

# FAMILY SYSTEM'S ROLE IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF THE CHILDREN

Nighat Gul<sup>1</sup>✉, Nasreen Ghani<sup>2</sup>, Sajid Mehmood Alvi<sup>3</sup>,  
Farhana Kazmi<sup>4</sup>, Asgher Ali Shah<sup>5</sup>

## ABSTRACT

**OBJECTIVE:** To find out the influence of single- and joint-family systems on psychological well-being of children.

**METHODS:** This comparative study was conducted on 200 participants, including 100 (50 male & 50 female) from single-family system and 100 (50 male & 50 female) from joint-family system. Required sample size was drawn for two different family systems equally by applying the stratified probability random sampling technique. Children aged 12-14 years were included. While Ryff psychological well-being measurement scale (RPWMS) was used for data collection purpose. In our study we assumed; in joint-family system the level of psychological well-being of the children will be higher than single-family system. While for statistical analysis of the collected data, descriptive analysis technique and independent t-test was used.

**RESULTS:** Mean age of participants was  $13.09 \pm 0.86$  years. Overall, mean RPWMS score was  $186.60 \pm 42.61$ . Mean RPWMS score was  $175.80 \pm 40.53$  &  $197.41 \pm 42.09$  for children from single & joint family system respectively ( $p < 0.001$ ) and  $195.93 \pm 36.56$  &  $177.28 \pm 46.23$  for female & male children respectively ( $p < 0.001$ ). Mean score for autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and acceptance of self was  $9.33 \pm 6.85$ ,  $29.83 \pm 6.76$ ,  $29.22 \pm 7.37$ ,  $29.25 \pm 7.37$ ,  $29.42 \pm 7.58$  &  $28.75 \pm 7.88$  respectively for participants from single-family system and  $32.37 \pm 6.53$ ,  $33.120 \pm 6.35$ ,  $32.68 \pm 7.05$ ,  $32.39 \pm 7.75$ ,  $32.67 \pm 6.43$  &  $32.08 \pm 8.09$  respectively for participants from joint-family system ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**CONCLUSION:** Children from joint-family system and female children had a better psychological well-being than children from single family system and male children on same scale with approximately same characteristic and features.

**KEY WORDS:** Family (MeSH), Psychological well-being (Non-MeSH), Joint family system (Non-MeSH), Single family system (Non-MeSH).

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## INTRODUCTION

Family structure has an impact on the psychological well-being of the children. Family structure is the grouping of relatives that contain a family. In single family system two marital parents of opposite sex and their offspring live at the same place.<sup>1</sup> Amato and Keith (1991)

argued Joint family system comprises of the close blood relations, who live together in one single home and share all their basic necessities of life there.<sup>2</sup> A single family system consists of minimum number of members and contains parents and children. They are independent and are free from duties to other family members such as grand parents,

✉ Department of Psychology, Postgraduate College Haripur for women, Haripur, Pakistan.  
E-mail: ali25\_moh@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup> Institute of Nursing Sciences, Khyber Medical University, Peshawar, Pakistan

<sup>3</sup> Department of Psychology, University of Haripur, KP, Pakistan

<sup>4</sup> Department of the Psychology, Hazara University, Mansehra, Pakistan

<sup>5</sup> Islamic International University of Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan

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uncle, nieces and aunt etc.<sup>3</sup> According to Irawati Karve, joint family is the group of individuals living in one home and contain more than one married couple who share meal and property and take part in family worships.<sup>4</sup>

Both family systems have effects on psychological well-being of the children. Psychological well-being is the happy feeling along with happy sentiments and joys that may later help an individual to play a role in development of society and welfare.<sup>5</sup> A significant relationship between family system and psychological well-being of individuals in later life was observed by Christina D. Falci.<sup>6</sup>

