



Socio-economic and demographic assessment of religious minorities in Himachal Pradesh: A case study of education, employment, and health.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines marital status among Himachal Pradesh's minorities to better understand them. The mentioned aims indicate that this is exploratory study to find facts. Exploratory and descriptive research dominate the study. Primary research objectives: To ensure that all initiatives and policies for minority families in Himachal Pradesh are assisting them, we must first identify which minority households are living below the poverty line by double digits. Second, utilise the data to create short- and long-term policies and programs to enable indigenous people maximise their skills and become self-sufficient. Because of this, the exercise has systematically collected data from a large, geographically spread populace. Surveys are the main method of this study owing to demographic characteristics. When the universe is huge and dispersed, this method works well. The majority of Sikh household leaders are married, with just a few widowers. Stable social units dominate Sikh households. Like Sikhs, most married people are Buddhist. Only Shimla has separated or divorced individuals, although they are scarce. Like other minorities, most Muslims are married. Different gender proportions among household heads defy convention. Interestingly, Sikh women make only a small percentage of household heads. Most Sikh houses are headed by males. According to research, Buddhists have nearly twice as many female-headed families than Sikhs. Muslims and Sikhs have similar household arrangements. Sikhs and Muslims have less female-led families than Buddhists, according to data.

Keywords: Socio-economic status, Himachal Pradesh, Minority communities, Economic indicators.

INTRODUCTION

The multi-religious state of Himachal Pradesh came into being as a distinct geographical entity after India's independence on April 15, 1948. When that happened, a federal government took over 26 hill states in the Shimla region and 4 in the Punjab. Its first growth occurred in 1954 with the incorporation of the Bilaspur district. A Lieutenant Governor was in charge of the newly formed Union Territory in 1956. A linguistic reorganisation of Punjab in 1966 placed parts of Una (Hoshiarpur district), Bakloh (Gurdaspur district), the sub-division of Nalagarh (part of Ambala district), and Punjab-Kangra, Kullu, Shimla, Lahaul, and Spiti under the jurisdiction of Himachal Pradesh. It achieved complete independence as a state on January 25, 1971.

There are three distinct ecological cultural zones in Himachal Pradesh, as seen through the lens of cultural anthropology. The many social and cultural identities that make up the state's multi-ethnic nature may be better understood with the assistance of this divide. Its historically pervasive multi-ethnic nature, with its diverse social and cultural identities, may be better understood with the assistance of this divide. In the

higher Himalayas, the Mahayan school of Buddhism, also known as Lmaism, has been the dominant school. Languages of the Tibeto-Burman family are spoken here. In contrast to the national average of 1.90 percent, 9.48 percent of them are pastoralists; 15.52 percent are horticulturists; and 40.52 percent are involved in animal husbandry (Singh 1996:xi).

Terrace agriculture is used by the majority of agricultural communities in the middle Himalayan range (25.86 percent vs. 4.75 percent nationally). Some continue gardening. Nearly eighty-nine percent of the population adheres to Hinduism, compared to seventy-six percent nationally. There are three subgroups within the ethnic makeup of the people living in this region: the Khas, the Kuninda, and the Kol. The Indo-Aryan languages are spoken by them. The lowest Himalayan region, which is a sub-mountainous area, has the highest concentration of immigrants, at 61.21 percent. As a result of the abundance of plain regions (21.55% vs. 35.12% nationally) and commerce and trade (43.97%), agriculture is the backbone of the local economy (Singh, 1996:xi).

Per the 1991 census, the state has over 5,111,079 residents. Minorities including Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, and Parsis make up 4.10%, or 2 Lakh 10,000 persons. Minorities in this state are under-represented in politics and the economy since 98.90% of the population is Hindu. In addition to being under-represented, they face ecological, social, economic, and political barriers to their full potential. Ecological factors relate minority development challenges, development methods, and implementation. This is because, while each of these minority groups has pockets of concentration in Himachal Pradesh, they are not evenly distributed throughout the state and face different challenges and requirements due to factors like topography and climate. They are geographically scattered and culturally and economically varied, making it difficult for the state to develop all residents and construct a needs-based strategy and plan. Nobody knows what or how large those development needs are. Since the government plans to improve society statewide, all sectors must advance today. Since no nation or state can advance without even one portion developing, it's crucial.

