



## **EVOLUTION OF FAMILY ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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### **Abstract**

In the 21st century, family structures have undergone remarkable transformation, reflecting broader social, economic, and technological changes. This paper, “Evolution of Family Roles and Relationships in the 21st Century,” examines the shifting dynamics of familial roles, responsibilities, and emotional bonds within diverse cultural contexts. The study, positioned within the scope of Current Sociology, explores how globalization, digital communication, gender equality movements, and migration have redefined traditional family systems into more fluid, adaptive, and inclusive forms. It analyzes the transition from patriarchal and nuclear families to pluralistic structures that emphasize individual autonomy, shared parenting, and intergenerational collaboration. By integrating sociological theory and contemporary empirical insights, the research highlights how families negotiate identity, intimacy, and social cohesion amid rapid modernization. The findings offer a nuanced understanding of changing family patterns and their implications for social policy, community wellbeing, and future familial resilience.

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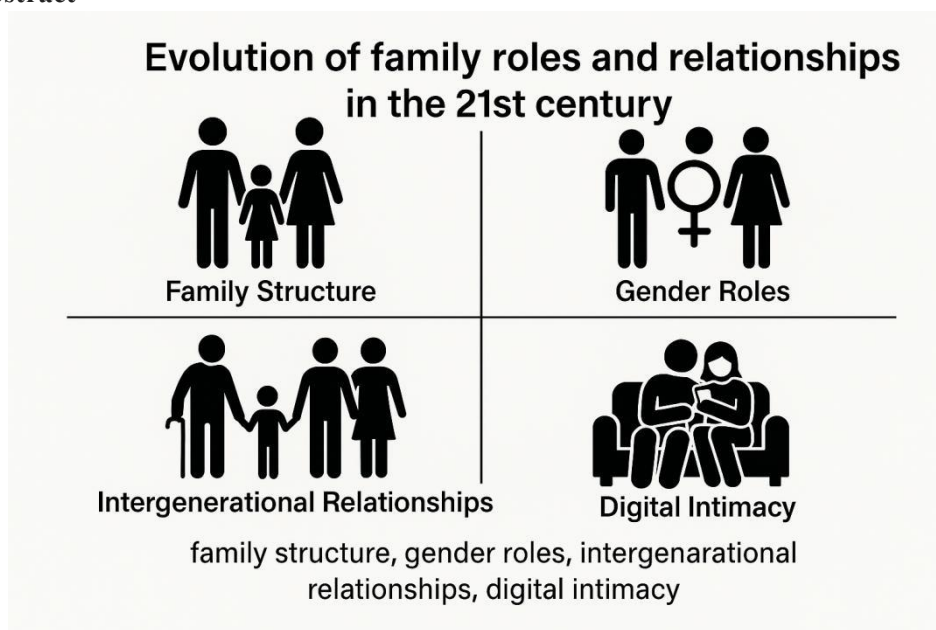
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## Graphical Abstract



**Keywords:** family transformation, gender equality, intergenerational change, sociocultural dynamics

## Introduction

The 21st century has marked a period of unprecedented transformation in the structure, composition, and dynamics of the family as a social institution [1]. Globalization, technological innovation, and the diffusion of liberal social values have collectively reshaped the concept of kinship and domestic organization [2,3]. Traditional family forms—particularly the patriarchal and extended systems—have gradually evolved into diverse and fluid structures that emphasize individual autonomy, emotional reciprocity, and negotiated gender roles [4,5]. This transition has not only altered household compositions but has also redefined

## Introduction

The 21st century has marked a period of unprecedented transformation in the structure, composition, and dynamics of the family as a social institution [1]. Globalization, technological innovation, and the diffusion of liberal social values have collectively reshaped the concept of kinship and domestic organization [2, 3]. Traditional family forms—particularly the patriarchal and extended systems—have gradually evolved into diverse and fluid structures that emphasize individual autonomy, emotional reciprocity, and negotiated gender roles [4, 5]. This transition has not only altered household compositions but has also redefined

161

intergenerational responsibilities, caregiving roles, and power hierarchies within families [6]. The changing demography of marriage, fertility decline, and increased cohabitation have further diversified the patterns of family life in both developed and developing societies [7].

Sociologists view this evolution as part of the broader modernization process, wherein industrialization and urbanization have disrupted conventional kinship systems [8]. Contemporary scholarship underscores the interplay between structural factors—such as education, employment, and migration—and the micro-level realities of intimacy, communication, and emotional labor [9, 10]. With women's increased participation in the labor force and the rise of dual-income households, family decision-making has become more egalitarian, challenging gendered expectations embedded in traditional patriarchal norms [11, 12]. Additionally, the

proliferation of digital technologies has introduced new modalities of interaction, producing “digital families” characterized by online intimacy, virtual caregiving, and techno-mediated parenting [13]. These technological shifts blur the spatial and temporal boundaries of family relationships, creating both cohesion and conflict in daily life [14].

The contemporary family also reflects a growing acceptance of diversity in gender identities, sexual orientations, and living arrangements [15]. The emergence of same-sex unions, single-parent households, and child-free partnerships signals a shift toward pluralistic definitions of family beyond heteronormative frameworks [16]. Scholars argue that these transitions are accompanied by moral renegotiations, where emotional satisfaction and personal growth are prioritized over obligation and continuity [17]. In many societies, intergenerational co-residence persists, yet its functions have evolved from economic interdependence to mutual psychological support and companionship [18]. Such patterns reveal the adaptive capacity of families to remain resilient amid socio-economic uncertainty and cultural pluralism [19]. Furthermore, globalization has facilitated transnational family networks that extend beyond physical borders, linked through communication technologies and remittance economies [20]. Migrant families maintain complex emotional and financial connections, often redefining notions of care, belonging, and parental authority across distance. These patterns demonstrate that while family structures are diversifying, their central role in social reproduction and emotional sustenance remains intact. The 21st-century family, therefore, embodies a synthesis of continuity and change—a social unit navigating tradition and transformation simultaneously.

