

# Navigating The Dynamics Of Joint Family System In Modern India: A Sociological Study

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

This research examines some of the main causes of the traditional joint family system's continued vitality in India. We seek to show that the Indian family is a pragmatic response to the forces of modernity. The traditional family structure seems to offer a necessary corrective in terms of a sense of location, personal identity, self-worth, social position, and obligation in modern life precisely because modernity emphasizes social estrangement and cultural diversity. In addition, it is likely that the old and new will continue to be accommodated and adapted within the context of Indian experience. In India, the Hindu joint family system has long been a significant and enduring social institution. This research gives a brief overview of the historical development, distinguishing features, and current relevance of the Hindu joint family system. It has historically provided a solid foundation for preserving cultural values, social cohesiveness, and economic stability. Hindu joint families have been a significant and enduring social structure for centuries since they have been embedded in India's cultural and historical landscape. Numerous generations coexist under one roof in this traditional family structure, also known as the Hindu Undivided Family (HUF), which is characterized by a strong sense of kinship and the sharing of resources and duties. Ancient Indian literature like the Manusmriti and Dharmashastras, which not only supported the joint family but also included it into the larger cultural and religious conventions of the time, are where its historical relevance can be found.

**Key words:** India, joint family, family structure, globalization, modernity, culture, economy.

## Introduction

Joint families may consist of individuals who have lived together for more than three generations. However, there are other factors that also define a joint family system. In the sense that they share a pool of assets and income, families made up of two brothers who live in different homes but share a family business are likewise categorised as joint families. Therefore, a joint family also includes an extended family. Even yet, a range of earnings within the joint family might cause the house to be divided into smaller parts, each of which would have a lower family size—that is, the nuclear family. However, the division is merely a physical one and not a structural or economic cleavage of jointness as long as there is a common pool. A joint family can also be a nuclear one. This may occur when one son has a separate source of income, but it is not adequate to support him. Alternatively, he may live separately from the rest of the family despite being a part of a joint family because of bad relationships. It makes sense that these intricate types of jointness have a significant temporal component and are difficult to quantify. Nowadays, the vast majority of jointness is observed in lower socioeconomic categories, urban slum inhabitants, and rural residents.

Under these systems, a single-family life in a single home, headed by parents, sons, and their offspring. The father continues to be the owner and registered owner of the home owned by the husband's parents. However, the house is frequently passed to the male child in acknowledgment of his assuming parental responsibilities as the parents age. Then he moves into the house with his wife, kids, and one or more younger brothers. Usually, the brothers combine all of their income and expenses into a single pool. Most of the time, the oldest brother

manages this fund of income and expenses; eventually, his sons take over these responsibilities. Include the year of publication of the reference.

### **Background**

The concept of the joint family system has long been a cornerstone of many societies worldwide. It represents a multi-generational, extended family living together under one roof, sharing not only living space but also responsibilities, resources, and a sense of communal living. This system has been an integral part of human history, fostering strong bonds and traditions while providing a support network for its members. The joint family system has evolved over time, adapting to the changing dynamics of modern society.

Historically, the joint family system has roots that stretch back centuries, deeply embedded in the cultural and social fabric of many societies. This system has been particularly prevalent in countries like India, China, and various parts of the Middle East, where traditions and values are deeply intertwined with family life. In these societies, the joint family system often formed the basic unit of social organization. Multiple generations - grandparents, parents, children, and sometimes even extended relatives - would cohabit, sharing their lives, resources, and responsibilities. Such arrangements were not just practical but also cultural, allowing for the transmission of values, customs, and traditions from one generation to the next. However, as the world has evolved, so too has the joint family system.

The forces of urbanization, industrialization, and globalization have led to significant changes in the way people live and relate to one another. Nuclear families, comprising only parents and children, have become more common in many parts of the world, particularly in urban areas. This shift has been influenced by factors such as increased individualism, greater work-related mobility, and the pursuit of personal aspirations. Moreover, as societies become increasingly diverse and interconnected, the joint family system faces the challenge of adapting to modern values and lifestyles. Questions arise about gender equality, intercultural marriages, and the accommodation of individual career aspirations. These issues can create tension within the family as it navigates the complexities of contemporary life.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To analyse the problems of joint family.
2. To evaluate how mixed families affect the privacy and personal space of individuals and family members.
3. To investigate the financial benefits and drawbacks of a joint family arrangement.
4. To explore the impact of urbanization, modernization, and changing social norms on the sustainability of joint families.