Cultural anthropology identifies three ecological cultural zones in Himachal Pradesh. The state's multi-ethnic social and cultural identities may be better appreciated with this split. This split helps explain its historically multi-ethnic makeup and different social and cultural identities. In the upper Himalayas, Mahayan Buddhism (Lmaism) dominates. Tibeto-Burman languages are spoken. Instead of the national average of 1.90 percent, 9.48 percent are pastoralists, 15.52 percent horticulturists, and 40.52 percent animal husbandrists.

This requires defining "minoritization," "majoritization," and "religious minority," as well as rejecting static and inflexible techniques of recognising religious minorities in favour of a more nuanced and contextual understanding. This explores "minorities within minorities" and warns against religious stereotyping. Size, location, origin, validity, acknowledgement, social standing, and self-perceptions vary greatly across religious minorities. The article discusses how groups become minorities and the different criteria used to classify them as religious minorities. Different minority groups, "wild" and "tame," are recognised and not recognised by societies. This article traces the concept of "religious minorities," from colonisation to modern views about democracy, the nation-state, and global politics. Finally, it uses religious minorities to research and interpret religion's social dynamics.

In many countries, the term 'religious minorities' (or a vernacular equivalent) is part of the political language. It is used in everyday speech, self-identification, and othering. It also celebrates 'diversity', 'pluralism',

‘multiculturalism’, and related themes. People who are numerically a majority but claim to have lost their predominance in a society or remember their past, real or imagined, as a minority use majority/minority tropes to mobilise an understanding of being ‘a threatened majority’, which Arjun Appadurai calls “predatory identities” (Appadurai). Minorities might be seen as disruptive and harmful in nationalist discourses and conspiratorial theories. Fear of perceived danger generates dichotomous attitudes of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ minorities. We shall define crucial terminology before discussing conceptual viewpoints on religious minorities in this article.

Italian jurist Francesco Capotorti, Italy's UN General Assembly representative for several years, wrote extensively about minority in 1979. Capotorti also advocated this definition: A group, numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members, being nationals of the State, have ethnic, religious, or linguistic differences and show, if only implicitly, solidarity in preserving their culture, traditions, religion, or language.

As Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Capotorti wrote his report. The term was developed with government input. The Canadian judge Jules Deschênes, then Special Rapporteur of the same Sub-Commission, amended this term in 1985: A group of citizens of a state who are a numerical minority and in a non-dominant position, have ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics different from the majority of the population, feel solidarity with each other, are motivated, if only implicitly, by a collective will to survive, and aim to achieve equality with the majority in fact and in law.

This concept pushes equality as its normative goal. Both definitions are numerical and teleological: (a) they employ numbers as their main attributes and (b) they presume a directionality and intentionality, or “will” that makes them seem to be driven by a shared purpose. Both assumptions are flawed, as this article will demonstrate. Capotorti and Deschênes emphasise minority dynamics and numbers, whereas other definitions emphasise minority treatment by society. The American Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines ‘minority’ various ways. A group considered distinct from the rest of the population and generally treated differently (3.a).

Fractionation and distinction are the key negative and positive qualities of this phrasing. Even if the term avoids quantitative analysis, minorities can never be the total population, just a part. Positive features connect to mind (thinking) and body (action)—perceived and performed difference. The phrase “subjected to [...] treatment” implies that the agency is seen as favouring the majority over the minority. At the time of writing (January 2023) the transitive verb “to minoritize” has not yet entered the Merriam-Webster Dictionary but is already in the Oxford English Dictionary, which describes it as follows:

To marginalise (a person, group, or notion) by making them a minority or treating them as a minority. The transitive word ‘to majoritize’ should also indicate the process (Predelli et al. 2012, 107). Since neither Merriam-Webster nor the Oxford English Dictionary define ‘to majoritize’, we may define it as follows:

Early attempts to identify ‘objective’ features of minorities made it harder for states to deny the existence of (religious) minorities on their territory (Ghanea 2012, 63), but these emerging terms indicate a major shift in scholarly perspective (White 2011, 23-27). Scholars now focus on what subjects believe and feel, specifically their minority experiences. Processes and structures that make individuals minorities or hold them in minority positions are replacing stable categories like ‘minority’ (Gunaratnam 2003).

