

# A Sociological Study on Managing Conflicts in Families with special reference to Bengaluru Rural and Urban Districts.

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\* Sophia Sharon \*\* Madhuri Suresh

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## *Abstract*

*Bengaluru, a cosmopolitan city is witnessing racing changes in terms of spatial growth, industrial progress and infrastructural development. It is the second fastest growing metropolis in India. With a gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$83 billion, Bengaluru is 4th among the top 15 cities contributing to India's overall GDP. It is evident that there is stress on these city dwellers to be forefront achievers. A majority of them are working for private and corporate companies where the jobs offered are target oriented and insecure. Career orientation, changing lifestyle, consumerism, urbanization and industrialization, urban migration have led to the emergence of dual income, multi income and disorganized families.*

*The family being one of the basic institutions plays a prominent role right from arranging marriages for the progeny, child development to taking care of the senior citizens. In a fast changing urbanized society all these functions are transferred to secondary agencies; this has led to the loss of relevance of relationships in the family, which has given room for repercussions on individual's personality. Due to this there is disorientation, lack of integrity, declining respect and love for other fellow human beings. Family disorganization is one of the causes of social problems such as Domestic violence, alcoholism, drug abuse, divorce, suicides, juvenile delinquency etc. On one side there is tremendous economic progress and on the other side there is absolute disintegration and degradation of value systems and the families are the sources of this and affected units.*

**Key words:** *Family Conflicts, Family Disorganization , Effects of Rapid Urbanisation.*

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\* Lecturer in Sociology, Mount Carmel College, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India,  
Email: sophia.sharon@gmail.com

\*\* Lecturer in Sociology, Mount Carmel College, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

## **Introduction**

In India, the family is the most important institution that has survived through the ages. Like most other less industrialised, traditional, eastern societies, India is perceived as a society that emphasizes family integrity, loyalty, and unity. It is referred to as an institution that includes rules and common or shared pattern of behaviour that regulates sexuality, birth, child rearing, individual personality and development. The Indian family has been a strong lasting institution in the life of the individual and the community. For the Hindu family, extended family and kinship ties are of utmost importance. Furthermore, most Indian families adhere to a patriarchal ideology and follow the patrilineal rule of descent. They practice patrilocal residence, have familial value orientations and endorse traditional gender role preferences. The Indian family is considered puissant, well established, lasting and resilient. Historically, the traditional, ideal and desired family in India is the joint family. A joint family includes kinsmen, and generally includes three to four living generations, including uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, and grandparents living together in the same household. It is a group composed of a number of family units living in separate rooms of the same house. These members eat the food cooked at one hearth, share a common income, common property, are related to one another through kinship ties, and worship the same idols. The family supports the old; takes care of widows, never-married adults, and the disabled; provides security and a sense of support and togetherness. The joint family has always been the preferred family type in the Indian culture, and most Indians at some point in their lives have participated in joint family living.

## **Shifting of Social Dynamics in Contemporary India**

There has been an obvious shifting of social dynamics in modern India. It is an accepted fact that cultures are not stagnant - they are constantly evolving and the pace of the change is usually progressive. However, looking back over the different generations of human kind, an obvious difference can be seen. The changes are at many levels composing of social norms, accepted ways of thought, communication, behaviours, and the role of family and community. Nonetheless, these changes have slowly been woven into the fabric of Indian society, gradually being absorbed as the new norms, without disrupting the core. The changes that have taken place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century seem to have manifested at a much accelerated pace, causing tears in the very foundation of Indian culture. They seem to be impacting the very basis of individual identity and the pillars of Indian society leading to factors that may develop triggers for familial conflicts and maladjustments. All these aspects have led into a quest to seek empirical evidences to some of the fundamental queries related to family dynamics. Many Indians tend to covet the western way of

life even though traditional Indian society has always been restrictive in many senses where social mobility was restricted most of the times. Previously, in Indian contemporary society, family, gender, caste, and hierarchy used to define one's place in the social order and determine how others viewed, related to and behaved towards people and what was expected of people. It also defined what options were open to one in terms of what people could accomplish and become in life. It favoured the privileged and those in the upper classes of society. But, this fast-globalising context with the introduction of technology and industrial sectors shook all that up, leading to new opportunities and financial freedom and ultimately bringing in its wake many other changes. Therefore, the social fabric of Indian society has undergone dramatic changes. The changes are redefining the concept of identity and individuality among younger Indians, reshaping the role of family, altering the family structure and the Indian values of interdependence, modesty, family honour, as well as social hierarchy and so on. Young Indians are confident, ambitious and ready to make a change in the world. Unlike their orthodox parents, they want to take charge of their life and 'make' things happen. Young women are seeing a world of opportunities opening up for them like never before. Financial independence is allowing this generation to make choices that were not possible before - for example, they can move out of parental homes, spend on material goods and lifestyles without feeling guilty. They are becoming more self-oriented and individualistic. They are now exposed to members of the other sex on a regular basis and making choices of life-partners from a wider pool of people, beyond the old lines of hierarchy. And more importantly, social mobility is now possible due to all the above. The restrictions of family, religion, gender, and so on are no longer inhibitors.

