

The Changing Trends in Family Structure

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Introduction

The Family

The family is a social institution found in all societies that unites people in cooperative groups to oversee the bearing and raising of children. Family ties are also called kinship, a social bond based on blood, marriage or adoption. The family is the basic unit of society. It is the first and the most immediate social environment to which a child is exposed. All societies contain families, but exactly who people call kin has varied through history and varies today from one culture to another. Families differ in terms of economic, cultural, social and many factors but what every family has in common is that the people who call it a family are making clear that those people are important in some way to the person calling them his family.

In some or the other way the family is a universal group. It exists in tribal, rural, urban communities and among the followers of all religions and cultures. It provides the most enduring relationship in one form or other. From the moment of the birth to the moment of death the family exerts a constant influence.

In spite of the universal and permanent nature of the family one can also see vast difference in its structure in different societies. In tribal and agrarian societies people of several generations live together. These societies have a large and joint family. In the industrial society the family is limited to husband wife and their children. Sociologists call it a nuclear family. The family is formed with number of members. These members live together. In this sense, the family is a group. There are certain rules and procedures at the roots of the family. In this sense, the family is an institution.

Definition of Family

While defining the term family some special scientists have seen the family as a universal institute others have used the terms to refer to a distinctive characteristic of the social life. Functionalist perspective defined family in terms of activity and their effect on society. Marxist perspective explains the family as the basic unit of oppression and to envisage its eventual abolition.

The word 'family' is derived from Latin word 'famulus' which means a servant. In Roman law the word denotes a group of producers and slaves and other servants as well as members connected by a common descent or marriage. Thus, originally, family consisted of a man and woman with a child or children and servants.

Some Other Definitions

Several sociologists have defined the family in a number of ways.

Maclver And Page defined family as- "Family is a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for procreation and upbringing of children"

According to **M.F.Nimkoff**

"Family is more or less durable association of husband and wife with or without child, or of a man or woman alone with children"

Whereas **Burgess And Locke** defined

“Family is a group of persons united by ties marriages, blood or adoption constituting a single household interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, creating a common culture”

Eliot And Mervill states that“ Family is a biological social unit composed of husband, wife and children”

Objective of The Paper

- To understand the meaning of a family.
- To study the characteristics of family.
- To know about different types of families.
- To understand the changes in family structure.

Elements of Family

The definitions reveal certain elements of family which are as follows-

- a. The family is a basic, definite and enduring people.
- b. Family is formed by the relatively durable companionship of husband and wife
- c. Family can be large in size in which persons belonging to several generations may live together.
- d. Family may be limited to husband, wife or only the father and his children or only the mother and her children.
- e. Family procreates and helps in bringing up children

Characteristics of the Family

Living together of man and woman, reproducing and bringing up children alone does not form family. Marriage plays an important role in changing the man woman relationship in to the permanent relationship to husband and wife. Along with sexual relationship and procreation psychological attachment is also necessary. No other organisation of society can be companied with the family where sociological understanding is concerned. According to Mark Ever and page the family has certain features and they are as follows-

- A. Universality
- B. Social environment which influences individuals
- C. Affected basis, emotionally
- D. Limited size
- E. Central position in social structure
- F. Sense of responsibility among the members
- G . Social regulations of behaviour
- H. Permanent and temporary in nature

The definitions and characteristics of family shows that on one hand it has a biological aspect in which men and women become husband and wife by certain institutional modes. They procreate and bring up children. On the other hand, it has a social aspect in which the family members have responsibilities toward each other. In social cultural sphere of the family influences its member by the process of socialization. It also regulates the behaviour of its member.

The family is generally smaller in size however; families in agrarian and tribal communities can be large. The nature of the family is universal because it exists everywhere. The nature of a particular family may be permanent or temporary.

The family has passed through many stages to reach its modern form. The family, marriage, economic system and succession are inter-related. The structural behavioural patterns and functions of the family have been changing with the change in socio-economic order.