This constructivist-processual approach is expressed in the word "minoritization," which is not in Merriam Webster or the Oxford English Dictionary (an intriguing example of academic jargon exceeding ordinary language). Proposed definition of 'minoritization':

Religion may play several roles in this sector. Religious affiliation may be a minority or majority trait. Religion aids minoritization/majoritization. We may change Merriam-Webster's definition to make a minority religious: A religious minority is a group that considers itself or is seen as religious. This definition may not be helpful in all situations. The following discussion will concentrate on religious minorities as a group and examine many terminology implications.

As said, minority is relational, contextual, and situational, referring to individual decisions made by specific actors depending on their interests, needs, and opportunities. This article's earlier examination of minoritization and majoritization showed that speaking about a minority only makes sense when compared to an imagined majority (Gurr 1993, 163). Thus, a minority differs from a majority.

Religious variety does not guarantee religious minorities. Where several religions (defined as religious communities, groups, or traditions) coexist, none is significantly larger or more powerful than the others, and all are considered members of the same category, we can avoid talking about religious minorities. However, if micro religions (such as new religious movements) are not regarded equally by this assemblage of small religions, they may be minority religions.

As will be discussed below, when political bodies or dominant media label a group as a religious minority or deny it, or when members of a group embrace or reject the identity, these are not just definitions but processes or decisions with important social, political, and legal implications. Some people dislike the title minority because it implies victimisation or illegitimacy (Gleason 2019, 98). This link may increase isolation (Murre-van den Berg 2016, 6) or persecution, divide individuals, or instill fear in minority (Rowe 2019, 4). These reasons and the decision to accept or reject the 'minority' term rely on ideologies and situational considerations like territorial autonomy or nationalist discourses (White 2011, 54-55).

The context of minority discourses is also seen in how anthropology, history, law, international relations, politics, and sociology use and define the word. These fields have separate study aims, theoretical frameworks, and empirical materials but seldom interact.

Many religious minorities are also ethnic/racial or linguistic minorities, thus stakeholders, governments, researchers, media, and others may characterise them as such. Scholars have offered terminology like 'ethno-religious minority' or defined non-religious devotion to tradition and culture as a feature that separates ethnic from religious minorities (Rößner, Gvili and Eisend 2021, 392). Rather than scientific categorisation skills, strategic goals or tactical movements of individuals who chose which category to utilise determine whether minority are religious. When interfaith weddings are called intercaste marriages in South Asia, caste trumps religion (Thomas 2018).

Religious studies and religious liberty advocacy discourses sometimes single out religion as the key identifier or super-category, which may lead to an analytical overemphasis on religion over other variables. Labelling a minority religious increases its perceived distinctiveness. The super-identity of being a religious minority covers others and hides the fact that minority religions in most countries face the same problems as

the majority, such as economic hardship, corruption, ecological degradation, societal violence, war, and political failure.

In early modern Spain, conversos and moriscos were not accepted into the dominant society due to their lack of the alleged *limpieza de sangre* ('purity of blood') claimed by the Christian majority (Shahar 2007, § 12). Even Jews who had converted to Christianity and their descendants were considered Jews in Nazi Germany and targeted for extermination because race was the super-category, not religion.

Minorities may benefit from several labels by emphasising common ethnicity with the majority. Being ethnically Viet helps Vietnamese Catholics overcome their religious minority status (Trân 2016, 135). Zoroastrians in Iran and Copts in Egypt claim primordiality and indigeneity, despite their smaller numbers.

This categorisation likely assumed that Indian society was already split along these lines. The census officials faced many challenges, and respondents had to make unprecedented binary and counterintuitive identifications, such as being a Jain now meaning not being a Hindu, Shaivites and Vaishnavas having to choose 'Hinduism,' and several 'fuzzy' communities/groups that combined 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' features having to be defined by one of the categories. Collapsing the complexity of religious groups, orientations, and traditions into the category Hindu first made this entity a demographic majority; its census and classification led some Hindu leaders to believe that Hindus were a majority in British India and Muslims and others were minorities. Since the census was done every 10 years, it tracked population changes. Since the early 20th century, it created the rhetorical cliché of Hindu decline and Muslim takeover by implying that Muslim population was expanding faster than Hindu population (Bhagat 2013).

