



The Family: Changing Trends In Modern Society

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Introduction:

A family, in very basic terms, is an intimate domestic group made of people who are related to one another by bonds of blood or legal ties. It is the most basic social unit and the most important primary group. It is a social group consisting of a father, mother, their children and grandparents as well if it is a joint family.

A family is a relatively permanent group of persons linked together in social roles of blood, marriage or adoption and who live together and cooperate economically in the rearing of children.

Contemporary trends in family structure have witnessed a departure from traditional norms. The nuclear family, once the predominant model, is undergoing transformation. Today, diverse family structures, including single-parent families, childless families, and cohabiting families, reflect the changing dynamics of societal relationships.

Family as a social institution has certain characteristics:

1. Family is universal. In every society, family is seen in one form or the other.
2. The family is grounded in emotions and sentiments, love, affection, sympathy, cooperation and friendship.
3. A family has a limited size. It is small as it is the most basic and smallest social unit.
4. The family shapes the personality and moulds the character of its members. Thus, family has a formative influence.
5. The family is said to be the nucleus of all other social organizations.
6. The family is secured and guarded by social and legal regulations. The society tries its best to protect the family from any possible breakdown.
7. The members of the family have certain responsibilities and obligations which they must fulfill in order to live a smooth and happy life.

Traditionally, a family is usually understood as a joint family that comprises of a large number of members. The eldest male member is the head of the family. All members are taught family values such as love, respect, sacrifice, cooperation, honesty, obedience and collective prayers. Duties and responsibilities are equally divided among the members.

A joint family is known for protecting the members, providing safety and security, participating in religious ceremonies and other public gatherings and also acting as an agent of socialization and social control.

On the other hand, in modern society, it is necessary to understand that the family system and structure has undergone a significant change due to social processes such as industrialization, urbanization, migration, increasing influences of the state and also the feature of 'individuation' where one prefers to live his or her own life without giving much importance to close family and kinship ties.

Some important changes in the system of family are discussed ahead:

1. The breakdown of joint families and **emerging nuclear families** in increasing numbers is one major change in the system of family.
2. The Indian society is gradually accepting the western patterns of living such as **broken family, single-parent family**, living alone and even **live-in relationships**.

3. Situations such as live-in relationships as mentioned above are gradually found to be **weakening the role of marriage** in society.
1. The typical structure where the father or male member is the breadwinner and the female member is to take care of the household and children is gradually changing.
4. **Men are participating** in the woman's household work and women are also working in present time society.
5. The **senior members** of the family are not sitting at home as was the case in the past. Instead, they also go out, volunteer as helping assistants in organizations and **spend their time more productively**.
6. Due to more acceptance and removal of taboos, divorce is considered normal and therefore, **divorce rates have seen a huge rise** in the recent years.
7. With advancement in technology, **children aim to be independent** at a very young age.
8. **Same sex couples and marriage** has also been a recent change in the family systems. A new emergent form of a family comes into existence.
9. Families are more accepting towards **adoption of children** to bring up a family. Initially, this was not considered a good choice.

Families at present give more importance to education and financial independence due to which the **age of marriages of children has risen.**

10. Due to the concept of nuclear family and more awareness, **the number of children in a family is limited** to two or three against ten or eleven as was in the past.
11. Families have also seen to come into existence through **love marriages**. In the past, the concept of arranged marriages was in force and love marriages were considered a grave sin.
12. The trend of **neo-local families** is emerging. Couples wish to start a family in their own set up, independent of either of the parents.
13. Due to the concept of individualization, bonds do not last for enough time and people feel it is **normal to end a relationship** or break a family if he/she was unhappy.
14. The emergence of **filo-centric families**, i.e. child-centred families is on a rise.
15. The concept of **'blended family'** is also a newly emerging trend. It refers to a type of family where the couple lives together with their children, as well as those children they have had from their previous relationships.
16. There is an emergence of what is known as a **'sandwich**

generation'. This refers to the generation of people that supports their children as well as takes care of their parents or the old-aged.