Anthropological studies of tribal societies and particularly, Malinowski's researchers have proved that even in the tribal societies the institution of the family existed in some form or the other. Primitive social and economic systems, especially agrarian system require more of human labour. Therefore, the size of the family in these societies is generally large. Polygene was also prevalent in these societies. This was also a reason of the large size of the family. The industrial urban system has reduced the size means husband, wife and their children. There are certain social and economic factors behind this in a system which is based on labour and wages the individual is responsible for this work. The individual goes from the village to the city in search of employment. On account and small accommodation, he is forced to follow the small family norm. In the modern urban industrial system the basis of marriage is love toward the small of the family in urban societies.

Function of the Family

The family as a social institution performs several functions. Different thinkers of the world expressed different opinion regarding the function of the family.

Kingsley Davis speaks of four main functions of the family:

- ✚ 1 Reproduction
- ✚ 2 Maintenance
- ✚ 3 Placements and
- ✚ 4 Socialization

Simultaneously, **Ogburn and Nimkoff** have mentioned 6 functions:

- 1 Recreational
- 2 Affectional
- 3 Economics
- 4 Protective
- 5 Religious
- 6 Educational

According to **Goode** the family has the following functions:

- ✓ 1 Procreations
- ✓ 2 Socio-economic securities to family members.
- ✓ 3 Determination of status of family members.
- ✓ 4 Socialization and emotional support.
- ✓ 5 Social controls

Types of Families

The structure of family has changed dramatically over the last 50 years. Several variations of family have been created. Along with certain traditional types of family some new and specific types of family structure are identified by society today. The following types of families exist today which are based on varies parameters.

1. Types of Family Based on the Basis of Marriage

On the basis of marriage, family has been classified into three major types:

- ❖ Polygamous or Polygynous family
- ❖ Polyandrous family
- ❖ Monogamous family

2. Types of Family on the Basis Of the Nature of Residence

On the basis of the nature of residence family can be classified into three forms.

- Family of matrilocal residence

- Family of patrilocal residence
- Family of changing residence

3. Types of Family on the Basis of Ancestry or Descent Family

On this basis family can be classified into two.

- Matrilineal family
- Patrilineal family

4. Types of Family on the Basis of Size or Structure

On the basis of size or structure and the depth of generation family can be classified into two main families

- ✚ Nuclear or the Single Unit Family
- ✚ Joint families

5. Types of Family on the Basis of the Nature of Relations

On the basis of the nature of relation among the family members the family can be classified into two main types

1. The conjugal family which consist of adult members among there exists sex relationships.
2. Consanguine family which consist of members among whom there exists blood relationship brother and sister, father and son etc.

Alternative Family Forms

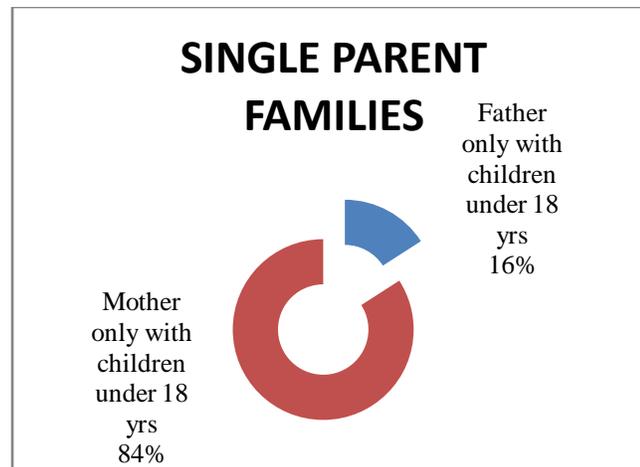
There is no denying that the concept of family has certainly changed over a last few decade and our society discovered greater diversity. There are several alternative family forms and they are:

- ✓ One-parent families
- ✓ Cohabitations
- ✓ LGBT
- ✓ Singlehood

➤ One Parent Families

One parent families are also known as single parenthood. Single parenthood was fairly common prior to the 20 century due to more frequent death of spouses. But at that time there was certain stigma surrounding being a single parent. But today, single parenthood is considered more acceptable. One parent families still results from death of either of the spouse but also from choice, divorce and a unmarried decision to have a child alone.