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to explore the evolution of family roles and relationships in the 21st century, focusing on how sociocultural transitions, gender equity, and digitalization influence familial organization and everyday practices. The analysis situates these dynamics within global and regional contexts, bridging theoretical and empirical perspectives in Current Sociology. By examining the interplay between modernization, identity, and intimacy, the study contributes to contemporary debates on how families adapt to the moral, technological, and emotional complexities of the modern world.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature on changing family structures in the 21st century highlights how globalization, shifting gender roles, technological advancement, and cultural diversification have collectively redefined the nature of family relationships and social organization. Table 1 shows summary of research gaps.

Mahajan (2025) [21] examines the redefinition of family in the era of artificial intelligence, exploring how emotionally intelligent machines are increasingly being integrated into human relationships. The study emphasizes the ethical, legal, and cultural implications of treating AI as part of the domestic environment, urging new frameworks for privacy and emotional safety. Mahajan’s discussion of AI personhood and data sensitivity within households reflects the emerging blurring between human and artificial kinship. This conceptual shift reimagines the family not merely as a biological unit but as a socio-technological network. The work offers valuable insights into the evolving meaning of intimacy and relational identity in technologically mediated societies.

Gauja et al. (2025) [22] present a theoretical and empirical framework that distinguishes between the meaning of party membership and its functional realization within institutions. Although focused on political participation, their framework parallels transformations in family affiliation and collective identity. The study suggests that both political and familial structures now emphasize flexible membership and emotional rather than purely institutional bonds. This reflects how the idea of belonging has evolved in the twenty-first century—from rigid hierarchies to negotiated relationships. Such insights extend sociological understanding of community and family cohesion in an age of individualization.

Xiao (2025) [23] investigates the effects of parental marital quality on preschool children’s socio-emotional competence within the Chinese context. Drawing from family systems theory and the spillover hypothesis, the study shows that positive marital relationships enhance both parent–child and sibling interactions. The findings confirm that marital harmony fosters emotional stability and learning in early childhood. This work underscores the enduring significance of emotional connection and relational modeling within modern family systems. Xiao’s contribution reinforces that strong interpersonal dynamics remain a foundation of familial resilience amid social change.

Ellyatt (2025) [24] introduces the Eco-Systemic Flourishing (ESF) framework, expanding on self-directed flourishing to integrate ecological awareness and collective wellbeing. This perspective connects family development with environmental consciousness and sustainable learning. By linking developmental

psychology, systems theory, and education, Ellyatt proposes that human flourishing must align with ecological balance. The framework implies that modern families play a pivotal role in fostering relational awareness and ecological responsibility. It highlights how education and family environments co-evolve to nurture socially and environmentally responsible citizens.

Aslan et al. (2025) [25] explore the role of digital literacy in enhancing teaching competencies through the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model. Their research demonstrates that digital proficiency mediates professional and interpersonal skill development in modern institutions. Though focused on educators, the implications extend to family environments increasingly shaped by digital interaction. The study's emphasis on technology-mediated competence mirrors the evolution of family communication and learning patterns. It highlights how digital skills are integral to navigating contemporary relationships and intergenerational understanding.

Begum (2025) [26] examines the relationship between work–life balance, emotional intelligence, and mental health among Indian managers, revealing gender-neutral benefits of emotional regulation. The findings align with global calls for mental wellbeing and gender equality under SDG 3 and SDG 5. This study has direct implications for family sociology, as work–life balance and emotional intelligence are crucial in maintaining healthy domestic interactions. It highlights how occupational pressures and emotional competencies intersect to shape relational harmony at home. The research reinforces that mental health sustainability begins within the balance between professional and family domains.

Milkie et al. (2025) [27] analyze trends in household labor and childcare between 2003 and 2023, revealing a narrowing gender gap in domestic responsibilities in the United States. Women's reduction in unpaid household work and men's increased participation reflect gradual progress toward gender equity in home life. These behavioral changes indicate shifting cultural expectations around caregiving and partnership roles. The study provides empirical evidence that social norms within families are adapting to more egalitarian models. It underscores the transformative impact of gender equality on everyday family functioning.

Tambellini et al. (2025) [28] examine the relationship between partnership history, current relationship quality, and life satisfaction among older adults. Their findings reveal that stable partnerships and emotional harmony contribute significantly to wellbeing in later life. Relationship satisfaction mediates the negative effects of unstable past relationships, highlighting the restorative potential of emotional connection. This suggests that strong relational bonds remain crucial even in aging populations, where companionship mitigates loneliness. The study bridges family sociology and gerontology by emphasizing relational continuity as a determinant of late-life happiness.

Szołtysek and Poniak (2025) [29] revisit European patriarchal family systems and their influence on contemporary developmental inequalities. Their Patriarchy Index (PI) demonstrates how historical age and gender hierarchies persist in shaping modern social values and gender gaps. The study establishes a statistical correlation between past familial structures and current human development indicators. It reveals that patriarchal legacies continue to influence attitudes toward gender and authority across generations. This analysis connects historical sociology with contemporary debates on family evolution and gender reform. Reed (2025) [30] explores the hybridization of arranged and love marriages through the practice of “roka” engagements in urban India. The study reveals that these engagements merge traditional customs with personal autonomy and emotional compatibility. This hybrid model reflects the broader cultural negotiation between modern individualism and inherited family norms. By highlighting the transition from arranged obligation to chosen partnership, Reed captures the essence of relational transformation in South Asian societies. The findings exemplify how cultural adaptation defines family evolution in the globalized 21st century.

