

Original Article

TRANSFORMATION OF FAMILY VALUES AMONG YOUTH IN GWALIOR

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ABSTRACT

The family remains the primary setting in which young people learn responsibility, cooperation, respect, gender roles, emotional behaviour, and expectations regarding marriage and elder care. In Gwalior, these values are being renegotiated under the influence of higher education, digital media, urban lifestyles, employment aspirations, migration, and the growth of nuclear households. This paper examines the transformation of family values among youth in Gwalior through a sociological framework that distinguishes structural change from value change. It argues that smaller households and greater personal autonomy do not necessarily indicate the rejection of family relationships. Rather, many young people appear to favour a negotiated family model in which emotional attachment and filial responsibility continue, while authority, marital choice, gender expectations, and career decisions become more egalitarian. The paper reviews relevant literature, identifies a clear research gap, presents one focused objective with corresponding hypotheses, and proposes a mixed-method research design for youth aged 18 to 25 residing in Gwalior. A structured family-values questionnaire, supported by semi-structured interviews, is recommended for examining the influence of education, digital media exposure, family type, and gender. The proposed analysis uses descriptive statistics, group comparisons, correlation, regression, and thematic interpretation. The paper concludes that family transformation in Gwalior is best understood as negotiated continuity: traditional emotional bonds remain important, but their expression increasingly depends on dialogue, consent, and shared decision-making.

Keywords: Family Values, Youth, Gwalior, Intergenerational Relations, Nuclear Family, Modernization, Digital Media, Negotiated Family

INTRODUCTION

The family is one of the most enduring social institutions. It provides care, protection, emotional support, economic cooperation, and the first environment of socialization. Through everyday interaction, young people learn how authority is exercised, how decisions are made, how responsibilities are distributed, and how relationships between generations are maintained. Family values therefore include not only respect for elders or obedience to parents, but also attitudes toward gender roles, marital choice, career autonomy, financial contribution, elder care, emotional communication, and collective responsibility.

Indian family life has often been associated with collectivism, interdependence, filial duty, and the moral importance of the joint family. However, family systems have never been completely uniform. They differ according to caste, class, religion, region, occupation, education, and urban or rural residence. Moreover, structural nuclearization, in which married couples and their children live separately, does not automatically mean that emotional and economic ties with the extended family disappear. Separate households may continue to exchange money, advice, care, and ritual support.

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Gwalior provides a useful setting for studying these changes. The city combines historical traditions and strong kinship networks with expanding educational institutions, digital connectivity, modern employment aspirations, and growing mobility. Young people may remain emotionally close to their families while asking for greater participation in decisions about education, career, friendships, marriage, and place of residence. They may also support equal opportunities for women and men while continuing to value family approval and intergenerational support.

The transformation of family values should therefore not be reduced to a simple conflict between tradition and modernity. Change may be uneven across dimensions. Respect for elders may remain strong while unquestioned obedience declines. Responsibility for parents may continue while co-residence becomes less common. Arranged marriage may be reinterpreted as a process in which parents suggest possible partners but the final decision depends on the consent of both individuals. Such patterns indicate negotiation and adaptation rather than complete family breakdown.

SOCIAL CONTEXT OF FAMILY CHANGE IN GWALIOR

Gwalior is a major urban centre of northern Madhya Pradesh with educational, administrative, commercial, and cultural importance. Its population includes long-established local families as well as students and workers from surrounding districts. The city's social life reflects the coexistence of traditional neighbourhood networks, extended kinship relations, modern residential colonies, higher education, coaching culture, service-sector employment, and digital communication. These conditions expose youth to different models of family life and personal success.

Education influences family values by increasing access to new ideas, peer groups, professional aspirations, and knowledge of legal and social rights. Higher education may strengthen the expectation that career and marriage decisions should include the young person's consent. It can also alter gender-role attitudes by increasing support for women's education, employment, property rights, and participation in household decisions. At the same time, educational achievement is often pursued with substantial family support, which can reinforce gratitude and responsibility toward parents.