Research has shown that growing up in a one parent family can be disadvantages for children. Poverty is the most serious problem for one parent families especially if that parent is women. According to the 2012 US census, there were approximately 10 million single mothers in 2011. On average, children growing up in a single parent family start out poorer, get less schooling, and its end up with lower income as adults. Fortunately, this does not happen in every case, but it's just more likely in a single parent home. Single parent family can be further classified into two:

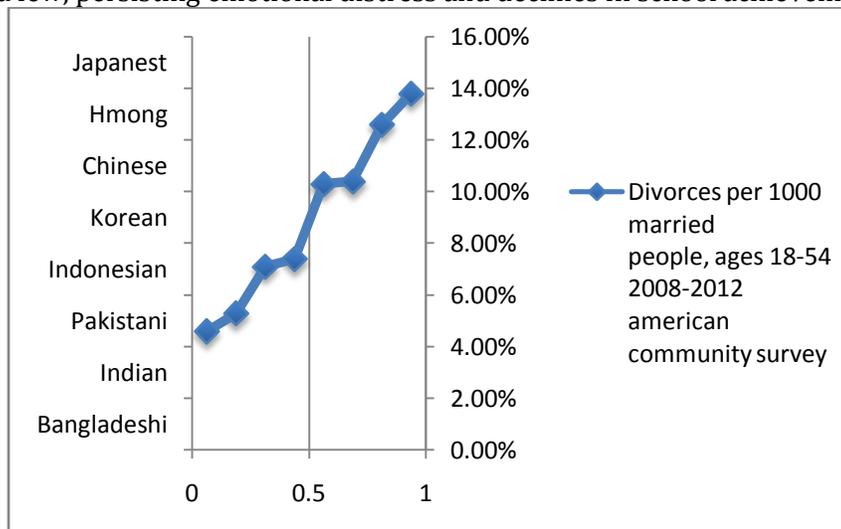


1. Single Divorced Parent Families

2. Never Married Single Parent Families

a. Single Divorced Parent Family

The largest percentage of single parent families are headed by divorced female parents. “The assumption has been made that the trauma from divorce is likely to result in poorly socialised cognitively deficient children who experience poor parent child relationship. But a research has been undertaken which shows that the children living with their mother are healthier than those living with fathers. The majority of children show improved adjustments by two years after divorce yet for a few, persisting emotional distress and declines in school achievement still exist.



Source: <http://familyinequality.wordpress.com>

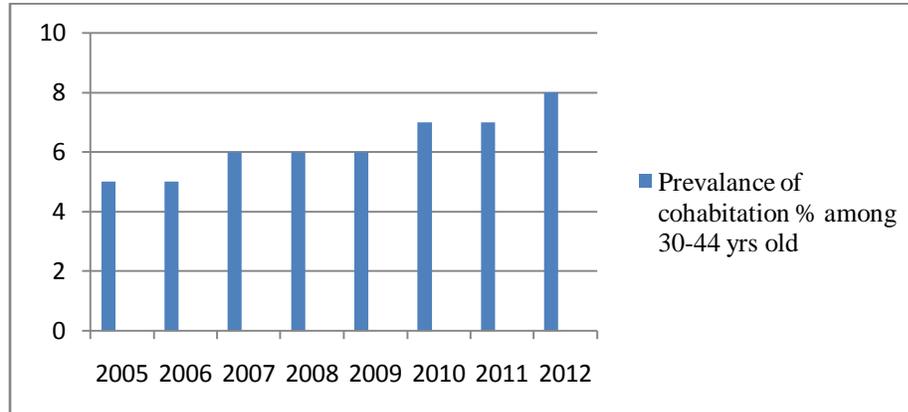
b. Never Married Single Parent Families

It is believed that a cultural shift towards later marriage has contributed to a rise in never married motherhood. “It has been thought that children in these kinds of families are shielded from marital status, children of never married mothers show slightly better academic performance and emotional adjustment than do children of divorced and remarried mothers. But when compared with children of two parent families, these children may experience less attention, difficulties in

interaction with other children, a lack in school performance and behaviour associated with the lack of male parental influence.

