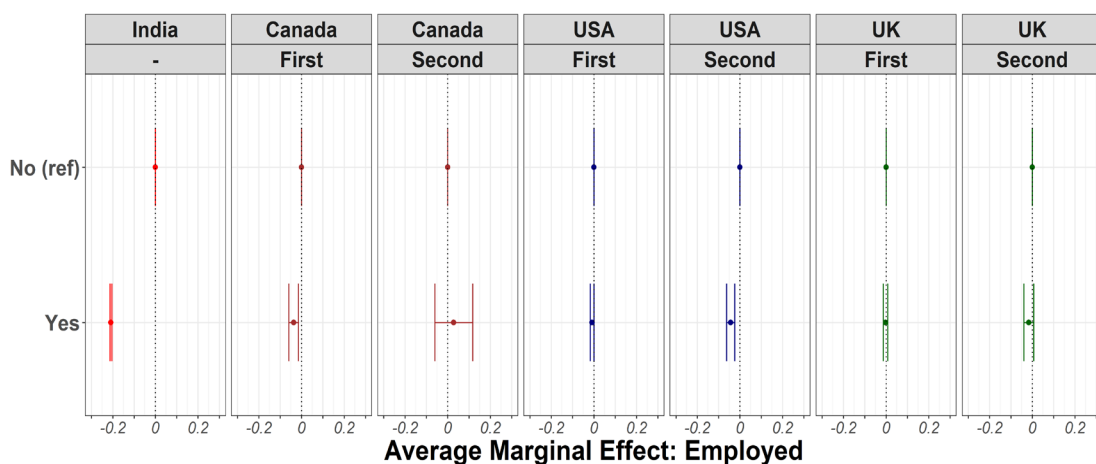
are 9.9 ($p < 0.001$) and 8.0 ($p < 0.001$) percentage points more likely to reside in a patrilocal setting, respectively, in comparison to those with low levels of education. Furthermore, in the UK sample, among second-generation women with medium education, there is a 4.3 ($p < 0.001$) percentage point increase in the likelihood of patrilocal residence as compared to women with low education. In some of the groups, the likelihood of residing in a patrilocal setup exhibited a decline with an increase in educational attainment. For instance, in the Canadian, US and UK samples, the likelihood of patrilocal residence among highly educated first-generation women decreases by 6.2 ($p < 0.001$), 4.3 ($p < 0.01$) and 0.8 ($p < 0.05$) percentage points, respectively, as compared to women with low education. Furthermore, among second-generation Indian women in the US, the likelihood of patrilocal residence among the high and medium education groups, decreases by 4.2 ($p < 0.001$) and 3.1 ($p < 0.01$) percentage points, respectively, as compared to the low education group (see [Appendix, Table 1](#)).

Figure 2b: Logistic regression results for living in patrilocal residence (1: yes; 0: no), across countries and generations, average marginal effects (AME): Educational Attainment



Source: Authors' own elaboration, with data from the IPUMS International and the UK labor force data

Figure 2c: Logistic regression results for living in patrilocal residence (1: yes; 0: no), across countries and generations, average marginal effects (AME): Employed



Source: Authors' own elaboration, with data from the IPUMS International and the UK labor force data

3.2.3 Employment status

With the exception of second-generation women in Canada, the likelihood of patrilocal residence is inversely linked to employment status. However, not all observed effects are significant. In India, employed women show a

significant decrease in the likelihood of patrilocality (20.8 percentage points, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, for first generation women in Canada, employment significantly reduced patrilocality (3.7 percentage points, $p < 0.01$). In the US sample, in both first- (0.8 percentage points, $p < 0.05$) and second- generation women (4.3 percentage points, $p < 0.001$), the likelihood of patrilocality reduces with the presence of employment (see [Appendix, Table 1](#)). Overall, the impact of employment on the likelihood of patrilocality is stronger in case of the Indian sample as compared to the immigrant samples.

4. Discussion and conclusion

In all the studied groups, the proportion of women (and their husbands) who co-reside with their husband's parents is greater than the proportion of women (and their husbands) who co-reside with their own parents. This evidence indicates that patriarchal family structures continue to be prevalent within India and among Indian diasporas. It also suggests that traditional cultural norms continue to shape family dynamics.