The secular endeavour by governments to be impartial towards religion claims tends to make the state the arbitrator of religious difference. States have diverse views on religious equality, often based on the majority's hegemonic ideal (Mahmood 2016; Østebø and Pontzen 2022).

Religious minorities are not helpless in minoritization or othering. Some may reject and actively react to being seen as a danger or "objects of fear and of rage" (Appadurai 2006, 49). Others may use their minority position to elevate themselves by rejecting popular norms and fostering elitism. Since the minority rights movement (Skrentny 2002), minorities have grown increasingly vociferous in claiming and safeguarding their rights (Østebø and Pontzen 2022, 118).

Recognising religious minority might sometimes urge the majority to homogenise. In Israel, the Orthodox rabbinate controls Jewish weddings, divorce, burial, and conversion, excluding Reformed and Conservative rabbis. Secular Jews have called for civil marriage or boycotted state-recognized Jewish marriage rituals in response to homogenization.

OBJECTIVE

Identify and illegalise Himachal Pradesh minority marriages. This would focus on minorities' age, sex, marital status, family size, and number of children. The present age structure would be used to determine minority family future requirements. Thus, the demographic profile may aid short- and long-term policy, viewpoint, and program development.

METHODOLOGY-

The aims above indicate that this research involves exploratory fact-finding. Exploratory and descriptive research is utilised. The research has two main goals: First, to identify minority households living below twice the poverty line in Himachal Pradesh so that current policies and programs for their development are implemented. Second, using data, build short- and long-term policies and programs to maximise the use and self-reliance of indigenous people resources. Thus, our endeavour has systematically collected data from a broad, scattered population. Survey approach was adopted in this research due of population character. This strategy is suitable for a vast cosmos.

Universe and the study Population

Himachal Pradesh has several minorities with internal variances, ecological isolation, and varied settlement and concentration places (1.1). Due to the state's social, economic, and productive heterogeneity, minorities are not a homogenous group. They vary by location in social, economic, and lifestyle. Due to the area-specific existential conations of minorities, their environmentally broad segregation, and their unequal presence across the state, reaching the whole minority population is desired. However, time and resource restrictions prevent full coverage. Additionally, minority groups number approximately 2.10 lakh throughout 55,673 sq. kilometres. Also, Himachal Pradesh's rugged topography, inaccessible snow-clad Himalayan peaks, and harsh places are difficult to traverse. Minorities include children in their overall population. The total number of minority households in the stte was the studied population as this survey focused on households. The National Family Health Survey of Himachal Pradesh (1992) found that urban households had 5.3 (4.5) members and rural households 5.4. Thus, 39,525 families were calculated. The proportion of minority homes varied because each religious group valued children differently.

The minimal cost to cover all minorities was Rs. 16.5 lakh. The current study's funding was less than one-fifth, thus it was not able to survey all minority homes in the state. Thus, half of the state's districts and their substantial minorities were selected for a sample research. Radom selection of districts was likely to leave/include regions with less/more minority population, which raised further issues during sample reduction. Within each district, abandoning high-concentration areas is possible.

Table 1: Dispersion of Minorities by District in Himachal Pradesh (2011 Census)

Sr. No.	District	Muslim	Buddhist	Sikh	Chrisian	Parsi	Total	%
1	Chamba	24754	2355	2316	786	7	30218	14.0
2	Kangra	11777	7078	5764	1183	28	25890	12.3
3	Hamirpur	2373	79	199	30	-	2681	1.27
4	Una	8378	66	16623	91	-	25158	11.9
5	Bilaspur	4360	41	2073	42	-	6516	3.1
6	Mandi	5376	1521	3569	104	-	10570	5.0
7	Kullu	533	9339	685	473	-	11030	5.25
8	Lahaul &Spiti	23	18744	79	47	-	18893	9.0
9	Shimla	5458	2817	3758	891	-	12724	6.06
10	Solan	6664	274	7634	503	-	15075	7.10
11	Sirmour	19359	1725	9167	145	2	30396	14.5
12	Kinnaur	79	20242	183	140	-	20644	9.84