### **Research Methodology**

This research, which used a descriptive research design, focused on university students from different states in India. Through the use of random sampling techniques, a sample of 117 graduate students—23 males and 94 females—with an average age of 23 years was chosen. Data was collected by distributing questionnaires via online platforms, specifically Google Forms, to individuals between the ages of 17 and 30. After that, the data was analysed using both Excel and SPSS software, which allowed for a thorough understanding of the dataset. This methodology allowed for the investigation and comparison of various factors among university students, offering insightful information about their attitudes, actions, and experiences.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The concept of "structural functionalism" may be very useful for researching the joint family system in modern India. This sociological theory, introduced by scholars such as Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, examines how societies sustain stability and order through the interplay of social institutions and their functions.

In the framework of joint families in India, Structural Functionalism can aid in understanding how various roles and norms within the family structure contribute to its functioning and perpetuation. For example, it can explain how different family members play distinct roles (e.g., seniors as decision-makers or younger members as caregivers) and how these roles contribute to family cohesiveness and harmony.

Furthermore, Structural Functionalism can give light on how joint families adjust to current developments. For example, it might investigate how conventional roles and norms are renegotiated or altered in response to socioeconomic developments such as urbanisation, women's empowerment, and migration.

Researchers can use Structural Functionalism to examine the joint family system not as a relic of the past, but as a dynamic social institution that evolves and adapts to modern demands while maintaining its core functions of providing support, stability, and identity to its members.

### **Impacts of the Joint Family's Breakdown**

The status and roles of family members have changed as a result of changes in rural family structures. The dynamics of the joint family are shifting, and the patriarch is falling behind. The male family elders have historically held the position of leadership. The eldest male member of each nuclear unit becomes the leader of the new authority centres that form when the family splits up into smaller groups. Additionally, the younger, more independent and educated generations are challenging patriarchal rule. Young males who are exposed to

contemporary concepts of independence and freedom exhibit hostility towards established authority. Many young women also oppose the domineering attitudes of the mothers-in-law following the separation of a joint household.

### **Changing patterns of Joint Family System**

Mondal (2013) elaborates on various aspects of changing patterns in the structural and functional aspects of joint families in India, as discussed:

#### **a. Small Family Size**

The traditional family unit has reduced in size. Social and economic shifts have influenced people's attitudes about joint families and encouraged individualism. Urbanisation has placed a strong focus on privacy and individuality, which is another reason to live independently of a large family. As a result, little families are emerging to replace the dissolution of joint families.

#### **b. Neo-Local Residence**

Urbanisation and industrialization have led to an increasing number of young married couples relocating to live near their place of employment. Thus, neo-local housing is increasingly becoming available.

#### **c. Functional Jointness**

The married sons who have set independent household continue to maintain their connection with their joint families in their native places. Some of them continue to fulfill their obligations to their parents and siblings. But the ties between the neo-local residence and distant kin are very weak.

#### **d. Equality of Individual**

Individualism had no place in traditional civilizations, which are generally acknowledged to have been dominated by families as the primary method of value orientation. Family objectives take precedence over personal ambitions. Joint family members are now more aware of their freedom and uniqueness. Instead of trying to push their will on the kids, the family's parents or patriarchs now allow them more autonomy in choosing how to pursue their objectives. An individual's position is determined by his own achievements, not by his age or relationship.

#### **e. Equal Status for Women**

In the past, patriarchal societies gave fathers unrestricted power over their spouses, sons, and daughters, with women frequently occupying submissive roles. However, women's responsibilities and status have changed in the joint family structure. In contemporary times, women assume a consultative role, delegating significant family choices to their spouse or father. Both oldest males and oldest females now hold positions of authority. As more women enter the workforce, males are beginning to treat them more equally, reversing the conventional view of women's status. A major change in the traditional Indian family structure is this shift in gender roles and authority.

#### **f. Freedom in Mate Selection**

In India, traditional joint family arrangements have changed from being rigid to being flexible, giving the younger generation some degree of independence. Both boys and girls have been allowed to take part in the process of choosing a partner, and the foundation of free mate selection has been love marriage. Changes in arranged weddings are being seen in urban and some rural regions as a result of this trend. The Indian family structure is exhibiting an adaptive tactic by giving the children a certain amount of independence.

#### **g. Growth of Individualism**

Studies show that as Indian women are more aware of their independence and individuality, they have a worse opinion of combined families. As a result, women are increasingly choosing to live distant from their families or to start their own households after being married. The power structure of the joint family is evolving from one-sided male authority to a sharing of power between the husband and wife, challenging the traditional view of role patterns.

Traditional Indian family relationships are evolving, with women eating with their husbands and daughters-in-law no longer submitting their mother's domination. Co-residential, commercial joint families in cities stay together due to housing scarcity, but there may be a divide in household finances. Both male and female family members seek profitable employment outside the home, and to maintain smooth operations, family members increasingly take care of the house and children, with working spouses choosing to live in nuclear households.