### **Changing Dynamics and Consequent Rise in Family Conflicts**

Society is made up of individuals and stable societies are the product of responsible families as well as people. A family irrespective of its composition implies the maintenance and the endurance of vital underlying principles of integrity, values, welfare, understanding, compassion, compatibility, patience absence of which are leading factors for maladjustments.

### **Need for the study**

Scientific and Technological innovations and inventions and their direct impact on the social and economic life of the Indian people have resulted in the growth of new family structures and a shift in dynamics resulting in familial conflicts and maladjustments. Bengaluru presents a typical case for the study of urban and suburban families that provide examples of trigger factors that give rise to such conflicts. For instances; income expenditure balancing, single parent family, childless

family, stepfamily, cohabitation (no marriage), adoption, wedding after pregnancy and gay families, disintegration of joint family into nuclear families amongst others. An analysis of such factors will help in a better sociological understanding of ongoing social changes within Indian family systems.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the factors that trigger familial conflicts and maladjustments in Bengaluru urban and Bengaluru rural district.
2. To examine how such factors are acting as catalyst for rapid social changes in Bengaluru.

### **Review of Literature**

Most researches on conflict involving family, concentrate on conflict in the areas of work life balance. However elements within family may be identified as factors for conflict and maladjustments. According to D'Cruz and Bharat (2001), family research in India focused on common identifiable 'patterns' rather than exploring the 'dynamics'. Thus popular notions of nuclear family as a modern urban social phenomenon in India is dispelled by the authors who are of the opinion that by focusing research energies on 'patterns' early researchers perpetuated the belief that all family systems in India were 'Joint' in nature and form (D'Cruz . J.P Singh, 2005; Patel, Tulsi 2005). Plurality of form, characterised many chronological phases, of the family in India. Thus it is argued that, at all times in Indian social history, a multiplicity of family patterns had been practised like the joint, nuclear, single parent, dual earner and adoptive family systems (Ahmed, Imtiaz, 2005; D'Cruz; Chakraborty, Krishna. 2002). Conflict with in large families and consequent readjustments through breakups and independent reestablishment of smaller units have been practised historically. Rajan Et.al.1993, discusses the role of family planning and fertility tracking (Ram, 2012) in India. Success of Family planning policies, their propagation through various media and the practise of 2 children policy also influenced the family dynamics as it reduced family sizes and increased economic independence, freed women from a cycle of pregnancies, emphasized the conjugal relation of couples and made way for splitting joint families. Also common practise of neo local residence, freedom in mate selection, rise in marriageable age and equality in spousal relations are aspired by most people (D'Cruz and Bharat). Consequently children in such families are now wielding enormous influence on their parents (Theresa Rhea, 2004). Their decisions and choices are given priority. Thus free choice, independent decision making, rebelling against patriarchal authority figures are increasing in frequency with in all types and forms of urban familial structures. Levels of Gender based conflict also are on the rise by

both housewives and working women as men try to hold on to patriarchal authority and leadership patterns (D’Cruz and Bharat, 2001; Narayan and Bharadwaj, 2005).

## **Methodology**

**Method of Research-** The Research is based on Descriptive Study. It is Quantitative in nature.

## **Variables of the Study**

**Dependent variable-** ‘Family Conflict’ is the Dependent variable.

**Independent variables-** Income, Expenditure, Joint and Nuclear family, Nurture of children, Work life balance, Arranged marriages, Status of women, Unmarried Cohabitation, Family hierarchy, Independent decision making.

**Sampling Technique-** Simple Random Sampling technique was used for Primary Data collection.

**Sample Size-** Sample size was restricted to 50.

**Tools for Collecting Data-**An Interview Schedule was developed containing both quantitative questions and open ended questions for qualitative analysis in the primary data collection.

## **Field Work Details**

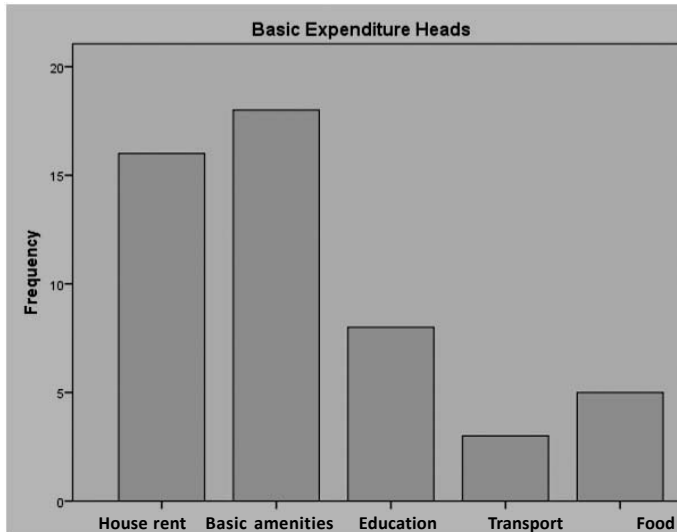
Primary data was collected from Bengaluru urban districts and Bengaluru rural district (sub-urban areas).