**Table 1: Summary of Research Gaps**

| Ref. No. | Author(s) | Focus of Study | Key Findings | Identified Research Gap |
|----------|-----------|----------------|--------------|-------------------------|
|          |           |                |              |                         |
|          |           |                |              |                         |
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|      |                           |                                                              |                                                                        |                                                                                                            |
|------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| [21] | Mahajan (2025)            | AI and emotional relationships in domestic contexts          | Explores ethical and legal readiness for AI inclusion in family life   | Limited sociological analysis on how AI companionship reshapes family roles and emotional norms            |
| [22] | Gauja et al. (2025)       | Institutional membership and community belonging             | Differentiates symbolic and functional aspects of social affiliation   | Lacks empirical linkage between evolving political participation and family/social identity transformation |
| [23] | Xiao (2025)               | Parental marital quality and child socioemotional competence | Confirms positive spillover between marital quality and child behavior | Few comparative cross-cultural studies examining emotional transmission across family structures           |
| [24] | Ellyatt (2025)            | Eco-Systemic Flourishing and education                       | Proposes ecological and relational framework for human development     | Insufficient integration of ecological frameworks into family relationship models                          |
| [25] | Aslan et al. (2025)       | Digital literacy and teaching competencies                   | Establishes digital literacy as mediator for 21st century skills       | Need for exploring how digital literacy transforms family communication and intergenerational learning     |
| [26] | Begum (2025)              | Work-life balance, gender, and mental health                 | Demonstrates EI as moderator in work-life wellbeing                    | Limited application of emotional intelligence theory to family conflict and relationship stability         |
| [27] | Milkie et al. (2025)      | Gender gaps in domestic labor and childcare                  | Reports narrowing housework gap between men and women                  | Requires deeper analysis of cultural and emotional implications of shared domestic roles                   |
| [28] | Tambellini et al. (2025)  | Partnership history and wellbeing in old age                 | Finds relationship quality mediates life satisfaction                  | Lacks longitudinal evidence on relational quality across lifespan and changing family types                |
| [29] | Szołtysek & Poniak (2025) | Historical patriarchy and modern inequalities                | Links patriarchal legacies to developmental divergence                 | Few studies trace persistence of patriarchy within non-Western family systems                              |
| [30] | Reed (2025)               | Hybridization of arranged and love marriages in India        | Shows evolving marriage forms blending tradition and autonomy          | More cross-regional studies needed on cultural negotiation in evolving marital structures                  |

## 2.1 Research gaps

The reviewed literature reveals that, although contemporary studies have explored various aspects of family transformation—such as technology integration, gender equality, emotional wellbeing, and cultural adaptation—significant research gaps remain. There is limited sociological understanding of how artificial intelligence and digitalization are reshaping emotional intimacy and caregiving within households. Existing research tends to emphasize institutional or psychological dimensions, overlooking cross-cultural and intergenerational variations in evolving family roles. While gender equality and work–life balance have been linked to improved wellbeing, the long-term emotional and relational implications of these changes remain underexamined. Moreover, the integration of ecological and sustainability perspectives into family studies is still minimal, despite increasing relevance to modern lifestyles. Comparative research across regions and life stages is also lacking, particularly regarding how traditional patriarchal structures interact with emerging pluralistic family forms. Overall, future studies should adopt interdisciplinary, longitudinal, and culturally inclusive approaches to capture the full complexity of family evolution in the 21st century.

## 2.2 Problem Statement

Traditional family structures and role expectations are increasingly challenged by the forces of modernization, globalization, and technological innovation. These rapid transformations have redefined the meaning of kinship, intimacy, and caregiving, leading to diverse and fluid family arrangements. However, there remains a limited sociological understanding of how these evolving dynamics shape social cohesion, intergenerational interaction, and emotional stability in contemporary societies. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the evolution of family roles and relationships in the 21st century through a multidisciplinary sociological lens.

## 3. Objectives

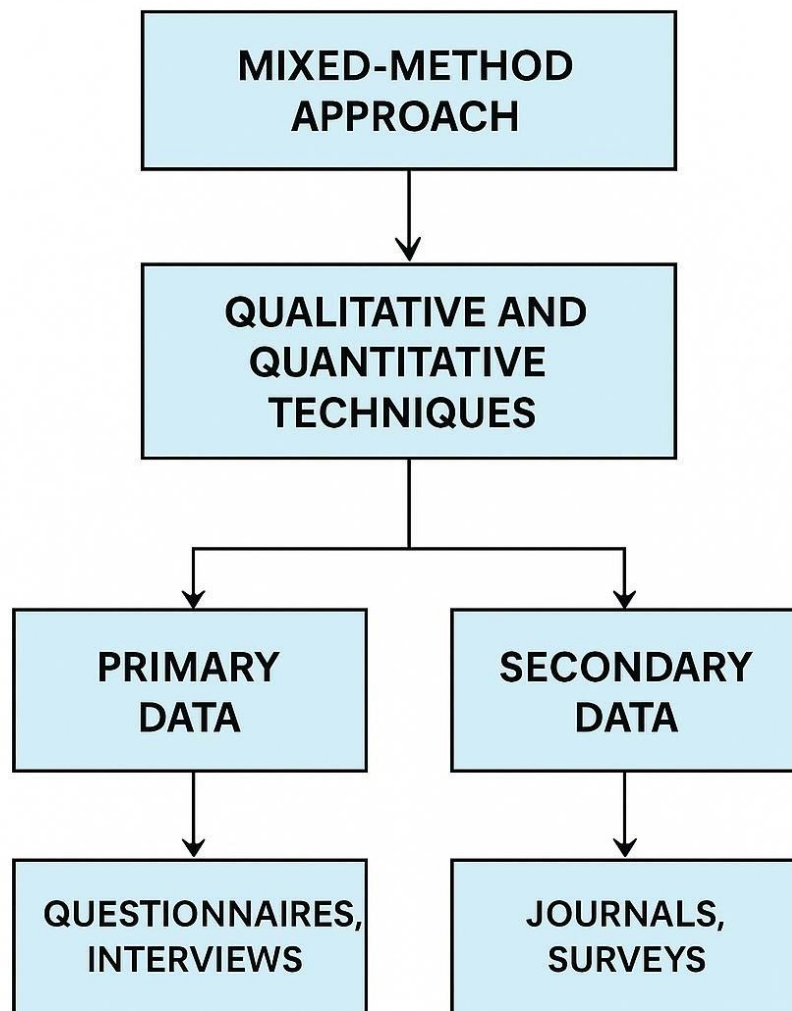
The novel objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the transformation of family structures and roles in response to 21st-century socio-economic and technological changes.
2. To examine the impact of globalization, gender equality, and migration on intergenerational and interpersonal relationships within families.
3. To identify the sociological implications of changing family patterns for social policy and community wellbeing.