### **Future Prospects**

In India, a number of issues, such as societal upheavals, demographic changes, economic advancements, and cultural alterations, will affect the future of joint families. In rural and semi-urban areas where cultural traditions and economic interdependence are still strong, the traditional joint family model is likely to endure, even if it may continue to erode in metropolitan areas due to factors including urbanisation, nuclearization of families, and individualistic lifestyles. The dynamics and makeup of joint families are nevertheless likely to change in reaction to modern circumstances, even in these situations.

### **Potential Consequences of Demographic and Societal Changes:**

**Urbanization:** Urbanization and growing cities are driving families to transition from joint living to independent nuclear structures due to limited living space, occupational mobility, and evolving societal values. This trend represents a broader societal shift towards self-sufficient and smaller family units, adapting to urban life's demands and opportunities.

**Ageing Population:** As life expectancy rises and fertility rates fall, joint families may see a transition in the population that is typified by a greater number of senior family members who need care and assistance from fewer working-age persons.

**Gender Dynamics:** As gender equality and women's empowerment continue to advance, women in joint families may have more autonomy, which would challenge conventional gender roles and power relations.

**Technological Developments:** New developments in healthcare and communication technologies, in particular, may make it easier for distant family members to coordinate their care and improve the standard of care for elderly or dependent relatives.

### **Suggestions for Researchers, Policymakers, and Practitioners:**

**Social Welfare Policies:** Lawmakers should create comprehensive social welfare programmes that meet the requirements of single-parent and dual-parent homes. These programmes should include childcare, elder care, and financial aid for low-income households.

**Legal Reforms:** For a family to remain harmonious and cohesive, inheritance rules and property rights must be fair and transparent. Having clear rules and regulations levels the playing field and keeps injustices and conflicts at bay. Inheritance rules that are fair and open are crucial for maintaining family unity and empowering people, especially women and others who are more likely to be disregarded. Strong legal protections are necessary to promote a loving and peaceful home life.

**Family Support Services:** To improve family ties, settle disputes, and foster intergenerational solidarity, community-based organisations and practitioners ought to provide counselling, mediation, and educational initiatives.

**Research and documentation:** To provide empirical support for policy interventions and programmatic activities, researchers should carry out longitudinal studies to track changes in family dynamics, structures, and well-being across time.

### **Cultural Preservation**

To promote a feeling of pride and identity among the younger generations, efforts should be made to conserve and celebrate the cultural history of joint families via storytelling, cultural festivals, and intergenerational discourse.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the transformative forces of modernity, urbanisation, and evolving social norms are fundamentally reshaping the traditional joint family structure in India. While historically serving as a cornerstone of Indian society, the conventional joint family system now confronts significant challenges to its sustainability, notwithstanding the valuable benefits it offers in terms of social welfare, financial stability, and the safeguarding of cultural heritage.

The findings of the study underline a growing concern among the younger generation regarding issues of privacy, independence, and personal freedom within the framework of joint familial setups. Moreover, the dynamics of authority and decision-making within these households are undergoing a noticeable shift due to changing gender dynamics, intergenerational conflicts, and the increasing priority placed on individual aspirations and ambitions.

The joint family structure continues to be an essential component of Indian society despite the many challenges it confronts, especially in rural and semi-urban areas where mutual economic support and long-standing cultural values are still highly valued. Moreover, the results of the study show that a significant portion of the populace continues to see joint families as a beneficial and sensible kind of family structure, recognising the emotional support, shared responsibilities, and preservation of cultural traditions that this arrangement promotes. In the future, it will be clear that India's joint family system needs to evolve and adapt in order to meet the demands of modern society while maintaining its core values and benefits. This progress might include fostering clear communication and efficient dispute resolution techniques, encouraging more gender equality and inclusive decision-making frameworks, and finding a harmonic balance between individual freedom and community responsibilities.

In the end, the respected joint family structure in India will mostly depend on how well it navigates and embraces both the traditional traditions and the forward-thinking values of modern society. In a period of swift changes and shifting paradigms, it must both skilfully assimilate the new expectations and aspirations of people and households and effectively preserve the beloved values and traditions that have knitted the fabric of Indian culture. In order to ensure that the substance and applicability of the ancestral community living model

resonate seamlessly with the ever-evolving dynamics of today's globalised world, this delicate balancing act necessitates a balanced interplay of tradition and innovation. The joint family system in India is well-positioned to adapt to changing times and continue to play a significant role in forming the country's social and familial fabric for many years to come. This is because it balances the deep cultural significance of the system with a forward-thinking approach that meets the varied needs and goals of its members.

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