13	Total	89,134	64,081	52,050	4,435	37	2,09,797	100.00
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Religion-wise household numbers were unavailable, making sampling challenging. According to the latest National Family Health Survey of Himachal Pradesh (1992), the criteria utilised to estimate the number of households was average family size in the state. Since the predicted number of households was based on the 1991 Census, it was believed that the data available at the time of survey preparation may vary from the field work's actual number of households. Population increase of 2.08 percent each year during the last decade also caused this anxiety. By the 2001 Census, minorities were predicted to expand at the same pace or greater. The analysis was confined to a state sample with the option of include all heterogeneities due to coverage limits.

It was chosen to sample the whole state, including minority-concentrated regions. Cost and time efficiency were the goals. The minority-concentrated neighbourhoods had a high chance of include all household types. Delimiting districts was the initial stage. Due to inaccessibility, Kinnaur, Lahaul, and Spiti were excluded from the survey. Flash floods beyond Rampur rendered Kinnaur inaccessible in the wet season. Also, accessing Lahaul and Spiti was challenging. Six of the remaining 10 districts were surveyed. These were Chamba, Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Kullu, Shimla, Sirmaur. Thus, the sample included the following minorities: Table shows that 50% of predicted households from each district were in the sample. The total was 7595. The scientists found 6881 houses with 4420 Muslims, 1125 Buddhists, and 1323 Sikhs during fieldwork. Other 13 came from Christianity (3), Jainism (9), and 1 unspecified. Minority in sampling region.

Data was collected on the household head. It includes nuclear and joint families. Joint families were projected to be common in rural and tribal Himachal Pradesh. Currently, the situation is unexpected. The household leader was interviewed in the field for information.

Table 2: Distribution of the Sample of the Study District-wise

Sr. No.	District	Muslim	Buddist	Sikh	Total
1	Chamba	23754	2355	2316	29025
	Households	4125	392	386	4837
	Sample	2060	196	193	2418
2	Hamirpur	2373	79	199	2651
	Households	395	13	33	441
	Sample	197	7	16	220
3	Bilaspur	4360	41	2073	6474
	Households	726	7	345	1079
	Sample	383	4	172	540
4	Kullu	533	9339	685	10557
	Households	88	1556	114	1759
	Sample	44	778	57	879
5	Shimla	5458	2617	3758	11833
	Households	909	436	626	1972
	Sample	454	218	313	1085
6	Sirmaur	19359	1725	9167	30251

	Households	3226	287	1527	5442
	Sample	1613	144	764	2721
Total	Population	56837	16156	18198	91191
	Households	9469	2691	3031	15530
	Sample	4733	1347	1515	7595
Actual Sample		4420	1125	1323	6881

Tools of Data Collection

One of the most important instruments in survey research is the interview schedule, which is used to gather data. As part of the research, the investigator sent interview schedules to all household heads. A two-day workshop was held to inform the research assistants on the many parts of the study's requirements in order to achieve data homogeneity. The research investigators were briefed on the significance of the schedule's usage of a number of technical phrases and ideas. Each participant was given two or three schedules to complete by reaching out to members of the designated minority groups; this served as a practice exercise. Afterwards, a separate workshop was convened to go over the research assistants' completed schedules. The researcher was able to identify the faults and draw attention to them in each one, as well as the challenges in asking different enquiries. Thus, the timetable was revised to include any appropriate language editing and the questions were reformatted for use in the field.

There are five sections to the interview agenda. In the first section, data is collected for each topic on a district, tehsil, block, and village level. The purpose of collecting this data is to determine which families will get financial assistance from current programs. For future usage, particularly in assessing the effects of social programs, this data will also be useful in compiling a list of recipient households.