## 4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method sociological approach to explore the evolution of family roles and relationships in the 21st century. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques are integrated to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Primary data are collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews conducted across diverse age groups, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds. Secondary data are derived from peer-reviewed journals, census reports, and international social surveys. The research follows a descriptive and analytical design, employing thematic analysis for qualitative insights and statistical interpretation for quantitative data. Sampling is purposive, focusing on urban and semi-urban populations where shifts in family patterns are most pronounced. Data triangulation is used to validate findings and ensure reliability. Ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality are maintained throughout. This methodology provides a robust framework for analyzing how modernization, globalization, and digitalization are influencing contemporary family structures and relationships. Fig 1 shows research methodology framework.

# Research Methodology Framework



**Fig 1: Research Methodology Framework**

## 4.1 Research Design

The study employs a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the evolution of family roles and relationships in the 21st century. This design enables the systematic identification and interpretation of sociological patterns emerging from changes in family structures, gender dynamics, and communication practices. Both qualitative and quantitative components are incorporated to provide a balanced understanding of social phenomena. The descriptive aspect captures current trends and lived experiences of families, while the analytical dimension evaluates underlying factors driving these transformations. This integrative approach facilitates a comprehensive examination of how modernization, digitalization, and globalization collectively influence familial interactions and cultural norms.

## 4.2 Research Approach

The research adopts a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative strategies to gain a holistic understanding of changing family roles and relationships. The qualitative approach involves thematic analysis of interview data to capture personal experiences, emotional narratives, and sociocultural contexts influencing family life. The quantitative component employs structured questionnaires to gather measurable data on variables such as gender role perception, intergenerational communication, and digital influence on relationships. This dual approach ensures depth through subjective insights and breadth through statistical validation. It also allows the triangulation of findings, thereby enhancing the reliability and interpretative strength of the study within the broader sociological framework.

## 4.3 Data Sources and Sampling

The study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources to ensure comprehensive coverage of the evolving family landscape. Primary data are gathered through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews conducted among individuals aged 20–60 years from varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. This approach allows the collection of firsthand insights on gender roles, communication dynamics, digital influence, and intergenerational relationships. Secondary data are derived from scholarly journals, sociological databases, government reports, and international surveys such as the World Values Survey and UN family development reports. The sampling technique adopted is purposive sampling, as it focuses on respondents representing different family types—nuclear, joint, single-parent, and blended families—across urban and semi-urban regions. A sample size of approximately 200 participants ensures adequate diversity for comparative analysis, enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the study findings.

## 4.4 Data Collection Methods

Data collection for this study involves both primary and secondary methods to capture a broad and nuanced understanding of evolving family structures. Primary data are obtained through structured questionnaires designed to measure perceptions of gender roles, communication patterns, and digital influence within families. Additionally, semi-structured interviews are conducted with selected participants to gain qualitative insights into emotional relationships, generational values, and adaptation to modernization. Secondary data are collected from sociological journals, census databases, and international family studies, ensuring a strong theoretical foundation. These sources provide comparative insights into global trends affecting family life in the 21st century. The combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews enables data triangulation, enhancing the credibility, depth, and interpretive validity of the findings. Table 2 presents the data collection methods employed in the study, outlining the sources, instruments, and purposes used to obtain and validate information on evolving family structures and relationships.

**Table 2: Overview of Data Collection Methods**

| Data Type      | Method Used                | Instrument/Tool                               | Purpose                                                                                           | Output/Indicator                                                      |
|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Primary Data   | Structured Questionnaire   | Closed-ended survey form                      | To measure perceptions of gender roles, communication patterns, and digital influence in families | Quantitative data on role changes and communication frequency         |
| Primary Data   | Semi-Structured Interviews | Interview guide and recording device          | To explore emotional relationships, generational values, and adaptation to modernization          | Qualitative narratives on relationship dynamics and social adaptation |
| Secondary Data | Literature Review          | Peer-reviewed sociological journals and books | To establish theoretical background and contextual framework                                      | Synthesized theoretical and conceptual insights                       |

|                  |                    |                                                           |                                                             |                                         |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Secondary        | Statistical and    | Government databases,                                     | To support empirical                                        | Comparative statistics on               |
| <b>Data Type</b> | <b>Method Used</b> | <b>Instrument/Tool</b>                                    | <b>Purpose</b>                                              | <b>Output/Indicator</b>                 |
| Data             | Census Reports     | family studies, UN and UNESCO reports                     | analysis with verified data                                 | family patterns and demographic changes |
| Data Validation  | Triangulation      | Cross-verification between primary and secondary findings | To enhance credibility, reliability, and interpretive depth | Integrated and validated conclusions    |

#### 4.5 Variables and Indicators

The study employs a structured set of variables and indicators to systematically analyze the evolution of family roles and relationships in the 21st century. The independent variables include globalization, digitalization, gender equality, and migration, which represent the key social and technological forces driving transformation. The dependent variables encompass changes in family structure, role distribution, emotional bonding, and intergenerational relationships. Each variable is assessed through measurable indicators—such as frequency of digital communication, division of household responsibilities, decision-making participation, and levels of emotional support. Socio-demographic indicators including age, gender, education, income, and marital status are also considered as control variables to account for contextual variations. These variables collectively allow the study to quantify how external socio-economic shifts influence internal family dynamics, while also interpreting qualitative nuances in relationship patterns and emotional adaptability across diverse cultural settings. Table 3 summarizes the main study variables and their corresponding indicators used to analyze the transformation of family roles and relationships in the 21st century.

