

Family Demography in India: Emerging Patterns and Its Challenges

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Abstract

Family has always been an important unit of analysis in an effort to improve and understand human development. Studying the changes in the institution of family and households keeping in view the demographic, social, and economic transitions also becomes imperative. So far, in our knowledge, there are very few studies based in India have investigated the household size and family formation patterns, while a few of them have looked into its possible causes or associations and demographic, economic, and social repercussions. In particular, as per our knowledge, there is no evidence on who is losing and who is gaining among family members due to the unprecedented transition in family forms in India. This paper serves a twofold purpose as first it seeks to explore and enrich the field of family demography in India by studying the existing evidence in the field as well as allied fields to understand how family serves as the nuclei directing individuals and communities toward certain behaviors and choices which consequently translate into larger social, economic and demographic transitions. Second, it also discusses the missing links and scope in the field of family demography in India as compared to the developed societies to provide future research prospects in this area.

Keywords

family, family demography, demographic transition, kinship, households

Introduction

Family is the cornerstone of many concepts in the social sciences, and especially in demography and sociology. It is generally regarded as a major social institution and is positioned as the locus of much of an individual's life-course decisions. It is a social unit created by blood relation, marriage, or adoption. The family is the basic and important unit of society because of its implied role in the generation of size and quality of human capital and livelihood resources. Social and religious institutions have also vested power in family and kin to influence behaviors and attitudes at the individual, household, and community level. The family is also often treated as a protective unit for the vulnerable groups that is, children, women, and the elderly. It stands as a major source of sustenance, care, socialization and an institution that works as a bridge between individuals and society. Thus, the family has always been an important unit of analysis in an effort to improve and understand human development.

Family demography is then related to the study of events that shape the families and characteristics of individual members of these families. According to the Encyclopedia of Population ("Family Demography," 2018), family demography can be defined as the "study of the composition of families and of the transitions that individuals make into and out

of various types of families." Family composition and related factors such as the number of family members, age and sex profile of the members, marital and cohabitation status, and kinship network and support are studied critically under this domain. Transitions include life-course processes such as the marriage, timing and duration of cohabitation, union dissolutions, and remarriage and could very well define the ideational and behavioral changes in transitioning and post-transition societies.

This paper serves a twofold purpose as first it seeks to explore and enrich the field of family demography in India by studying the existing evidence in the field as well as allied fields to understand how family serves as the nuclei directing individuals and communities toward certain behaviors and choices which consequently translate into larger social,

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economic and demographic transitions. For this purpose, we utilized all possible data sources such as Census of India, National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) and Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS; Desai et al., 2015), and so on. which although are limited in their ability to study wider domains within family demography, provide sufficient proof to validate the objective of our study, that is, to develop an overview of changing families and to enrich family demography as a discipline in India. Second, it also discusses the missing links and scope in the field of family demography in India as compared to the developed societies to provide future research prospects in this area of research.

The Indian Context

Though families have for long held an important status in an individual's life, they are still confined within the private domains and away from the state's influence. Consequently, India does not have a specific family policy which dictates, safeguards and regulate family formation behaviors and other related factors. Over time, the government has formulated several useful legislative measures relating to various domains within families. For instance, change in inheritance laws for women, elimination of child marriages, legalization of widow remarriage, specifying and legalizing minimum age for marriage, adoption, and maintenance, laws regarding domestic violence, abuse by intimate partner, property-related rights for elderly, and many more which have impacted the Indian families in several ways (Anand, 2018; Chowdhury & Patnaik, 2013). Others have been indirectly aimed at regulating fertility through education, family planning and social security schemes for the elderly, and so on. However, given the large size and heterogeneity of cultural norms and communities and the lacuna of data and multi-disciplinary research on changing ideas and choices regarding families, it has been realized that the formulation of a single nationwide policy is a daunting task.

Families and households in India have become a crucial domain of analyses not only due to the sheer size of the population which reside and sustain in them but also because of its observed multilevel effects and variations among the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic population of India. According to the 2011 Census, the total number of households increased by 33% from 25 crores to 33 crores since 2001. Among these, approximately 22 crores belonged to the rural area and 11 crores belonged to the urban areas. Furthermore, data from census reveal that on one hand there has been an increase in the number of households with 1 to 4 members, a significant decline in households with 5 and above members can also be seen (Table 1).