Furthermore, the data reveal that the proportion of women residing in patrilocal households in India is relatively higher than that of their counterparts in the three host countries. However, the percentages of patrilocality vary between the Canadian sample and the US and UK samples. The proportion of first-generation Indian women residing in patrilocality is greater in the Canadian sample as compared to the US and UK samples. This phenomenon could be attributed to the fact that, after a period of residence in Canada, immigrants are permitted to sponsor their parents. Nevertheless, these percentages decline in the case of second-generation immigrants. In the US and UK samples, while the proportion of first-generation Indian women residing in patrilocality is relatively low (potentially due to structural constraints associated with immigration), it increases for second-generation immigrants and reaches levels comparable to those observed in second-generation women of Indian origin in Canada. The second-generation immigrants are not restricted by the structural constraints that their parents face, and the patrilocality percentages seem to stabilize (around 10%). Further, the patrilocality percentages in the second-generation immigrant women are lower than those found in India, but higher than those found in the local populations, suggesting two opposing sets of mechanisms. First, the cultural shift and new economic realities that push towards the adoption of non-patrilocal patterns, and second, the traditional mindsets that permeate generations and bind immigrants to customary practices.

The findings indicate that across all studied groups, as age increases, patrilocality percentages decrease. Three possible explanations could be offered here. First, as the individuals age, they become financially independent and can afford their own residence (Treas & Mazumdar, 2002). Second, household conflicts might arise among kin members overtime leading to the division of the household. Third, the probability of parental death tends to increase with age. It is important to note that the observed decrease in reported percentages does not necessarily indicate a corresponding decrease in the prevalence of patrilocality. It is not uncommon for a woman and her husband to continue residing in the same village, town or neighbourhood as a part of the extended kin of the husband's family after moving out of the husband's parental household. Furthermore, even in instances where the husband's parents have passed away, the household maintains proximity to the husband's extended family.

Previous literature suggests a link between empowering factors such as education and economic independence, and patrilocality. Stromquist (2015) proposes that when women are more educated and economically independent, they are more likely to question traditional practices. Biswas & Mukhopadhyay (2018) argue that education and financial independence are key to empowering women to challenge traditional stereotypes. According to Gruijters & Ermisch (2018), there is a positive association between education and propensity to live in a neolocal setting. We expected that women with higher levels of education and those who are employed would be less likely to co-reside in patrilocal settings.

However, the results are not fully consistent with our expectations. In the Indian sample, the incidence of co-residence in patrilocal households increases as the level of education increases. This pattern is also found in most medium education immigrant women in the host countries (compared to the low education group). However, in case of immigrant women, in most of the high-education groups, the likelihood of residing in patrilocality is lower as compared to the other two groups. The results suggest that for Indian immigrant women, a university degree (high education) is linked to lower incidence of patrilocality, most likely because higher education is also linked to employment in competitive and high paying jobs, which might not accommodate traditional residential structures. The association of employment depicts a more

consistent pattern. Across countries and generations (except for second-generation women of Indian origin in Canada), employment is associated with lower likelihood of patrilocality.

Overall, we find evidence that out of education and employment, the latter seems to have a more consistent negative association with the prevalence of patrilocal residence. While education is an emancipating factor, it may not be sufficient by its own (at least at medium levels) to bring about a change in the traditional residential structures. Economic empowerment linked to employment is more critical in challenging such gender-based practices. Research shows that despite increasing education for women in India, families prioritize marrying their daughters off rather than focusing on their career prospects, unlike with their sons (Kohli, 2017; Saha, 2013). Research also suggests that in countries such as India and China, which have a high incidence of patrilocal residential patterns, urbanisation and economic growth have led to the adoption of new forms of residence structures (Ebenstein, 2014; Khalil & Mookerjee, 2019; Landmann et al., 2017).

In conclusion, our numbers clearly suggest that in the Indian context, traditions such as patrilocal residence are highly persistent and deeply embedded in the social fabric. This is particularly relevant because previous literature (e.g. Ebenstein, 2014) suggests that patrilocality might be a key factor contributing to women's dependence and subordination. Naved & Persson (2005) argue that women's dependence on their husbands acts as a catalyst for various types of violence (physical, emotional, mental). Women in patrilocal households may not be able to return to their parents' home to seek support even if they face violence because of social stigma and societal pressure (Sekher & Hatti, 2010). Unfortunately, the legislation is not properly developed or modernized to detect and address the negative impacts of patrilineal structures and continues to support them instead. A recent court judgment exemplifies this. According to Delhi High Court (2023), a woman's insistence on neo-local residence was deemed cruel and whimsical and was seen as obstructing her husband's moral responsibility towards his parents. The judgment emphasized the integral role of the wife in maintaining the husband's family structure intact. We believe that a comprehensive overhaul of the legislation systems reflecting strong patriarchal biases is long overdue.