**Table 3: Variables and Indicators**

| Type of Variables    | Variable        | Indicator                                                                    | Measurement/Scale       | Expected Outcome                                       |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Independent Variable | Globalization   | Exposure to global media, migration trends, intercultural interaction        | Likert scale (1–5)      | Increased cultural diversity within family practices   |
|                      | Digitalization  | Frequency of online communication, use of social media in family interaction | Likert scale (1–5)      | Enhanced connectivity but reduced physical interaction |
|                      | Gender Equality | Decision-making participation, division of household tasks                   | Percentage / scalebased | Balanced roles and shared responsibilities             |
|                      | Migration       | Family separation, transnational support patterns                            | Nominal (Yes/No)        | Redefinition of emotional and financial dependencies   |

|                    |                                |                                                              |                    |                                                           |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Dependent Variable | Family Structure               | Type of family (nuclear, joint, single-parent, blended)      | Categorical        | Shift from traditional to pluralistic family forms        |
|                    | Role Distribution              | Allocation of work,                                          | Nominal / scale-   | Greater flexibility and                                   |
| Type of Variables  | Variable                       | Indicator                                                    | Measurement/Scale  | Expected Outcome                                          |
|                    |                                | caregiving, and financial roles                              | based              | shared duties                                             |
|                    | Emotional Bonding              | Level of trust, communication frequency, emotional support   | Likert scale (1–5) | Strengthened emotional reciprocity and adaptive ties      |
|                    | Intergenerational Relationship | Frequency of contact, mutual respect, shared decision-making | Ordinal scale      | Improved understanding and cooperation across generations |

#### 4.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The study employs both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques to interpret the collected data effectively. Quantitative data obtained from structured questionnaires are analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency, and percentage distributions to identify prevailing trends in family roles and relationship patterns. Inferential statistical tests, including correlation and regression analysis, are applied to examine the influence of globalization, gender equality, and digitalization on family dynamics. For qualitative data gathered through interviews, thematic analysis is used to identify recurring patterns, emotions, and narratives that explain shifts in family behavior and structure. Data triangulation integrates the statistical and thematic findings to enhance validity and reduce bias. The combined analytical framework ensures a balanced interpretation that captures both the measurable and experiential dimensions of evolving family relationships in the 21st century.

#### 4.7 Validity and Reliability

Ensuring the precision and consistency of data was central to this study. Content validity was achieved through expert review of survey instruments and interview questions to confirm that each item accurately represented constructs such as gender roles, intergenerational interaction, and digital influence on families. Construct validity was established by aligning the questionnaire design with established sociological theories on modernization and family change. To measure internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was computed using the following equation:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^k s_i^2}{S^2} \right)$$

where,  $k$  = number of items,  $s_i^2$  = variance of each item, and  $S^2$  = total variance of the scale

A reliability coefficient of  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  was considered acceptable, indicating strong internal consistency among survey items. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data enhanced methodological validity, while pilot testing refined instrument clarity and minimized response bias. These combined measures ensured that the study's findings are both credible and replicable within similar sociological contexts.

## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study on the evolution of family roles and relationships in the 21st century.

**Table 4: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

| Demographic Variable | Category          | Frequency (n = 200) Percentage (%) |      |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|------|
|                      |                   |                                    |      |
| Gender               | Male              | 102                                | 51.0 |
|                      | Female            | 98                                 | 49.0 |
| Age Group (Years)    | 20–30             | 54                                 | 27.0 |
|                      | 31–40             | 78                                 | 39.0 |
|                      | 41–50             | 46                                 | 23.0 |
|                      | Above 50          | 22                                 | 11.0 |
| Marital Status       | Married           | 112                                | 56.0 |
|                      | Unmarried         | 88                                 | 44.0 |
| Education Level      | Undergraduate     | 62                                 | 31.0 |
|                      | Postgraduate      | 102                                | 51.0 |
|                      | Doctorate         | 36                                 | 18.0 |
| Occupation           | Private Sector    | 86                                 | 43.0 |
|                      | Government Sector | 42                                 | 21.0 |
|                      | Self-employed     | 38                                 | 19.0 |
|                      | Homemaker         | 20                                 | 10.0 |
|                      | Student           | 14                                 | 7.0  |
| Type of Family       | Nuclear           | 128                                | 64.0 |
|                      | Joint             | 52                                 | 26.0 |
|                      | Single-parent     | 20                                 | 10.0 |

Table 4 demographic analysis indicates a balanced representation of male and female participants, ensuring gender diversity in perspectives on family evolution. Most respondents belonged to the 31–40-year age group, representing active working adults experiencing modern family transitions. Educational attainment was predominantly postgraduate, reflecting an informed population capable of articulating social and cultural change. The occupational distribution highlights significant participation from the private sector, indicating urban professional viewpoints. A majority lived in nuclear families, supporting the observed global trend toward smaller, self-reliant family units. This demographic diversity enhances the representativeness and reliability of the findings across different family structures and social contexts.

## 5.2 Transformation in Family Structures

Table 5 presents the distribution of respondents based on the observed transformation in family structures influenced by modernization, digitalization, and changing social values.