Digital media creates another major source of socialization. Social networking platforms, films, web series, online discussions, and influencer content expose youth to diverse relationships, parenting styles, gender identities, and marriage practices. These representations may encourage open communication and personal choice, but they may also create unrealistic expectations or intensify comparison between families. The effect of digital media is therefore neither entirely positive nor entirely negative; it depends on the content viewed, the social context, and the ability of young people to interpret it critically.

Changes in employment and migration also influence family structure. Young adults frequently move for study or work, delay marriage, or seek economic independence before forming a household. Physical separation can reduce daily parental control, but digital communication allows frequent contact through phone calls, messaging, video calls, and family groups. Consequently, geographical distance may coexist with strong emotional and practical interdependence.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Public discussions often describe contemporary youth either as abandoning family values or as remaining fully bound by tradition. Both views are too general. There is limited Gwalior-specific research that measures family values across distinct dimensions such as elder authority, filial responsibility, gender equality, marital choice, communication, and collective decision-making. It is also unclear how education and digital media exposure are associated with these dimensions among youth living in a Tier-2 city. The central problem of the present paper is therefore to examine whether youth in Gwalior are moving from rigid hierarchy-based family values toward more egalitarian and negotiation-based orientations, while determining which traditional responsibilities continue to remain strong.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant for sociology, education, counselling, and family welfare. It extends the study of family transformation beyond metropolitan cities and focuses on a socially important but comparatively under-researched urban centre. By examining separate dimensions of family values, it avoids treating young people as either completely traditional or completely individualistic. The proposed framework can help educational institutions design family-life education and counselling programmes that address communication, consent, conflict resolution, gender equality, and elder responsibility. It can also help parents understand that requests for dialogue and autonomy do not necessarily represent emotional rejection. For policymakers and social organizations, the study can provide locally grounded evidence for youth support, premarital counselling, elder-care planning, and intergenerational programmes.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

INDIAN FAMILY STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONAL CONTINUITY

Classical studies of the Indian family emphasized that the joint family should not be identified only by common residence. [Desai \(1964\)](#), [Kapadia \(1966\)](#), and later [Shah \(1998\)](#) showed that kinship obligations, economic cooperation, ritual participation, and authority relations can continue even when family members live in separate households. This distinction between structural and functional jointness remains important for interpreting present-day nuclear households. A small household may remain closely connected with grandparents and other relatives through regular visits, financial assistance, shared ceremonies, and important decisions.

Research on family change in India therefore cautions against the assumption that nuclearization equals individualism. [Niranjan et al. \(2005\)](#) examined changes in family size and structure and showed that demographic and social transitions affect household composition. [Sonawar \(2001\)](#) similarly discussed how Indian families adapt to wider social change. These studies suggest that continuity and transformation occur simultaneously and that the meaning of family must be examined through relationships and responsibilities, not residence alone.

MODERNIZATION, EDUCATION, AND INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY

Modernization theories connect urbanization, formal education, occupational mobility, and economic independence with a decline in unquestioned traditional authority. [Inglehart and Baker \(2000\)](#) argued that socioeconomic development changes cultural values, although historical traditions continue to shape the direction of change. [Thornton \(2001\)](#) concept of developmental idealism explained how ideas about modern family life circulate internationally and influence attitudes toward marriage, gender, and personal choice. These frameworks predict that educated youth may prefer consultation and consent over unilateral parental control.

Individualization does not necessarily mean isolation. [Beck and Beck-Gernsheim \(2002\)](#) described how modern individuals are increasingly expected to construct their own life courses, yet continue to depend on intimate relationships. In the Indian context, autonomy is often relational rather than completely independent. Young adults may seek the freedom to choose a career or spouse while expecting emotional and material support from family and accepting responsibility for parents in return.

GENDER ROLES AND DECISION-MAKING

Education and women's employment have altered expectations regarding domestic work, mobility, marriage age, and participation in family decisions. Traditional gender arrangements often assign paid work and public authority to men and domestic care to women. Contemporary youth may support more equal education and employment opportunities but continue to experience unequal expectations regarding household labour, safety, and family reputation. This gap between stated belief and everyday practice makes gender-role attitudes an essential component of family-values research.

Family transformation can be observed in whether daughters and sons receive similar encouragement, whether women participate in financial decisions, and whether household work is treated as a shared responsibility. It can also be observed in the degree to which young women and men have equal voice in choosing education, occupation, and marriage. Measuring these issues separately provides a more accurate picture than asking only whether respondents support 'modern family values.'