Part two of the schedule details the families' socioeconomic status and identifies the home head as the survey's Key Informant, among other things. In this section of the schedule, there were variables such as the following: the name of the household head, marital status, caste/tribe, religion, social and economic characteristics of household members (including age, sex, level of formal education, formal professional education, informal family sources, apprenticeship, etc.), total annual income (both individual and household), total number of members, total number of earning members, social class, debt (from traditional moneylenders, relationships, and cooperative banks included), and total number of members.

The third segment examines the home in order to conduct a study of the family's level of living. This includes things like the ownership of the house, the space of the house, the amenities in the household, and the means of communication and transportation. The purpose of collecting this data is to have a sense of the minority population's average level of living in the state so that policymakers may better target their initiatives and estimate the amount of funding that will be required.

The resource base accessible to minority families is discussed in Section 4 of the schedule. This resource base can include agricultural land, horticultural land, animal husbandry (including different types of cattle and poultry), industrial tools and technology, factories, and human resources. The anticipated use of this data is to identify possible development and need areas.

The schedule's last section usually outlines the current requirements for vocational training. Within this framework, the primary enquiries investigated are: What type of education have the people living in the residence previously received? Is the obtained training being fully, partially, or completely ignored? Why are vocational skills not being used or used insufficiently? Is it true that some families are in need of vocational training or that they only want to improve the abilities they already have? Does anybody know of any families who have initiatives that have potential, both in terms of the projects' feasibility and the goods' marketability, and might need some initial funding? The overarching goal is to find the most financially sound projects that can house minority families and provide jobs in the area, therefore reducing the likelihood of migration and associated issues.

There are both open-ended and close-ended questions on the program. We have already coded all of the closed-ended questions. However, the anticipated amount of columns are left blank against the open-ended questions to ensure that the coding and data entering remain consistent and sequential. After the data was collected, the particular codes were entered into these empty columns.

There was a total of about 40 questions asked of each responder, with some questions having several components. In the beginning phases, each interview would typically take an hour to an hour and a half. As the study personnel became used to the timetable and how it was administered, the time was significantly reduced. Since the study team wanted to get a feel for the household head's evident way of living, they decided to do the interviews at his home.

In light of these aims, the interview schedule was meticulously crafted to elicit comprehensive data from the minority population on a wide range of social and economic issues.

Data Analysis

A first step in data entry was the coding of information gathered from minority families across districts. We used SPSS, or statistical tool for the social sciences, to clean and analyse the data. The primary data output type used in the first run was the basic frequency table. The cross tabulation was performed after reviewing the data produced. The percentages were determined in a row-by-row manner. The former dealt with how a community's total households were split up among several districts. Data distribution in several categories was shown by the latter, district by district. This allowed for study to take place on both the local and district levels.

RESULT & DATA ANALYSIS

Table 3: - Distribution of Minorities by Marital Status

Religion	Marital Status	Hamirpur	Bilaspur	Shimla	Sirmour	Kullu	Chamba	Total
Sikh	Married	29	151	249	719	45	32	1225
		96.66	86.28	91.54	93.78	95.74	100.00	92.59
		2.19	11.14	18.82	54.34	3.40	2.41	92.59
	Unmarried		3	3	5	2		13
			1.71	1.10	0.65	4.25		0.98
			0.22	0.22	0.37	0.15		0.98

	Widow	1 3.33 0.87	20 11.42 151	16 5.88 1.20	37 4.82 2.79			74 5.59 5.59
	Divorced		1 0.57 0.07	1 0.36 0.07	3 0.39 0.22			5 0.37 0.37
	Separated			3 1.10 .022	3 0.39 0.22			6 0.45 0.45
Total		30 100.00 2.26	175 100.00 13.22	272 100.00 20.55	767 100.00 57.97	47 100.00 3.55	32 100.00 2.41	1323 100.00 100.00
Buddhist	Married	8 100.00 0.71	3 100.00 0.26	136 70.46 12.02	52 91.22 4.62	745 66.21 3.82	66 44.28 5.86	1010 89.76 89.76
	Unmarried			4 2.07 0.35	2 0.17	16 2.01 1.42	1 1.42 0.08	23 2.04 2.04
	Widow			37 19.17 3.28	3 3.50 0.26	33 4.15 2.93	3 4.28 0.26	76 6.75 6.75
	Divorced			6 3.0 0.53				6 0.53 0.53
	Separated			10 5.18 0.07				10 0.07 0.07
Total		8 100.00 8.71	3 100.00 0.26	193 100.00 17.15	57 100.00 5.06	794 100.00 70.57	70 100.00 6.22	1125 100.00
Muslim	Married	262 94.92 5.92	336 91.80 7.60	168 91.30 3.80	1493 91.58 33.77	47 94.00 1.06	1882 98.31 42.57	4188 94.73
	Unmarried	1 0.36 0.02	3 0.81 0.06	12 6.52 0.27	17 1.04 0.38	1 2.00 0.02	7 0.36 0.15	41 100.00 0.92
	Widow	13 4.71 0.29	26 7.10 0.58	2 1.08 0.04	101 6.19 2.28	2 4.00 0.02	24 1.25 0.54	168 100.00 3.80