➤ **Cohabitation**

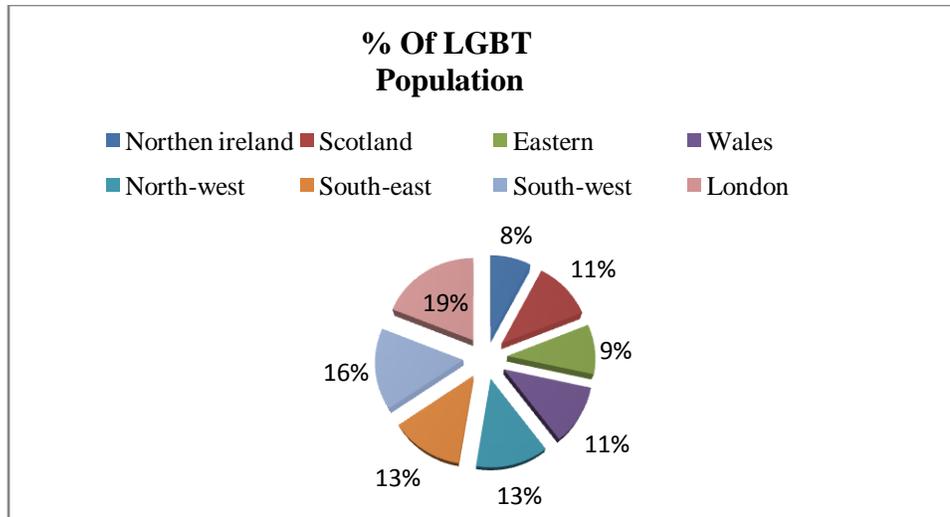
It is an arrangement where two people are not married, live together in a romantic relationship and or sexually intimate relationship on a long term or permanent basis. "Cohabitation usually refers to unmarried couples who live together without formally registering their relation as a marriage. Such arrangements have become increasingly common in western countries during the past few decades, being led by changing social views, especially regarding marriage gender role and religion. More broadly, the term cohabitation can mean any number of people living together. To "cohabit" in a broad sense means to "coexist".



Source: maran current population survey [CPS] integrated public use micro sample GLBT (GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER)

LGBT stand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. The romantic relationships of these groups of people as well as the families they create are considered as non traditional. In 1989 Denmark became the first country to lawful same sex marriage. Additional countries soon followed. Today, in USA several states have legalised same sex marriage. It is a topic all over the news and one of the biggest hot button issues.

A portion of the US population continues to advocate the GLBT lifestyles are wrong for a variety of reasons. However recently popular opinion has begun to shift and an increased acceptance of GLBT as an everyday part of reality had taken place. Television is an example of how our society in general, see homosexuality as a common attribute of today's culture.



Changes in Family Structure

Changes in family structure are associated with two mutually reinforcing processes of demographic change. The first which began in late 19th century, saw a decline in fertility, mortality and increase in life expectancy. The second which began in 1960s and continues today is characterised by a decrease in marriage and traditional family system and increase in cohabitation, extra marital births, divorce, single parenthood, gay and lesbian, bisexuals and trans genders. The process of changes in a family structure has relatively increased all over the world. In other words the diversification of family is common to all countries and similar trends can be identified all over the world, but the scope and diversity of change is such that it is not possible to speak of convergence to set a family forms. This partly because the starting point, pace and extend of family change vary.

The dramatic process of change in family structure that has been characterising world since the 1960s has two main outcomes-

First, there is the shrinking of the household the process began with a shift from extended to nuclear family structure as a result of industrialization and urbanisation, although historical studies have shown that this was by means universal. Multigenerational living is quite complex today. On the one hand three generations living together is far less common on the other hand, the age at which young adults marry and leave their parent home has risen significantly. In time with the individualisation of the life course and increased parent life expectancy, the number of one person household has risen drastically. In 1960 there were 13 million people across the Europe living in this type of household and it is predicted that by 2025 there will be 71 million such household. However, one person household are much more common today.