MARRIAGE, CONSENT, AND NEGOTIATED RELATIONSHIPS

Marriage remains an area in which family obligation and personal choice strongly interact. [Netting \(2010\)](#) described contemporary Indian marital ideals as creative combinations of love and responsibility. Many young people do not reject family involvement but prefer a semi-arranged process in which families participate while the couple's consent is essential. This negotiated model differs from both fully parent-controlled marriage and completely independent partner selection.

The age of marriage, educational compatibility, employment, caste expectations, and family approval continue to influence marital decisions. Digital communication and wider peer networks have increased opportunities for interaction between young women and men, yet family acceptance remains important for social support and long-term stability. The study of family values must therefore examine the form and degree of parental involvement rather than treating arranged and love marriage as mutually exclusive categories.

FILIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ELDER CARE

Respect and care for parents remain central moral expectations in Indian family life. [Chadda and Deb \(2013\)](#) emphasized the continuing importance of collectivistic family systems in India. Even where youth prefer greater autonomy, they may continue to accept responsibility for ageing parents. However, the practical form of care may change because of employment, migration, smaller

homes, and dual-earner households. Financial support, healthcare coordination, regular digital contact, and arranged caregiving may supplement or replace continuous co-residence. [Dzüvichü and Yhome \(2024\)](#)

This distinction is important because a decline in co-residence should not automatically be interpreted as a decline in filial values. The relevant questions concern willingness to support parents, involvement in important decisions, emotional availability, and arrangements for health and safety. These indicators allow the study to identify continuity within changing family structures.

DIGITAL MEDIA AND FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Digital media affects both the content and style of family communication. Smartphones allow family members to remain connected across distance, organize daily activities, share photographs, and coordinate emergencies. At the same time, excessive device use can reduce attentive face-to-face interaction and create conflict regarding privacy, screen time, friendships, and online behaviour. Digital platforms also expose youth to alternative family models and public discussions of consent, mental well-being, gender, and intergenerational boundaries. [Jenner and Jebakumar \(2024\)](#)

The relationship between media exposure and family values is therefore likely to be complex. High exposure may weaken support for rigid hierarchy while strengthening expectations of emotional communication and mutual respect. It may also produce disagreement when online ideals conflict with local family realities. A careful study should measure frequency, purpose, and type of media use rather than relying only on total screen time.

RESEARCH GAP

The review identifies four gaps. First, there is limited empirical research specifically focused on family-value transformation among youth in Gwalior. Second, many studies combine several attitudes into a single general category and therefore fail to show which values are changing and which remain stable. Third, education and digital media are frequently discussed as causes of change but are not always tested together with family type and gender. Fourth, the distinction between structural nuclearization and emotional or functional continuity requires greater attention. The present paper addresses these gaps through a multidimensional framework and a focused empirical design.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To examine the extent to which youth in Gwalior are shifting from traditional hierarchy-based family values toward egalitarian and negotiation-based orientations, with particular reference to education and digital media exposure.

HYPOTHESES

H1: Youth in Gwalior with higher levels of formal education and digital media exposure exhibit significantly lower adherence to rigid hierarchy-based family values and stronger support for egalitarian decision-making than youth with lower levels of exposure.

H0: There is no statistically significant difference in family-value orientation among youth in Gwalior according to their level of formal education and digital media exposure.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study uses a combined theoretical framework. Modernization theory explains how education, urbanization, occupational mobility, and mass communication can weaken ascribed authority and encourage individual choice. Applied to family life, it predicts a movement from unquestioned obedience toward consultation, equality, and achievement-based status. However, modernization theory alone may incorrectly imply that traditional relationships simply disappear.

Family systems and structural-functionalist perspectives provide a complementary explanation. They view the family as an adaptive system that modifies roles and authority in response to changing social conditions while continuing to perform care, support, socialization, and emotional integration. From this perspective, greater equality can be understood as an adjustment that may strengthen family stability by replacing coercive authority with communication and consent.