17. Another emerging trend is that of **'Living-apart-families'** known as LAFs. It refers to living separately yet maintaining sexual relationships.
18. **Childfree couples** are also a newly emerging trend and a popular one. It means that females or women who are fertile voluntarily choose not to have children.
19. They wish to pursue their career or live without the responsibility of a child.
20. Nowadays, one more noteworthy trend emerging in the family structure is called a **'transnational family'**. Post marriage, one partner might decide to live in another country to work and the other partner might stay in their country of origin, with their children if they have any.

These are the major changing family trends in modern society. Since a society is dynamic, trends and patterns keep changing with time, and it is best for people to accept it. Although the traditional joint family system is still important, it is necessary to adapt to the new and emergent forms of family as well. More awareness brings about more prosperity and happiness in society.

Contemporary Trends in Family Structure:

Contemporary trends in family structure have witnessed a departure from traditional norms. The nuclear family, once the predominant model, is undergoing transformation. Today, diverse family structures, including single-parent families, childless families, and cohabiting families, reflect the changing dynamics of societal relationships.

Impact on Individuals:

These shifts influence individual experiences, altering roles and responsibilities within the family unit. Understanding these changes provides valuable insights into societal expectations, parenting dynamics, and the overall support system.

Contemporary Trends in Kinship Systems:

1. Redefined Kinship Networks:

The traditional kinship system, based on blood relations, is experiencing redefinition. Contemporary trends showcase an expanded understanding of kinship, encompassing chosen families, friendships, and other non-biological connections. This evolution reflects the broader acceptance of diverse relationships in society.

2. Cultural and Legal Implications:

As kinship systems transform, cultural norms and legal

frameworks adapt to accommodate these changes. Exploring these shifts sheds light on how society navigates the complexities of defining relationships and their associated responsibilities.

Contemporary Trends in Marriage

Here are some key contemporary trends that are shaping modern marriage:

- 1. Declining Marriage Rates -** Fewer people in Western societies are getting married. More people are choosing cohabitation, casual dating or remaining single.
- 2. Later Marriage -** The average age of first marriage has been increasing steadily. More pursue education and careers before settling down.
- 3. Cohabitation -** Living together prior to or instead of marriage has become very common. It test-drives relationships and changes family dynamics.
- 4. No-Fault Divorce -** Easier divorce has made marriage more temporary and remarriage more accepted. People expect to have multiple partners.
- 5. Same-Sex Marriage -** Recognition and legalization of same-sex marriage is expanding partnership options and challenging traditional gender roles.
- 6. Interracial Marriage -** As acceptance grows, more people marry outside their race or

ethnicity, reflecting social diversity.

7. **International Marriage** - Ease of travel, technology facilitates relationships across borders, but also cultural challenges.
8. **Childfree by Choice** - Some couples intentionally avoid having children to focus on careers or personal life, redefining marriage purpose.
9. **Prenuptial Agreements** - More discuss finances upfront through cohabitation contracts or prenups to plan for potential divorce.
10. **Balancing Work & Family** - Dual-career couples navigate new roles, responsibilities as more women work and both partners pursue fulfillment.

Contemporary Trends in Sociology:

1. **Technology and Social Connectivity:** The advent of technology has revolutionized how we connect and interact. Social media, online communities, and virtual relationships are shaping contemporary trends in human connectivity. Exploring these examples provides a glimpse into the intersection of technology and social dynamics.
2. **Environmental Awareness and Activism:** Contemporary society is marked by a growing awareness of environmental issues. This trend has spurred activism, influencing social and political landscapes.

Examining how environmental concerns impact societal attitudes and behaviors offers insights into the interconnectedness of contemporary issues.

3. **Globalization and Cultural Exchange:** The world is becoming increasingly interconnected through globalization. Cultural exchange, international collaborations, and the blending of traditions are prevalent contemporary trends. Understanding these dynamics helps unravel the complexities of identity, diversity, and the globalized nature of modern societies.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, delving into contemporary trends in sociology unveils the nuanced layers of modern society. From redefined family structures to evolving kinship systems and changing perspectives on marriage, these trends shape our interactions and influence cultural norms. Exploring specific examples, such as the impact of technology, environmental awareness, and globalization, provides a holistic understanding of the intricate dynamics defining contemporary society. Contemporary trends in family structure have witnessed a departure from traditional norms. The nuclear family, once the predominant model, is undergoing transformation. Today, diverse family structures, including single-parent

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