Broken families, divorces, fights etc really affect the mental peace of a child.<sup>7</sup> In different studies data from fragile families were collected and well-being of children was determined at the time of birth and after birth. The separation, step parenthood, parent relations and social relations were found to be the main factors affecting the child's well being.<sup>8,9</sup>

Parental quarrel and parting of the family also play key role in poor health of the children and low mental health as compared to joint family structure. In single family system kin rivalry and alone parents affect the psychology of the children negatively as compared to the joint parents and families.<sup>10,11</sup> In the joint family a principle and direct association exists between the two generations living together that forms a set of connections and correlations among its members.<sup>12-14</sup>

Keeping in view the importance of family system and its effects on children

mental health, we conducted this study to evaluate the impact of family system on psychological well-being of the children in our area and to find out gender wise difference in psychological well-being among children in two different family systems.

### METHODS

This comparative study was conducted on 200 participants, including 100 from single-family system and 100 from joint-family system.

This study research design was comparative and was approved from ethical committee of Haripur University. Number of participants was determined with the help of formula in which confidence interval was 80%, margin of error 5% and unsuccessful population was 20%. Sample size was determined with the help of following formula  $n = z^2pq/e^2$  giving us a sample size of 200 participants with probability random sampling. Target population was children of two different family systems of district Haripur and (n= 100) participants were taken to each family systems. Then children from

four major schools of Haripur (Sir syed model public school & college Haripur, Ali ghar public school Haripur, Gardian public school Haripur and Basri public school & college Haripur) were selected after an informed consent from the head of the institutes. An informed consent from children and their parent's was also obtained. Fifty children (25 from single family system and 25 from joint family system), aged 12-14 and with and 7 years of schooling were randomly selected from each institute. Children living in orphanage and care centres deprived to family members were excluded from study.

Ryff psychological wellbeing scale was used for identifying the psychological well-being of the children in two different family systems.<sup>15</sup> This scale comprises of 84 items and measures psychological well-being over all and sub factors were autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life and acceptance of self and has the ability for measuring 21 good positive relations. Duration of the study was 6 months. Independent t-test was used for data analysis.

### RESULTS

This study was conducted on 200 participants, including 100 (50 male & 50 female) from single family system and 100 (50 male & 50 female) from joint family system. Mean age of participants was  $13.09 \pm 0.86$  years. Age distribution in both genders and single versus joint family system is given in Table I.

Over all, mean total Ryff psychological well-being score was  $186.60 \pm 42.61$ . Total psychological well-being score in single and joint family system and both genders is given in Table II.

Table III, shows comparison of mean scores for autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and acceptance of self in participants from single and joint family system.

### DISCUSSION

The research findings of our study showed that mean RPWMS score was significantly higher ( $197.41 \pm 42.09$ ) for children from joint family system than from single family system ( $175.80 \pm 40.53$ ).

**TABLE I: AGE DISTRIBUTION IN BOTH GENDERS AND SINGLE VERSUS JOINT FAMILY SYSTEM**

Average Age	Gender			Family System		
	Female	Male	P value (chi square)	Joint Family	Single Family	P value (chi Square)
12 years (n=67)	34	33	>0.05	36	31	>0.05
13 years (n=48)	23	25		25	23	
14 years (n=85)	43	42		39	46	
Total (n=200)	100	100		100	100	

**TABLE II: RYFF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING SCORE AMONG SUBJECTS FROM SINGLE AND JOINT FAMILY SYSTEM AND BOTH GENDERS**

		Total psychological well-being			Mean Std. Deviation Std. Error Mean p value (independent sample t test)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Family system	Single family system (n= 100)	175.80	40.53	4.05	<0.001
	Joint family system (n= 100)	197.41	42.09	4.20	
Gender	Female (n= 100)	195.93	36.56	3.65	<0.001
	Male (n= 100)	177.28	46.23	4.62	
Total (n=200)		186.60	42.615	3.013	