In terms of immigration, we conclude that though relaxed family reunification policy for parents and extended family members in countries such as Canada is praiseworthy from the perspective of helping family members be close to each other, it also leads to a skew in patrilocal residential structures. Glick et al. (1997) and Milan (2016) find that immigrants more often live with their parents than natives. As an example, in Canada, immigrants from South Asian and West Asian countries more likely to co-reside with their parents (Landale et al., 2011; Milan, 2016). Our numbers suggest that in case of Indian immigrants, the husband's parents are more likely to move as compared to the wife's parents, laying the foundation of gender-based discrimination. Shirwadkar (2004) found that Indian immigrant women in Canada experience domestic violence and face challenges that often stem the persistent cultural values and traditions that in some cases normalize violence in addition to linguistic and integration problems.

It is important to emphasize that while patrilineal structures are particularly prevalent in Asia and Africa (Ebenstein, 2014; Ghodsee, 2023; Khalil & Mookerjee, 2019; Landmann et al., 2017), similar mindsets have been historically observed in the Western societies. Historically, women in the western countries were expected to take up residence at their husband's domicile after marriage (Nader, 1986), with restrictions on property ownership and career development roles that were traditionally assigned to men (Nader, 1986). In the last century, these traditions have evolved due to factors such as increased awareness, industrialization, legislative developments, and shifts in economic and demographic trends (Blaauboer et al., 2011; Chan & Ermisch, 2015a; Ghodsee, 2023). We posit that comprehending the intricate interplay between cultural norms, gender, and socioeconomic status—along with a multitude of influencing factors such as economic empowerment, economic development and legislation—is critical for advancing gender equity and addressing challenges faced by women. Research on patrilocal residence can provide valuable insights for policymakers, facilitating the development of effective interventions and policies.

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Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study for the USA, Canada, and India samples are collected from IPUMS International, which are openly available after registration at <https://international.ipums.org/international/>. The UK data is obtained from the UK Labour Force Survey (UKLFS) dataset, which is available through the UK Data Service. Access to the UKLFS data requires an application and approval process and can be found at <https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>.

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Information in German

Deutscher Titel

Forschungsnotiz: Kontinuität oder Wandel: Intergenerationale patrilokale Wohnsitzmuster bei Indern in Indien und im Ausland (USA, Großbritannien und Kanada)

Zusammenfassung

Fragestellung: In dieser Arbeit wird die Patrilokalität unter indischen Frauen in Indien, indischen Einwanderinnen der ersten Generation und indischen Frauen der zweiten Generation in Kanada, den USA und Großbritannien untersucht. Dabei wird analysiert, wie Alter, Bildung und Erwerbstätigkeit die Muster des nahehelichen Zusammenlebens beeinflussen.

Hintergrund: Patrilokalität wird in Gesellschaften, in denen sie weit verbreitet ist, mit der Abhängigkeit und Unterordnung von Frauen in Verbindung gebracht. In dieser Studie wird die Häufigkeit der Patrilokalität in der Herkunftsbevölkerung und in drei wichtigen Zielländern für indische Einwanderer (wo sie unüblich ist) untersucht und die Auswirkungen auf die Geschlechterdynamik erforscht.

Methode: Die Studie präsentiert eine vergleichende deskriptive Analyse und untersucht die Beziehung zwischen post-ehelichen Co-Residenz-Mustern und demografischen Variablen wie Alter, Bildungsniveau und Beschäftigungsstatus unter Verwendung binärer logistischer Regression. Die Stichprobe umfasst indische Frauen in Indien (IPUMS, 2009), indische Einwanderinnen der ersten Generation und indische Frauen der zweiten Generation in Kanada (IPUMS, 2011) und den USA (IPUMS, 2015) sowie im Vereinigten Königreich (UKLFS, 2008 bis 2012).

Ergebnisse: In allen Gruppen leben die Frauen eher bei den Eltern ihres Ehemanns als bei ihren eigenen (Patrilokalität). Die Patrilokalität nimmt mit dem Alter ab, variiert je nach Bildung und Kohorten in den einzelnen Ländern und ist bei berufstätigen Frauen durchweg geringer.

Schlussfolgerung: Die Ergebnisse verdeutlichen das Fortbestehen patrilokaler Traditionen sowohl in Indien als auch in der indischen Diaspora und unterstreichen die Notwendigkeit, kulturelle Normen, sozioökonomische Faktoren und politische Implikationen zu verstehen, um die Gleichstellung der Geschlechter zu verbessern.

Schlagwörter: Geschlechterdynamik, länderübergreifende Analyse, Zusammenleben nach der Eheschließung

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