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Impact of Modernization on Family and Marriage System of Nepal

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Abstract

Modernization is a regular process of change. It normally happens by adopting the new tools and technology that result in to change in the society. Revolutionary changes have taken place in Nepalese society particularly in the field of information technology, media and education. These changes have affected the family structure and marriage system. Prevailing social norms, values and culture are also affected because of modernization. This study aims to explore the impact of modernization in family and marriage system of Nepal. The study was conducted among 274 elder people living in old age homes of Kathmandu valley. The study explored the intensity and horizon of the changes in family structure and marriage system in their homes in between their active age and age at leaving homes. The result shows that there were significant changes in family structure and marriage system during the period. The respondents stated that when they were active for household and social work, there was joint family system and arrange marriage practices but at the age of leaving home, nuclear family system, love marriage, elope marriage and inter-caste marriage were started. There might be many causes of leaving the home but these changes also indirectly made the elder people to leave their homes. The change in family structure and marriage system was caused by the modernization. So, further study is suggested to explore the impact of modernization in social relationship and other social systems.

Keywords: Family, Impact, Marriage, Modernization

Introduction

Family is considered as one of the old institutions in the world. We can find many and different opinions about how and when family was originated. The sociologists have defined the family in their own ways. In some societies, family is given more importance than the individual while in others it is vice-versa. But there is no society in the world in which the families have no roles and responsibilities towards members. Family is unavoidable for human development, growth and socialization. It plays a decisive role in the material and cultural life of the people. Each family is required to perform two types of functions namely: (a) compulsory functions, (b) optional functions. There are some functions which the family is expected to perform and without their performance, the very existence of the family is endangered called as compulsory function. Family must satisfy sex needs of its members through the institution of marriage, which is its integral part. In other words, the family should arrange the marriage of the children at the appropriate time because that alone legitimate sexual relationship of the boy and the girl (Raj, 2002). Besides that, family has to see each member gets the minimum amount of money as their needs, access on health service, right education, celebration of religious functions and ceremonies, festivals and cultural programs.

Joint family system was very popular in the past which in current days, is gradually disintegrating. Because of the industrialization, there is migration of people from the rural areas to the urban. In the urban areas, however, there is serious shortage of residential accommodation. It is difficult to find a dwelling unit where all the members of a joint family can live together under one roof. The result is that even if the member of a family wishes to live together, they find it difficult to meet their desire. There is thus no other alternative but to have single family system. Similarly, search of better education, feeling of independence,

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employment opportunity, and access on technical advancement attracts the people towards the nuclear family system.

Industrialization and modernization have their own impact on joint family system. In fact, these are two more important causes responsible for disintegration of joint family system. Industrialization provides opportunities for people to leave the village and joint family system and shift to the industrial areas. Thus, whole outlook towards life forced to change because of urbanization. The women become economically self-sufficient and less dependent on their male members. Women eventually then feel free and enjoyed independent life, which they cannot get in a joint family system. They therefore, feel that living outside the joint family system is much better than living in it. According to Cowgill, (1986) modernization leads to the decreased importance of the extended family, increased geographic mobility and rapid changing technology, social structure and cultural values. Some researchers argue that the processes of modernization and urbanization are beginning to erode the traditional social welfare system of Africa (Mbamaonyekwu, 2001). In a typical African extended family unit, one readily finds elderly persons, adults, young people and children (Adeokun, 1981). One of the most important attributes of the traditional extended family is its potential for caring for the elderly population because of the social relations and interactions among kin groups, as well as roles and responsibilities different age groups assume. However, Apt (1996) contends that at precisely the point of time at which the numbers of the aged are growing, their customary source of support is being eroded. It is generally believed that as societies modernize and urbanize the size and complexity of households and families reduce, transforming from the extended to the nuclear type (Goode, 1963; Holland, Plath, & Carvallo, 1988; United Nations, 1973; Treas & Logue, 1986; Chan & Lee, 1995; Reay, 1996; Hollos & Larsen, 1997; Kattak, 1999; Thomas & Price, 1999).