A decrease in the proportion of households with 3 or more married couples have been observed both in urban and rural areas, although households with 2 married couples have increased over time (Table 2).

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Households by Household Size in 2001 and 2011.

Household size	Total		Rural		Urban	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
1	3.6	3.7	3.5	3.7	3.7	3.6
2	8.2	9.7	8.2	9.8	8.2	9.5
3	11.1	13.6	10.4	12.6	12.7	15.9
4	19.0	22.7	17.7	21.0	22.4	26.4
5	18.7	18.8	18.5	18.9	19.2	18.5
6–8	28.1	24.9	29.6	26.9	24.4	20.6
9+	11.3	6.6	12.2	7.2	9.3	5.4

Source. Authors estimation using Census 2001 and 2011, Office of RGI, India.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Households by Number of Married Couples in 2001 and 2011.

No. of married couples	Total		Rural		Urban	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
None	11.1	11.6	10.5	11.1	12.6	12.7
1	70.3	70.1	69.3	69.6	73.0	71.2
2	13.5	14.1	14.6	14.9	10.8	12.6
3	3.6	3.2	4.0	3.4	2.7	2.9
4	1.0	0.7	1.1	0.8	0.7	0.6
5+	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.2

Source. Authors estimation using Census 2001 & 2011, Office of RGI, India.

So far, in our knowledge, there are very few studies based in India that have investigated household size and family formation patterns though some looked into possible causes or associations with larger demographic, economic, and social repercussions (A. M. Basu & Desai, 2016; Myroniuk et al., 2017; Nayak & Behera, 2014; Niranjana et al., 2005; Samanta et al., 2015). In particular, as per our knowledge, there is no evidence on who is losing and who is gaining among family members due to the unprecedented transition in family forms in India.

As per the global paradigm, transformations in the social institutions in any society are preceded by large scale changes in the demographic and economic environment. Globally, India has always been uniquely important and different due to the sheer size of its population. Combined with its unique cultural and social preference, the trajectory of transition in India does not represent any of its earlier predecessors. For instance, several demographic and public health studies in India has convincingly concluded that unlike its western counterparts, the fertility and mortality decline in India is majorly policy-induced rather than a consequence of socio-economic development (de Silva & Tenreyro, 2017; Dharmalingam et al., 2014; James & Goli, 2016; Goli & Arokiasamy, 2013; Jain, 1985). Further, a major consequence of demographic transition is the change in the age structure

of the population with the proportion of adults increasing and the proportion of children and elderly falling (James & Sathyanarayana, 2011; R. D. Lee & Reher, 2011). Keeping in line with its unconventional path, the proportion of working-age population in India reached 60% in 2015, but the proportion of the elderly population also increased up to more than 7%. United Nations predicts a 2% rise in the economically active population between 2005 and 2050, whereas it estimates a 13% rise in the population above 60 in the same period (United Nations, 2015). It took 110 years and 80 years to double the share of the older population (from 7% to 14%) in France and Sweden respectively, while it is projected to take only 20 years in India (Goli et al., 2019; Kulkarni et al., 2016; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (WPA), 2015). Thus, India is predicted to experience a shorter demographic window of opportunity than other countries due to the accelerated pace of its demographic transition. Overall, Indian families have comparatively a smaller number of children in households as compared to the past and, more members in the age group 60 years and above are living longer but not necessarily healthier (Barik et al., 2017; Dommaraju, 2016b). Whereas a lesser number of children contribute to resource-saving leading to better investments in socio-economic indicators such as health, education, and occupation, a growing number of elderly members might neutralize the higher saving propensity. These individual-level changes in turn affect family formation behaviors and choices and inter-generational transfers of resources and emotional support. Thus, such dynamic concepts need to be analyzed and studied extensively to establish robust pathways and mechanisms to explain the transformations.