## **Data Analysis**

The primary data was analysed using the SPSS 20 version.

## **Findings**

Changing social structures in urbanised settlements have inherent anomalies within them that act as trigger factors leading to social conflicts. The primary data analysis that analysed the responses of 50 respondents in a dip stick survey method have displayed interesting results. Respondents belonging to Income Brackets that are below Rs 5000 and respondents earning above Rs 20,000 both display a struggle to ensure the acquirement of Basic Amenities, rentals, education, transport and food. Demand for Rented Accommodation by migrants and residents alike and consequent spiralling of rental prices have greatly influenced the budget of the average Bangalorean.

**Table 1 Basic Expenditure Heads**

About 56 percent of the respondents preferred the joint family system in comparison to 44 percent who opted for the nuclear family. Loss of culture in urban nuclear families of Bengaluru and cultural endurance of the joint family was hotly contested with 50 percent of the respondents agreeing and 50 percent disagreeing. Arrangement of marriage by the family elders or mutually accepted matches/love marriages drew 50 percent of the respondents saying yes and 50 percent saying no. Cohabitation or Live in found disapproval among the respondents. Only 22 percent agreed to the prospect of a live- in relationship to test compatibility between couples. 78 percent of the respondents replied in the negative to such a practice. A single member as the main decision maker in the family found disapproval in 46 percent of the respondents. 54 percent reported that it was more convenient. However women disapproved of complete control of decision making in the hands of the male head of the family.

Other problem areas included imbalances in income and expenditure. To the question of whether women in nuclear families have more power than in the joint families, 84 percent agreed compared to 16 percent who disagreed. Existence of hierarchy within the family persists with 54 percent reporting it compared to 46 percent giving a negative response. To the question of who is the head of the household 76 percent reported that males were the head compared to 24 percent women as head of household.

## Discussion

The primary data analysis shows potential trigger factors for conflicts and resulting maladjustments within the urban families of Bengaluru urban and suburban districts.

Struggle to make ends meet in an urban settlement results in endless conflicts within families. It is one of the main reasons for the splitting of the Joint family into smaller nucleuses. The preference for joint family and its security is widely accepted but the existence of most citizens in a nuclear set up indicates a conscious choice. For example urban families are equally divided in their opinions whether nuclear families spell loss of culture for the younger generation. It has been widely accepted by the respondents that there is no need for a joint family for the inculcation of cultural values, elements of socialization and expression of independence. Such strong opinions can become catalysts for potential conflicts within urban families. Arranged or mutually accepted (love) marriages created divided opinions with a equal number saying parents are the best decision makers and a equal number of parents and youth saying the decision should be left to concerned parties. Unhappiness and incompatibility and resultant separation of couples or estrangement with parents due to disapproval of love marriages are on the rise which proves why arranged marriages are being strongly contested. Living in or Cohabitation is being tested by many urban couples. These kinds of arrangements find strong disapproval even in urban and cosmopolitan Bengaluru. This trend is potentially a conflict factor for the parents, and the concerned children, which triggers the conflict between them. It also brings the couple into conflict with relatives and friends of the couple as well as landlords of rented accommodation, neighbours etc. Preference for common decision making with approval of all family members, resentment of male members as heads of the household and maintenance of patriarchal male order hierarchy within the urban family are other areas of conflict identified that can result in maladjustments, open rebellion, separation of family members in an urban setting.

## **Conclusion**

The advent of urbanisation and modernisation has younger generations turning away from the joint family form. Rapidly changing societal structures are putting pressure on family dynamics. The modified extended family has replaced the traditional joint family. Even in the more modern and nuclear families in contemporary India, many functional extensions of the traditional joint family have been retained because of demand for social changes resulting in the nuclear family being strongly embedded in the extended kinship environment. In spite of the numerous changes and adaptations to the western culture and a move toward the nuclear family among the middle and upper classes, the modified extended family is preferred and continues to prevail in modern India. Despite India being on the verge of becoming a developed nation, by following the western culture to a great extent in many aspects of citizen's social life, the stability of family structure is becoming weak by giving in more scope for conflicts. How to manage such perpetual conflicts in the family has to be addressed at different levels by the

family members, sociologists, psychologists, administrators, politicians and community leaders. This is imperative to sustain the resilience of the urban family structure in contemporary India.

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