**TABLE III: MEAN SCORE FOR AUTONOMY, ENVIRONMENTAL MASTERY, PERSONAL GROWTH, POSITIVE RELATIONS, PURPOSE IN LIFE, AND ACCEPTANCE OF SELF FOR PARTICIPANTS FROM SINGLE AND JOINT FAMILY SYSTEM**

Variable	Single family system (n= 100) (Mean±SD)	Joint family system (n= 100) (Mean±SD)	Total Population (n=200) (Mean±SD)	P value (independent sample t test)
Autonomy	29.33±6.85	32.37±6.53	30.85±6.85	<0.001
Environmental mastery	29.83±6.76	33.120±6.35	31.47±6.75	<0.001
Personal growth	29.22±7.37	32.68±7.05	30.95±7.40	<0.001
Positive relations	29.25±7.37	32.39±7.75	30.82±7.60	<0.001
Purpose in life	29.42±7.58	32.67±6.43	31.41±6.65	<0.001
Acceptance of self	28.75±7.88	32.08±8.09	30.41±8.14	<0.001

Mean score for autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and acceptance of self was also higher for participants from joint-family system than for participants from single-family system. Mean RPWMS score was also higher for female as compared to male children.

Research has shown that family structure influences child well-being through various mechanisms like parental resources, mental health of parents, quality of relationship between parents, etc. Family structure in Western countries includes traditional families, cohabiting-couple families and single mother families. Studies have shown that family structure and family stability are contributing in psychological well being of children.<sup>7,16,17</sup> Apart from fragile families, conflict between parents is also contributing to low psychological well-being among children in all families.<sup>18</sup>

In Pakistan, family structure is mainly based on single and joint family system. Present study findings suggest that the psychological wellbeing of children was higher in joint family system children as compared to single family system children. In combine family system, children get more love, care and affection from their relatives and parents. While in single family system, children feel alone and gain less attention of parents due to engagement with other household issues and work (if dual parents are employed), thus their psychological well-being is

badly affected by single family system. According to Acock AC, et al<sup>19</sup>, children emotional well-being is affected by the family structures. Parent-child relations and parental discrepancy are contributing to psychological wellbeing of the children very negatively. Psychological well being of children is lower in single parent's family system then dual parent's family system.<sup>20</sup>

Another important finding in this study was that female children scored higher on psychological well-being as compared to male children. Although gender similarities hypothesis suggests that both genders are similar on majority, but not all, psychological variables,<sup>21</sup> gender differences are present for majority of health-related quality of life of children and adolescents.<sup>22</sup> Some studies have shown lower psychological well-being for young girls as compared to boys.<sup>23-25</sup> Other studies have shown that the gender difference is less in pre-pubertal age and increases later in adolescence.<sup>26,27</sup> Family structure is strong associated with gender variation in psychological wellbeing.<sup>28</sup> In our study single family system adversely affecting the psychological wellbeing among both genders as compared to joint family system. Social context is an important factor and needs to be studied further.

### CONCLUSION

We conclude that two different family systems are playing significant role in the psychological well being of

children differently. Joint family system is positively increasing the level of psychological wellbeing of the children as compared to single family system. Children from joint family system and female children had a better psychological well-being than children from single family system and male children on same scale with approximately same characteristic and features. Further studies are recommended to address the gender-based variations in psychological wellbeing of children in single and joint family system.

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Following authors have made substantial contributions to the manuscript as under:

- NiG:** Concept & study design, acquisition of data, drafting the manuscript, final approval of the version to be published
- NaG:** Analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the manuscript, final approval of the version to be published
- SMA:** Acquisition of data, Drafting the manuscript, final approval of the version to be published
- FK & AAS:** Drafting the manuscript, critical revision, final approval of the version to be published

Authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

KMUJ web address: [www.kmuj.kmu.edu.pk](http://www.kmuj.kmu.edu.pk)

Email address: [kmuj@kmu.edu.pk](mailto:kmuj@kmu.edu.pk)