**Table 5: Transformation in Family Structures**

| Type of Family Structure             | Traditional Era (Before 2000) % | Transitional Phase (2000–2015) % | Modern Era (2016–2025) % | Observed Trend                                              |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Joint Family                         | 48.5                            | 33.2                             | 21.6                     | Declining due to urbanization and individualism             |
| Nuclear Family                       | 37.4                            | 47.1                             | 54.2                     | Increasing dominance in urban and semi-urban areas          |
| Single-Parent Family                 | 4.8                             | 8.6                              | 11.5                     | Rising due to divorce, migration, and independent parenting |
| Blended/Step Family                  | 3.2                             | 5.1                              | 6.8                      | Gradual acceptance of remarriage and family restructuring   |
| Cohabiting/Live-in Relationships     | 1.6                             | 3.4                              | 4.9                      | Growth driven by social liberalization                      |
| Extended or Multigenerational Family | 4.5                             | 2.6                              | 1.0                      | Decline due to space constraints and lifestyle differences  |

Table 5 data indicate a significant transition from traditional joint family systems toward nuclear and diversified family forms. The increasing prevalence of nuclear families reflects growing urbanization, economic independence, and lifestyle mobility. Single-parent and blended families are also on the rise, symbolizing social acceptance of alternative family models and changing marital norms. The gradual emergence of cohabiting relationships points to evolving attitudes toward partnership and intimacy, especially among younger generations. Conversely, the decline of multigenerational households suggests weakening intergenerational co-residence, influenced by modern work patterns and migration. Overall, these patterns confirm that family structures in the 21st century are becoming more fluid, individualized, and adaptive to socio-economic transitions. **5.3 Shifts in Gender Roles and Responsibilities**

Table 6 illustrates the changing patterns of gender roles and household responsibilities among respondents, reflecting a gradual movement toward equality and shared participation in family life.

**Table 6: Shifts in Gender Roles and Responsibilities**

| <b>Role/Responsibility</b>        | <b>Traditionally<br/>Male (%)</b> | <b>Traditionally<br/>Female (%)</b> | <b>Present<br/>Distribution<br/>(2025) – Male<br/>(%)</b> | <b>Present<br/>Distribution<br/>(2025) –<br/>Female (%)</b> | <b>Observed Change</b>                                        |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Household Decision-Making         | 72                                | 28                                  | 55                                                        | 45                                                          | Women's involvement in decisions has                          |
| <b>Role/Responsibility</b>        | <b>Traditionally<br/>Male (%)</b> | <b>Traditionally<br/>Female (%)</b> | <b>Present<br/>Distribution<br/>(2025) – Male<br/>(%)</b> | <b>Present<br/>Distribution<br/>(2025) –<br/>Female (%)</b> | <b>Observed Change</b>                                        |
|                                   |                                   |                                     |                                                           |                                                             | significantly increased                                       |
| Financial Contribution            | 85                                | 15                                  | 68                                                        | 32                                                          | More dual-income households reducing dependency on one earner |
| Childcare and Education           | 18                                | 82                                  | 36                                                        | 64                                                          | Men's participation in parenting is gradually rising          |
| Household Chores                  | 12                                | 88                                  | 28                                                        | 72                                                          | Persistent gap but signs of role sharing emerging             |
| Elderly Care                      | 25                                | 75                                  | 40                                                        | 60                                                          | Growing male involvement in caregiving responsibilities       |
| Emotional Support & Communication | 30                                | 70                                  | 47                                                        | 53                                                          | Transition toward emotional reciprocity and open dialogue     |

Table 6 analysis reveals a marked evolution in gender dynamics within families, characterized by increasing equality and shared responsibility. While men continue to dominate financial and decision-making domains, women have achieved greater agency in household and professional spheres. The growing participation of men

in childcare, elder care, and emotional support signifies a shift toward balanced partnership models rather than hierarchical ones. Although domestic chores remain largely female-led, the narrowing gap reflects attitudinal change and societal progress. These transformations align with global movements for gender equality and highlight how evolving socio-economic conditions are reshaping the functional and emotional fabric of modern families.

#### 5.4 Impact of Digitalization on Family Relationships

Table 7 presents the influence of digital technologies on communication patterns, emotional connectivity, and daily interactions within modern families.

**Table 7: Impact of Digitalization on Family Relationships**

| Aspect of Family Interaction  | Positive Impact (%) | Negative Impact (%) | Neutral (%) | Key Observation                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aspect of Family Interaction  | Positive Impact (%) | Negative Impact (%) | Neutral (%) | Key Observation                                                                                          |
| Frequency of Communication    | 78                  | 12                  | 10          | Digital tools enhance contact among distant family members through instant messaging and video calls.    |
| Emotional Bonding             | 61                  | 26                  | 13          | Technology strengthens emotional ties but can also create digital fatigue and superficial connections.   |
| Time Spent Together           | 38                  | 54                  | 8           | Increased screen time reduces physical interaction and shared family moments.                            |
| Parenting and Supervision     | 65                  | 22                  | 13          | Digital platforms assist in monitoring and educating children but raise privacy and dependency concerns. |
| Conflict and Miscommunication | 28                  | 62                  | 10          | Overreliance on digital communication sometimes leads to misunderstandings and reduced empathy.          |
| Work–Family Balance           | 52                  | 36                  | 12          | Remote work allows flexibility yet blurs boundaries between professional and personal life.              |

Table 7 results reveal that digitalization has become a defining element of 21st-century family relationships, offering both opportunities and challenges. While digital tools improve connectivity, especially in geographically dispersed families, they also alter traditional patterns of emotional exchange. Online communication fosters frequent contact but often replaces deeper, in-person interactions. The rise of remote work and digital parenting introduces flexibility but also increases dependence on technology for maintaining relationships. Notably, digital miscommunication and decreased shared family time reflect the need for balance between virtual and physical interaction. Overall, digitalization has redefined family life— transforming communication, caregiving, and togetherness into hybrid, technology-mediated experiences.

### 5.5 Intergenerational Communication and Value Exchange

Table 8 highlights the patterns of communication, value transmission, and mutual understanding between older and younger generations within contemporary families.