In particular, Goode (1963) argues that with the expansion

of the economic system through industrialization, family patterns will change and there will be a weakening of ties with the older generation. This refers to a decline in social interaction and physical and financial support for the elderly persons, in addition to greater prevalence of separate living arrangements as a country develops. In this connection, this study also had main aim to identify pattern of marriage and family system prevailed in the respondents' home and also to dig out the impact of modernization in family and marriage system of Nepal as well.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the Kathmandu valley of Nepal covering Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur districts among the elder people living in the old age homes (OAH). The study was based on the descriptive design. It is based on the mixed method as both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the field. The study had collected data from the 274 elder people. The quantitative data was collected by using the structured survey questionnaire and qualitative data was collected from the observation and interview with elder people. The study had visited the 17 OAHs from the total (28) OAHs by using the lottery system under random sampling technique. The study had selected only those respondents who were able to see, listen and perform two ways communication with researcher. They were also asked whether they are willing to participate in the interview. The collected data was analyzed statistically and presented in the tabular form.

Result and Discussion

The data in Table 1 below presents that almost 79 percent female elderly were living in old age home in comparison to male (21 %) among the total number of respondents included in the study (274). What it clearly infers that women elderly are more vulnerable or are much more suffered than males. It can also be said that more women prefer OAHs or compelled to go there as compared to males.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by their Demographic Characteristics

Gender and Ethnicity of Respondents			
Gender	Frequency	Percent	
Male	57	20.8	
Female	217	79.2	
Total	274	100.0	
Caste	Sex (%)		Total
	Male	Female	
Brahmin	15.8	24.0	22.3
Chhetri	24.6	21.7	22.3
Janjati	50.9	50.7	50.7
Dalit	3.5	3.7	3.6
Madhesi	5.3		1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

If we look at the data regarding ethnicity of the respondents, the more Janjati (50.7%) are living in OAHs as compared to other caste. Virtually, the data supports with the economic condition of Nepalese people. Janjatis in Nepal are left behind in terms of development mainstream also. They are considered as economically erstwhile group that reason could help push them to OAHs. Respondents like Brahmin and Chhetri who are considered high caste group account 22 percent each.

Family Structure

Family is a form of basic unit of social organization and it is hard to imagine how human society could function without it. Moreover, family has been seen as a universal social institution and as an inevitable part of human society. The structure of the family varies from society to society. The smallest family unit is known as the nuclear family and consists of a husband and wife and their immature offspring whereas large unit of family is known as joint

family and consists of grandparents, uncle and aunts, sister, brother, husband and wife and their offspring. Extended family refers third generation such as the spouses' parents and addition of members of the same generations as husband's brother or an additional wife. In Nepal, both nuclear as well as extended family system is existed. In the rural areas where the impact of modernization is less, the joint family is practiced whereas in the cities and urban dwellings, nuclear family system is existed mostly.

The situation of family structure was asked to the respondents considering two time periods. Like what was the family structure when respondent was at active age and what changes occurred on family structure when he/she left the home? Every interviewed respondent have certain time gap between active age and age at leaving home. He or she

felt some changes regarding the family structure between that time gaps; due to the reason he or she left the home. The data presented in Table 2 clearly depicts that 39 and 61 percent respondents were living in joint family system and nuclear family system respectively when they were at active age. Later, when they left their home, the proportion of joint family system and nuclear family system was recorded to 12 and 88 percent respectively. Such changes were either not preferred by them or the changing scenario made them compel to go to OAH. If we look at the data by gender, more male elders are found to be vulnerable than women elder. About 53 percent male elders as compared to 35 percent female were living in joint family system at their active age which reduced to 18 and 10 percent respectively when they left homes.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by their Types of Family

Family Structure	Active Age (%)			Age at Leaving Home (%)					
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total			
Joint	52.9	34.6	38.6	18.4	10.4	12.1			
Nuclear	47.1	65.4	61.4	81.6	89.6	87.9			
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0			
Paired Samples Test									
	Active Age - Age at leaving home	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1		-.27155	.45533	.02989	-.33045	-.21265	-9.084	231	.000

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The statistical analysis of Paired Samples t-test showed that there was significant difference in active age and age at leaving home regarding nuclear and joint family trend because $p = .000$ which is less than 0.05 significant level at 95% confidence interval. The result clearly indicates that they left home due to changing scenario of family structure and various other social, economic, and environmental factors.