Secondly, there is the diversification and deinstitutionalisation of family forms. The process of family deinstitutionalisation has greatly contributed to the rise in single parent families. This trend is closely linked to other rising trends such as increase in divorced family with single parent, never married single family, cohabitation, gay and lesbian families, bisexuals and transgender.

This process needs to be understood in the context of dramatic change to the institution of marriage, and more specially the separation between partnership, reproduction, parenthood and marriages. In other words the change in the family forms goes hand in hand with an increased social recognition of coupledness and parenthood outside wedlock.

There is a decline in marriage and increase in age of marriage. Decrease in marriage goes hand in hand with increase in divorce rate. The fall in the fertility and marriage has gone hand in hand with an increase in cohabitation and in birth before marriage. Across western European countries cohabitation is more common in France and the Nordic countries and very low in island and southern European countries. Though there is trend of the gay and lesbian family and bisexuals and Tran's gender but there number varies considerably from country to country in different societies somewhere officially recognized as a family forms by the state more often unofficially as family arrangement made by homosexual couples who wish to constitute a family with children.

Changing Function of Family

With the changing of time various external and internal forces have acted upon family and brought a great change both in the structure and function of the family. The changes particularly in the function of family due to changes in the structure of the family have reduced the importance of family considerably and also have drawn a line between traditional family and modern family.

The changes are-

1. Change in the Primary Function

Modern families in most of societies fails to exertive its traditional control in regulating sexual behaviour. The child care functions of the family have been shifted to certain external agencies like hospitals, maternity homes, nurseries, kindergartens etc. The modern family fails to give traditional protection for the aged, diseased, mentally retarded, physically handicapped etc. The modern family give more attention to increase in socialization.

2. Changes in Secondary Function

The religious functions of the family have also undergone a great change. The religious practices have lost their traditional importance. More secular outlook is spreading day by day.

In spite of the changes, that have occurred in the function of family in modern times the family is still persisting as one of the most important social institution. This is because the traditional functions of family have been modified than lost.

Analysis

To determine the changing family structure and to know which type of family is more encountered, a survey was conducted and the information was gathered with the help of the questionnaire.

The questions were asked through a simple questionnaire in generalized design

The question were-

1] Which type of family structure do you think is more appropriate?

1] Cohabitation 2] Single Parent Family
3] Nuclear Family 4] Joint Family

2] Among the given type of family which type of family is more encountered in the society?

A] Nuclear Family 2] Joint Family
C] Single Parent Family 4] Never Married Single

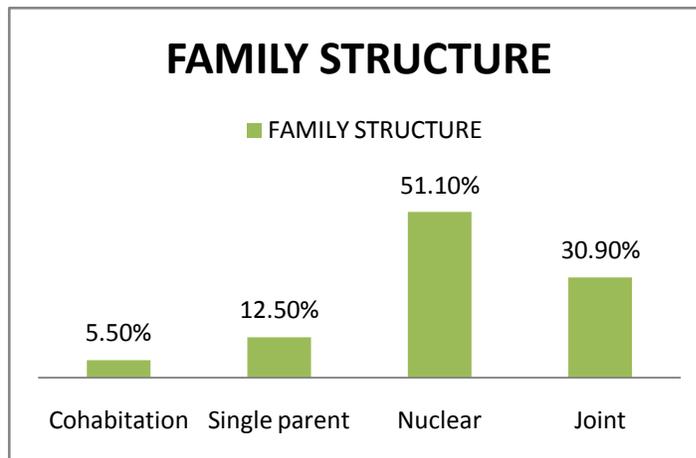
3] Is there a correlation between nuclear family and saving habit?

A] Yes B] No

4] Is there a decline in traditional family system?