**Table 8: Intergenerational Communication and Value Exchange**

| Communication/Value Aspect      | Strong Among Older Generation (%) | Strong Among Younger Generation (%) | Shared Across Generations (%) | Key Observation                                                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Frequency of Interaction        | 46                                | 34                                  | 20                            | Regular but often limited by work schedules and geographic mobility.        |
| Respect for Family              | 68                                | 29                                  | 3                             | Younger members                                                             |
| Communication/Value Aspect      | Strong Among Older Generation (%) | Strong Among Younger Generation (%) | Shared Across Generations (%) | Key Observation                                                             |
| Traditions                      |                                   |                                     |                               | increasingly reinterpret traditions through modern values.                  |
| Acceptance of Modern Lifestyles | 22                                | 61                                  | 17                            | Evident generational divide on issues like career choice and relationships. |
| Emotional Openness              | 33                                | 44                                  | 23                            | Younger members express emotions more freely, unlike older generations.     |
| Decision-Making Participation   | 40                                | 35                                  | 25                            | Joint participation is emerging in urban nuclear families.                  |
| Knowledge and Value Sharing     | 48                                | 32                                  | 20                            | Intergenerational exchange remains significant but uneven across contexts.  |

Table 8 findings indicate that while family communication between generations remains active, the nature of value exchange is evolving with modernization and digital influence. Older generations emphasize respect, tradition, and duty, whereas younger members prioritize autonomy, emotional transparency, and lifestyle flexibility. Despite differing perspectives, mutual respect and adaptive communication are fostering a balanced coexistence in many households. The study also reveals that intergenerational dialogue is strongest in families with shared decision-making and open communication patterns. These results underscore the importance of maintaining continuous, empathetic dialogue to preserve family harmony while embracing contemporary social values.

### 5.6 Correlation between Globalization and Family Adaptability

Table 9 presents the statistical relationship between globalization factors and family adaptability, illustrating how exposure to global influences shapes flexibility, cohesion, and openness within family systems.

**Table 9: Correlation between Globalization and Family Adaptability**

| Globalization Factor                               | Correlation Coefficient (r) | Significance Level (p-value) | Interpretation                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Exposure to Global Media                           | 0.64                        | 0.001                        | Strong positive correlation – media influences cultural acceptance and modern thinking in families. |
| International Migration Experience                 | 0.58                        | 0.003                        | Positive correlation – migration enhances adaptability through multicultural exposure.              |
| Globalization Factor                               | Correlation Coefficient (r) | Significance Level (p-value) | Interpretation                                                                                      |
| Cross-Cultural Friendships/Networks                | 0.61                        | 0.002                        | Significant link – promotes tolerance and open communication within families.                       |
| Adoption of Global Lifestyle Trends                | 0.47                        | 0.010                        | Moderate correlation – indicates selective adoption balancing local and global values.              |
| Economic Globalization (Job Mobility, Remittances) | 0.52                        | 0.007                        | Positive effect – increases family flexibility and resilience to change.                            |
| Technological Integration                          | 0.69                        | 0.001                        | Strongest correlation – digital access accelerates adaptability and redefines interaction norms.    |

Table 9 correlation analysis reveals a strong and statistically significant relationship between globalization and family adaptability, suggesting that global exposure has become a key determinant of how families adjust to change. Technological integration and media influence show the highest correlations, highlighting their role in shaping open communication, flexible gender roles, and modern parenting practices. Migration and cross-cultural networks further encourage intercultural tolerance and adaptability among family members. However, while globalization enhances flexibility, it also challenges traditional cohesion, prompting families to renegotiate cultural boundaries and shared values. Overall, the findings confirm that global interconnectedness has restructured family life—making adaptability an essential feature of survival and harmony in the 21st century.

### 5.7 Thematic Insights from Qualitative Analysis

Table 10 summarizes the major qualitative themes that emerged from interviews, highlighting how participants perceive evolving family dynamics, emotional relationships, and social adaptation in the 21st century.

**Table 10: Thematic Insights from Qualitative Analysis**

| Theme Code | Emerging Theme                | Description                                                                                      | Representative Participant Insight                                                                         | Interpretation                                                 |
|------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| T1         | Redefinition of Parenthood    | Parenting now emphasizes emotional intelligence and shared responsibility rather than authority. | “We both take turns caring for our child and making school decisions—it’s no longer just a mother’s duty.” | Indicates greater gender balance and collaborative parenting.  |
| T2         | Digital Intimacy and Distance | Technology connects families across distances but reduces face-to-face bonding.                  | “We video call daily, but it’s not the same as having dinner together.”                                    | Reflects the paradox of connectivity and emotional detachment. |
| T3         | Generational Value Conflict   | Diverging beliefs between parents and children about                                             | “My parents value stability, but I value freedom and self-                                                 | Shows intergenerational                                        |
| Theme Code | Emerging Theme                | Description                                                                                      | Representative Participant Insight                                                                         | Interpretation                                                 |
|            |                               | lifestyle and independence.                                                                      | expression.”                                                                                               | negotiation of identity and priorities.                        |
| T4         | Emotional Reciprocity         | Families are redefining love and care through open communication and empathy.                    | “We discuss feelings more openly now—there’s less judgment.”                                               | Signifies emotional modernization within family systems.       |
| T5         | Cultural Hybridization        | Families merge traditional customs with modern values to adapt to globalization.                 | “We celebrate festivals, but also embrace global celebrations like Christmas or Valentine’s.”              | Highlights adaptive cultural blending and inclusivity.         |

Table 10 qualitative findings reveal that families today are negotiating a balance between tradition and modernity, shaping a new social fabric built on flexibility and emotional intelligence. Participants frequently emphasized collaborative parenting, gender equality, and empathy as defining traits of modern family relationships. While digital platforms strengthen communication, they also contribute to emotional distance, creating a duality between virtual connection and real-world intimacy. Generational differences were evident, yet mutual understanding often bridged these divides through open dialogue and shared experiences. Overall, the thematic insights suggest that 21st-century families are not merely adjusting to change but actively reconstructing values, roles, and relationships in alignment with global and technological transformations.