Changes on Marriage Practice

Marriage itself is one of the universal social institutions. It is established by the society to control and regulate the sex life of humankind. It is closely connected with family. In fact, family and marriage are complementary to each other. Moreover, marriage is a union of man and women; becomes a marital bond only when the society gives its approval. Normally when marriage is given the hallmarks of social approval, it becomes a legal contract. There are various forms of marriage like polygamy, polyandry, monogamy, and group marriage, however, the tradition of polygamy and polyandry marriage consist rarely among some ethnic community of Nepal. However, in current days, modernization and globalization have degraded those entire cultural trends among the ethnic group. Nowadays, in the modern society, love marriage is getting popularity rather than arrange marriage. Arrange marriage is a marriage between male and female with the consent or arrangement of two family members. It could be exogamy or endogamy, whereas, love marriage is marriage between two opposite sex according to their will and choice without having consent of family or parents. In the same way, elope marriage is known for eloping by couple either by their choice or by family consent respectively. Inter caste

marriage is regarded as marriage between different caste group which is not acceptable by Hindu theology due to the caste stratification in the society.

This study also attempted to explore the trend or practice in the respondent's family regarding the marriage system. Table 3 clearly showed that previously, there were no any marriage practice existed at the respondents' home except arrange marriage system. Interestingly, with the time period when the respondents left their homes to OAHs, there were dramatic changes occurred on the marriage pattern. To note, arrange marriage system reduced to 43 percent, and mix of arrange, eloped, love and inter caste marriage accounted to 35 percent. Remarkably, 14 percent respondents said that eloped practice was existed at their homes. If we analyze the data by gender, about 50 percent women respondents said that they had still arrange marriage practice at their homes when they left homes. Which in contrast 48 percent male elders reported that mix of arrange, eloped, love and inter caste marriage practice were existed in their homes when they left homes. May be these changes were not preferred by the respondents as cultural, norms and traditional values were degrading at the family level so they decided to leave the home for OAHs.

Table 3: Marriage Practice at Respondents' Home

Types of Marriage	Active Age (%)			Age at Leaving Home (%)					
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total			
Arrange Marriage	100.0	100.0	100.0	22.9	50.0	43.0			
Eloped Practice	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7	13.8	14.5			
Love Marriage	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.3	3.6	4.8			
Inter Caste Marriage	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.2	1.4	2.2			
Mixed of all above	0.0	0.0	0.0	47.9	31.2	35.5			
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0			
Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
						Lower	Upper		
Pair 1	Active Age - Age at leaving home	-1.72581	1.80242	.13216	-1.98654	-1.46507	-13.058	185	.000

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The statistical analysis of Paired Samples t-test showed that there was significant difference in marriage system in respondents' active age and marriage system because p value is =.000 which is less than .05 significant level (at 95% confidence interval). The result indicates that there was change in the marriage system in between the active age and age at leaving the home by elder people.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that there were many causes behind leaving home by elder people; among them changing in family structures and marriage practices were major ones. There was significant change in family structure and marriage system in respondents' home in between their active age and age at leaving the home. The joint family system was changed into the nuclear family system because of the effect of modernization, and urbanization. The arrange marriage system was gradually changed into love marriage, elope marriage and inter-caste marriage. These changes were caused due to the changes of science and technology, level of awareness, urbanization, modernization, industrialization, and migration of people from rural to urban society, education and other social development and changes. May be people have more freedom in nuclear family than the joint family which attracts the people to live in nuclear family. Similarly, arrange marriage is such type of marriage where parent's decision is dominant to decide the marriage of children but in other types of marriages, boys and girls decide about the marriage as their own choice. The central aspect of change is personal freedom and easiness of life which is one effect of modernization in family and marriage system. Since this study explored only the impact of modernization in family and marriage system, further research is suggested to explore the impact of modernization in social relationship and effects in detail.

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