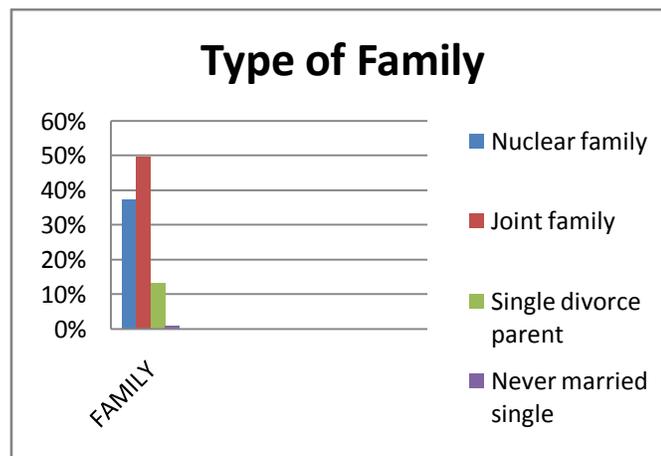
A] Yes B] No

1] Which type of family structure do you think is most appropriate?



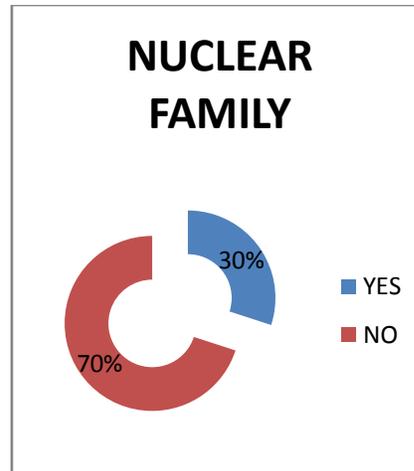
The above diagram explains the type of family which is most appropriate according to the people living in a society. The diagram clearly shows that most of the people are in a favour of nuclear family whereas joint family comes after it. Surprisingly in this modern era, still many people feel joint family system appropriate at the same people who think single parenting is better while few went for cohabitation.

2] Among the given types of family, which type of family do you think is more encountered in the society?



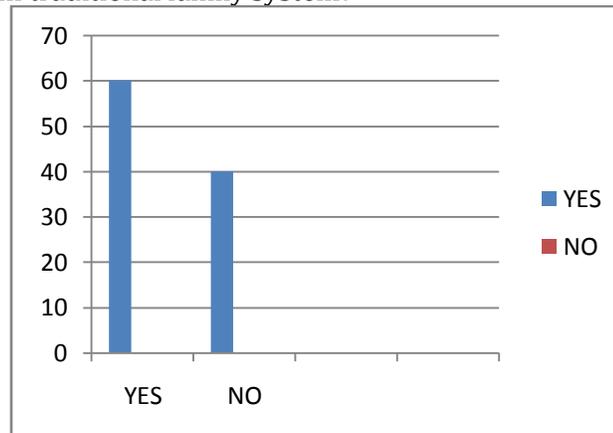
The above divided rectangle clearly describes that which type of family is more encountered in the society. Nuclear family has a figure of around 37% whereas the figure of 13% shows that there is a steady rise in single divorced parent in the society. It is proved that joint family system is still preferred by many i.e., approx 49%. Never married single parent also exist in the society but their number is quite few around 0.4% of the total.

3] Is there a correlation between nuclear family and saving habit?



It is assumed that more the family member more expense and less saving. Hence, many people prefer to live in a nuclear family just to increase there saving. Although the chart explains that very few people supports the ideology that nuclear family gives rise to the saving habit.

4] Is there a decline in traditional family system?



The graph above shows that there are still of 60% of the people who think that the trend of traditional family system is steadily declining where as the rest 40% thinks that the importance of traditional family system still exists today.

Conclusion

Families are the transforming not destroying themselves. There has been a change in the structure and types of family but families of all kind seek caring, supporting, comforting and enduring relationship, there is nothing inherently better about one type of family from than other. Earlier people of several generations tend to live together in one house but now day nuclear families are more in demand. There are several traditional forms of family which exists even today but there is a steady rise in the non-traditional forms of family which consists of single parenthood, cohabitation, and LGBT. The changing structures of families are linked by many people. Due to change in structure is also a change in behaviour and function of individual. There is an unbelievable change in the family structure and the system one more type of family which are now seen is LGBT family. Although there are different types of family but the family which is more encountered in the society is joint family.

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