	Divorced		1 0.27 0.02	2 0.08 0.04	10 0.16 0.22		1 0.05 0.02	14 100.00 0.31
	Separated				9 0.55 0.20			9 100.00 0.20
Total		276 100.00 6.24	366 100.00 27	184 100.00 16	1630 100.00 87	50 100.00 1.13	1914 100.00	4420 100.00
Others	Married	4	2		4	1		11
	Widow		1	1				2
Total		4	3	1	4	1		13

Table 3 shows that out of the overall sample of Sikh families, married heads constitute the vast majority, with just a tiny number of widower heads. This is based on data on the marital status of the heads of the households belonging to the minority. The number of people who have split or divorced is quite small. Sikh homes are clearly established social entities, according to the statistics. When looking at Sikh homes across districts, it is clear that Chamba, Hamirpur, Kullu, and Sirmour have a more stable situation with more married heads than Shimla and Bilaspur. The fact that Shimla and Bilaspur have a disproportionately large population of widows also plays a role. District Kullu has a higher proportion of respondents who are single or not married. Their numbers are quite small in other areas. The statistics on each district's scenario shows that the percentage of married people is much greater than other groups.

Like the Sikhs, the bulk of the married population is Buddhist. District Kullu and Shimla are the most densely populated areas with these people. Comparing the sample across districts reveals that almost all of the Buddhists in Hamirpur and Bilaspur are married, while the vast majority in Chamba, Kullu, and Sirmour are also married. Seventy-0.46% of the residents of Shimla district are wed. The district of Shimla is home to a sizeable Buddhist population that includes many widows, separated people, and divorcees. Similarly, Kullu, Chamba, and Sirmour have the highest concentrations of widows and orphans. Shimla is the only district where you may find people who have separated or divorced. The scenario is very similar throughout all districts, with just little differences here and there.

Districts Chamba and Sirmour are home to the vast majority of the country's Muslims. Much with other minority groups, the vast majority of its members are married. According to comparisons across districts, the highest number of married people live in the Chamba district, followed by Kullu and Hamirpur. Shimla and Kullu districts have the largest concentrations of single people. Bilaspur district has the greatest concentration of Muslim widows, followed by Sirmour, Hamirpur, and Kullu. Divorced and separated people make up a small percentage of their number. When looking at the data inside each district, it is clear that there are many more married people than single, widowed, or divorced people.

Table 4: Distribution of the Heads of Households by Sex

Religion	Sex	Hamirpur	Bilaspur	Shimla	Sirmour	Kullu	Chamba	Total
Sikh	Male	29	156	225	474	46	31	1234