The concept of negotiated family life connects these perspectives. It proposes that contemporary family relationships are increasingly maintained through discussion, reciprocal obligation, and situational agreement. Youth may reject unilateral control but still value belonging, support, and responsibility. The expected outcome is therefore neither complete traditionalism nor complete individualism, but negotiated continuity across generations.

CONCEPTUAL DIMENSIONS OF FAMILY VALUES

For clear measurement, family values should be divided into related but distinct dimensions. This approach makes it possible to identify uneven patterns of continuity and change.

Table 1

Dimension	Illustrative Indicators	Expected Direction of Change
Authority and decision-making	Parental control, consultation, youth voice, privacy	From unilateral authority toward shared discussion
Filial responsibility	Care of parents, financial support, emotional availability	Likely continuity with changing forms of care
Gender roles	Education, employment, domestic work, financial decisions	Greater support for equality, with possible practice gaps
Marriage and partner choice	Consent, parental involvement, caste and compatibility	Movement toward negotiated or semi-arranged choice
Communication and emotional expression	Openness, conflict resolution, digital contact	Greater expectation of dialogue and emotional support
Collective versus individual orientation	Career choice, residence, finances, personal goals	Selective autonomy combined with family interdependence

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH APPROACH

A mixed-method approach is suitable because family values include measurable attitudes as well as personal meanings that cannot be understood through numerical scores alone. The quantitative component can identify patterns and group differences, while qualitative interviews can explain why youth accept, modify, or reject particular family expectations.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The proposed study uses a cross-sectional descriptive-cum-correlational design. It measures family-value orientation, education, digital media exposure, family type, and selected demographic characteristics at one point in time. The design is appropriate for examining associations and group differences, although it does not establish definite causal relationships.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The target population consists of youth aged 18 to 25 residing in Gwalior city and its immediate urban surroundings. Participants may include undergraduate and postgraduate students, vocational learners, job-seeking youth, and recently employed young adults. A sample of approximately 350 respondents is proposed. Stratification by gender, educational level, and institutional or employment category can improve representation. Participants may be selected from colleges, universities, coaching institutions, training centres, and residential localities.

VARIABLES

The dependent variable is family-value orientation, represented by scores on authority, filial responsibility, gender roles, marital choice, communication, and collective decision-making. The principal independent variables are level of formal education and digital media exposure. Family type, gender, employment status, socioeconomic background, and migration experience may be included as control or grouping variables.

TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS

The primary tool should be a structured Family Values Questionnaire developed or adapted for the local context. It may contain five-point Likert-type statements ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement. Positive and negative items should be balanced to reduce response pattern bias. The tool should include separate subscales for the six conceptual dimensions identified above. A demographic and media-use schedule should record age, gender, education, family type, employment, daily media exposure, major platforms, and purpose of use.

A semi-structured interview schedule may be used with approximately 15 to 20 participants selected from contrasting score groups. Interview questions should explore experiences of parental authority, career negotiation, marital expectations, household responsibilities, privacy, digital communication, and elder care. Expert review, pilot testing, item analysis, reliability estimation, and evidence of content validity should be completed before final administration.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Permission should be obtained from the selected institutions and community settings. Participants should receive a clear explanation of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the protection of confidentiality. Questionnaires may be administered in person or through a controlled online form. Interviews should be conducted in a private and comfortable setting after informed consent. Names and direct personal identifiers should not be included in the final dataset.

DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation should be used to describe the sample and family-value scores. Independent-samples t-tests or one-way analysis of variance may compare groups according to education and media exposure. Pearson correlation can examine relationships between media exposure and the family-value dimensions. Multiple regression analysis can estimate the independent contribution of education, digital media, family type, and gender to overall family-value orientation. Interview transcripts should be analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns, disagreements, and examples of negotiated family life.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study should ensure informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw without disadvantage. Questions concerning relationships, marriage, and family conflict can be sensitive; therefore, participants should not be pressured to disclose personal experiences. Findings should be reported in aggregate form, and interview quotations should be anonymized. The language of the study should avoid labelling any family as backward, broken, or morally inferior.

ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION FROM OBEDIENCE TO CONSULTATION

The most visible transformation is likely to concern the form of authority. Youth may continue to respect parents but expect reasons, discussion, and participation in decisions. Career choice, higher education, friendships, travel, and marriage are areas in which unilateral parental decisions may increasingly be questioned. This does not necessarily represent disrespect; it may reflect a new definition of respect based on mutual recognition rather than silent compliance.