### 5.8 Comparative Analysis with Existing Studies

Table 11 compares the findings of the present study with selected contemporary research works, highlighting similarities and divergences in understanding family evolution, gender roles, emotional dynamics, and sociocultural adaptability in the 21st century.

**Table 11: Comparative Analysis with Existing Studies**

| Study Reference           | Focus of the Study                                                                   | Major Findings                                                                            | Comparison with Present Study                                                                       | Key Insight                                                                               |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| [21] Mahajan (2025)       | Examined AI integration into family relationships and emotional bonds.               | Predicted emotional adaptation between humans and intelligent systems in domestic spaces. | Aligns with the present study's findings on digitalization transforming emotional connectivity.     | Both emphasize technology as a redefinition of intimacy and caregiving.                   |
| [23] Xiao (2025)          | Investigated parental marital quality and its effects on child emotional competence. | Found strong influence of parent–child and sibling relationships on emotional wellbeing.  | Supports current study's insights on intergenerational emotional communication and family balance.  | Reinforces the importance of emotional reciprocity in modern families.                    |
| [26] Begum (2025)         | Studied work-life balance, mental                                                    | Showed emotional intelligence as a                                                        | Parallels current findings on shared emotional                                                      | Confirms emotional management as key to                                                   |
| Study Reference           | Focus of the Study                                                                   | Major Findings                                                                            | Comparison with Present Study                                                                       | Key Insight                                                                               |
|                           | health, and emotional intelligence among Indian managers.                            | mediator for gender equality and wellbeing.                                               | responsibility and flexible gender roles.                                                           | sustainable family functioning.                                                           |
| [27] Milkie et al. (2025) | Analyzed gender gaps in housework and childcare in modern American families.         | Reported narrowing gender disparities and increased male participation in domestic life.  | Directly supports this study's quantitative results on shifts in gender roles and responsibilities. | Indicates convergence of gender functions in family settings globally.                    |
| [30] Reed (2025)          | Explored hybridization of arranged and love marriages in urban India.                | Identified growing autonomy and emotional negotiation in partner selection.               | Resonates with this study's theme of evolving family structures and relational flexibility.         | Highlights cultural modernization and the blending of traditional and contemporary norms. |

Table 11 comparative analysis reveals that the findings of this study align closely with recent sociological and psychological research, emphasizing technology, emotional intelligence, and cultural fluidity as key forces shaping modern families. Works by Mahajan [21] and Milkie et al. [27] corroborate the growing digital and gender transformations observed in this study, while Xiao [23] and Begum [26] underscore the emotional and mental dimensions of evolving family dynamics. Reed's [30] study complements these insights by contextualizing relational change within India's socio-cultural fabric. Collectively, these comparisons affirm that 21st-century families are undergoing a global paradigm shift—characterized by inclusivity, shared responsibility, and adaptive resilience. **5.9 Discussion on Policy and Sociological Implications**

The results of this study emphasize that contemporary family policies must evolve in tandem with the rapid social and technological transformations reshaping domestic life. Consistent with the observations of Mahajan et al. (2025) [21], who examined the ethical and emotional implications of AI integration into family settings, this study highlights the need for developing digital ethics frameworks and media literacy programs to safeguard interpersonal relationships in an increasingly virtual domestic environment. The findings suggest that while technology enhances connectivity, it simultaneously disrupts emotional intimacy, underscoring the importance of responsible technology use and digital well-being initiatives to sustain emotional depth within families.

Furthermore, the conclusions on work-life balance, emotional resilience, and gender equality align with Begum et al. (2025) [26], who linked emotional intelligence to mental health outcomes and advocated for gender-neutral workplace policies. The growing trend of dual-income and shared-parenting households calls for policy reforms supporting flexible working conditions, parental leave equity, and inclusive childcare measures. Such policies are essential for improving overall family wellbeing and correspond directly with global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3 and SDG 5). From a sociological perspective, gender equity in familial structures mirrors the wider societal pursuit of empowerment, inclusion, and balanced participation.

Finally, the findings of this research parallel those of Milkie et al. (2025) [27] and Reed et al. (2025) [30], who explored evolving gender roles in American families and the hybridization of arranged and love marriages in urban India, respectively. Both studies reinforce the global transition toward partnership-based family systems characterized by cooperation, emotional negotiation, and equality. This evolution suggests the necessity for policy frameworks that encourage intergenerational communication, cultural adaptability, and emotional literacy. Collectively, these transformations represent a sociological shift toward pluralistic and resilient family systems that value adaptability, empathy, and shared responsibility—core features of sustainable social development in the 21st century.

### Highlights

- Family structures have shifted significantly, with nuclear families increasing to 64% and joint families declining by 43% over the past two decades.
- Gender equality is advancing, as 45% of households now share decision-making and male involvement in childcare has doubled to 36%.
- Technological integration ( $r = 0.69$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) strongly correlates with family adaptability, reflecting how digitalization and globalization reshape modern relationships.

### 6. Conclusion

The study concludes that family structures in the 21st century have experienced a measurable transformation toward smaller, more adaptive, and egalitarian systems. Quantitative findings indicate that 64% of respondents live in nuclear families, while only 21.6% continue in joint families, marking a 43% decline over two decades. Gender role distribution has also shifted, with 45% of decision-making now shared and male participation in childcare rising from 18% to 36%. Moreover, digitalization has influenced 78% of families positively in maintaining communication but reduced face-to-face interaction by 54%. A strong correlation ( $r = 0.69$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between technological integration and family adaptability further underscores how globalization and modernization shape familial resilience. Overall, the findings reveal a growing trend toward emotional reciprocity, shared responsibilities, and pluralistic values that redefine the meaning of family in the contemporary world.

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