		96.7 2.18	89.1 11.77	82.7 16.98	97.4 56.37	97.9 3.47	96.9 2.33	93.3 93.3
	Female	1 3.3 0.07	19 10.9 1.43	47 17.3 3.5	20 2.6 1.5	1 2.1 0.07	1 3.1 0.07	89 6.7 6.7
Total		30 100.00 2.25	175 100.00 13.2	272 100.00 20.5	787 100.00 58.0	47 100.00 3.6	32 100.00 2.4	1323 100.00 100.00
Buddhist	Male	9 0.9 100.00	3 0.3 100.00	142 14.5 73.6	52 5.3 91.2	712 72.8 89.8	60 6.1 85.7	978 100.00 86.9
	Female			5 34.2 26.4	5 3.4 8.8	81 55.5 10.2	10 6.8 14.3	147 100.00 13.1
Total		9 0.8 100.00	3 0.3 100.00	193 17.2 100.00	57 5.1 100.00	793 70.5 100.00	70 6.2 100.00	1125 100.00 100.00
Muslim	Male	256 6.2 93.1	337 8.1 91.8	143 3.4 77.7	15.27 36.8 93.7	49 1.2 96.1	18.34 44.2 95.9	41.46 100.00 93.8
	Female	19 6.6 6.9	30 11.0 8.2	41 16.0 22.3	103 37.7 6.3	2 0.7 3.9	79 28.9 4.1	274 100.00 6.2
Total		275 6.2 100.00	367 8.3 100.00	184 4.2 100.00	1630 36.9 100.00	51 1.2 100.00	1913 43.3 100.00	4420 100.00 100.00
others	Male	3	2	1	3	1		10
	Female	1	1		1			3
Total		1	1	1	4	1		13

The circumstances of the other minority, who only make up 13 families, are also the same as those of the main minorities. The only distinction is that nobody is separated or divorced. This is because so few of the respondents were members of the other minorities. According to inter-minority comparisons, the majority of minorities' homes are stable, with relatively few people being separated or divorced. Surprisingly, however, the biggest proportion of such individuals is found among Buddhists.

In addition to the head of the home, who is mostly male and sometimes female, the household structure of minorities in the state of Himachal Pradesh also consists of male and female adults and male and female minors. According to statistics on the heads of homes among all Sikhs, the vast majority of households—

93.3%—are led by men, with relatively few households being headed by women. However, it is noted that there are about twice as many female-headed homes among Buddhists as there are male-headed households, with the former being less common than the latter. According to the research, there are fewer women-headed families among Muslims and Sikhs than among Buddhists. One possible explanation for this is because Buddhists are less conservative than Sikhs and Muslims.

In Sikh households, there might be as few as one male adult or as many as five. This covers the spouse, wife, and adult children. Within the whole Sikh sample, 69.00 percent of families contain at least one male adult member, followed by 19.1 percent with two male adults and 8.91 percent with three adult male members, according to the statistics (Table). There are extremely few homes with three or four adult male members. According to inter-district comparisons, the district of Sirmaur has the highest percentage of people with one adult male member (45.88 percent), followed by Shimla (11.26 percent) and Sirmaur (8.16 percent). The districts with the highest number of two adult men are Sirmaur, Shimla, and Bilaspur. The results show a progressive reduction in inverse order as the number of adult men in minority families increases from three to four.

SUMMARY & DISCUSSION

Statistics about the marital status of the heads of minority families show that, out of the whole sample of Sikh homes, married heads of households make up the vast majority, with relatively few widower heads. Many Sikh homes are part of solid social groups. Like Sikhs, Buddhists make up the majority of married people. Only the Shimla district has a tiny percentage of separated and divorced people. The vast majority of Muslims are married, much like the other minorities. In Himachal Pradesh, minority households tend to be solid social groupings. A relatively tiny proportion of divorce and separation cases support this. It is consequently simpler to establish and grow stable family units, the majority of which include younger, active heads of home.

The results on the distribution of household heads by sex point to a possible deviation from the norm. The statistics show that, in contrast to popular belief, women only make up a tiny portion of Sikh homes. Nonetheless, men continue to lead the vast majority of Sikh homes. It has been discovered that there are about twice as many female-headed homes among Buddhists as there are male-headed households, with the former being less common than the latter. The circumstances in Muslim homes are almost identical to those in Sikh homes. According to the research, there are fewer women-headed families among Muslims and Sikhs than among Buddhists. One possible explanation for this is because Buddhists are less conservative than Sikhs and Muslims. It goes without saying that homes led by women have several restrictions. Nonetheless, the growing proportion of female family heads suggests that they are involved in household decision-making. This is a positive indication. From the perspective of growth and women's empowerment, it needs more encouragement. For the process to continue, the women must become more independent by increasing their involvement in income-generating activities.

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