CONTINUITY OF EMOTIONAL AND FILIAL BONDS

Emotional attachment and responsibility toward parents are expected to remain comparatively strong. Even when young adults prefer separate residence, they may plan to provide financial support, manage medical care, visit regularly, or remain in frequent digital contact. The form of support may therefore change without the moral value disappearing. This distinction is essential for avoiding exaggerated claims about the decline of the family.

GENDER EQUALITY AND EVERYDAY PRACTICE

Youth with higher education and wider media exposure may express stronger support for women's education, employment, and choice. However, attitudes may change faster than household practice. Young women may still face greater restrictions on mobility, timing, friendships, and marriage, while household work remains unevenly distributed. The study should therefore compare general beliefs with specific behavioural expectations.

MARRIAGE AS A NEGOTIATED DECISION

A likely pattern is the growth of negotiated or semi-arranged marriage. Youth may want the opportunity to know and approve a partner while also valuing family guidance and acceptance. This model combines personal choice with collective responsibility. Conflict may arise when families interpret consent as disobedience or when youth interpret all parental concern as control. Counselling and communication can help distinguish genuine protection from unnecessary restriction.

DIGITAL MEDIA AS A SOURCE OF CHANGE AND CONNECTION

Digital media may reduce support for rigid hierarchy by exposing youth to alternative viewpoints and language of rights, equality, and emotional well-being. At the same time, it enables families to maintain daily contact across distance. Family messaging groups, video calls, and online financial services can strengthen practical interdependence. Thus, the same technology can challenge authority and reinforce connection.

THE EMERGENCE OF NEGOTIATED CONTINUITY

Taken together, the expected patterns support the idea of negotiated continuity. Youth do not simply choose between family loyalty and personal freedom. They attempt to combine both by redefining authority, responsibility, and communication. Core bonds remain important, but the legitimacy of family expectations increasingly depends on consent, fairness, and reciprocal respect. This model provides a more balanced explanation of change in Gwalior than either complete traditionalism or complete individualization.

EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Colleges and universities can introduce family-life education, communication skills, gender sensitization, and conflict-resolution activities. Counselling services should recognize that many youth experience tension between personal goals and family expectations. Rather than advising total obedience or total separation, counsellors can support respectful negotiation and realistic planning.

Parents and community organizations can benefit from intergenerational dialogue programmes in which young people and elders discuss career, marriage, privacy, technology, and elder care. Such programmes should treat both generations as contributors. Elders possess experience and cultural knowledge, while youth bring new educational, technological, and occupational perspectives.

Policy planning for elder care should also recognize the changing form of family support. Smaller households, migration, and women's employment may reduce the availability of full-time family caregivers even when commitment remains strong. Community health services, day-care centres, counselling, and reliable home-care support can help families fulfil responsibilities without placing an unequal burden on one member.

LIMITATIONS

This paper presents a conceptual and methodological framework rather than primary empirical findings. The proposed cross-sectional design can identify associations but cannot establish the direction of causation. Self-reported attitudes may be influenced by social desirability, especially on questions of respect, gender equality, and elder care. The study is limited to urban Gwalior and cannot be generalized automatically to rural areas of the district. Family values also differ by religion, caste, class, and household history; these factors require careful interpretation and may be examined more fully in future research.

CONCLUSION

Family values among youth in Gwalior are undergoing transformation, but the process should not be interpreted as the disappearance of family commitment. The likely change is from rigid, age-based authority toward relationships based on consultation, consent, emotional communication, and reciprocal responsibility. Youth may seek autonomy in education, career, residence, and marriage while continuing to value parental support and accept responsibility for ageing family members.

The framework developed in this paper distinguishes household structure from family attachment and separates family values into measurable dimensions. It proposes that education and digital media are associated with greater support for egalitarian decision-making, but that continuity is likely to remain strong in emotional bonds and filial responsibility. A mixed-method study can test these patterns and provide a locally grounded understanding of negotiated family life in Gwalior. Such evidence can support education, counselling, social policy, and healthier intergenerational relationships.

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