What We Know

Family dynamics are best interpreted in the context of household and individual as a component of the family. To study the emerging inequalities in transiting Indian society, it is important to recognize the role of the family in reproducing these inequalities among individuals and within the family itself. Indian society is dynamic and complex and at the same time, it is traditional and conservative with higher importance for the prevailing socio-cultural norms (Kapadia, 1958; Karve, 1953). In recent decades, though the family has emerged as an important domain of study globally, its potential as an intervention or as a unit for the well-being of its members is yet to be realized in India. Also, no studies in the past have been able to make a clear demarcation between families and households. Most studies use these terms interchangeably since most large-scale surveys in India collect data at the household level.

Further assimilation of new multi-disciplinary ideas with new comprehensive quantitative data sets is the immediate need which will enable researchers to draw inferences and national level propositions with far-reaching policy

implications. To develop family demography as an evidence-based field of study in developing countries, it is imperative to study both what is available and the domains that remain untouched. Therefore, the next section compiles the available information and unexplored areas of family demography specifically in case of India.

Change in Marital Unions

One of the major reasons for the transformation within families is the distinctive shift in marriage and kinship patterns (Cherlin, 2004; Das, 1976; Shah & Patel, 2011; Uberoi, 1998, 2004). Despite holding its significance as a necessary event in an individual's life course, there has been a shift from viewing marriage as a cultural norm to view it as an economical choice by individuals who prefer to enter into a union rather than staying single (Becker, 1974; Shah, 2005). They exercise autonomy in selecting their partner and women, in particular, are continuing their jobs after marriage managing both the personal and professional lives. Another indicator of social and ideational change often studied by social scientists are the rise in inter-caste and inter-religion marriages. The study done by Goli et al. (2013) showed that inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are on the rise in India. They found that the prevalence of such unions has nearly doubled during the 1981 to 2005 period. However, they also reiterated that in terms of absolute numbers, inter-economic status marriages are more prevalent than both inter-caste and inter-religion marriages. Supplicating Goli and colleagues findings, we have estimated preferences for inter-marriages based on matrimonial ads published in four leading newspapers. The results show that there is a growing preference of professional and educational homogamy among those seeking partners despite caste and religion remaining as the most desirable criteria for mate selection (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 5 shows the marital status of women by their age groups (15–19, 20–24, and 25–29 years) for all four rounds of NFHS (1992–1993, 1998–1999, 2005–2006, 2015–2016). From the results, it is observed that in the year 2015 to 2016, there is a considerable increase in the proportion of unmarried women in the 15 to 19 age group as compared to the 1992 to 1993 period. Even in the age group of 25 to 29 years, the percentage of never married women were doubled from 4.3% in 1992 to 1993 to 8.4% in 2015 to 2016. Also, in terms of total population we observe a constant increase in the proportion of the population who never married at age 35 during the period 1991 to 2011 (Figure 1), though it is still very low as compared to other Asian countries (Jones, 2017).

The change in age at marriage has resulted in a reduction in the proportion of married women. This had a direct implication on reducing fertility rates as reproduction is primarily confined within marriage in the Indian cultural context. Trends in mean age at first birth show a slight but a definite

Table 3. Gender Differences in the Percentage Distribution of Profession (Job) Homogamy Marriage Proposals in India, 2016 to 2017.

Profession required							
Gender	Job stated	Government	Private sector	Business	Other	Not mentioned	
Looking for bride	Government	28 (82)	2 (6)	0 (0)	8.5 (25)	61.4 (180)	
	Private	3.2 (22)	15.2 (106)	0 (0)	12.1 (84)	69.6 (485)	
	Business	0.9 (1)	0 (0)	2.6 (3)	3.5 (4)	93 (106)	
	Others	5.6 (6)	1.9 (2)	0 (0)	16.7 (18)	75.9 (82)	
	Not Mentioned	7.0 (45)	7.0(50)	4.0 (5)	9 (27)	72.0 (212)	
Looking for Bridegroom	government	44.8 (126)	2.5 (7)	0.7 (2)	12.1 (34)	39.9 (112)	
	Private	8.7 (37)	22.7 (97)	1.9 (8)	15.9 (68)	50.8 (217)	
	Business	5.9 (2)	0 (0)	20.6 (7)	17.6 (6)	55.9 (19)	
	Others	8.5 (9)	2.8 (3)	3.8 (4)	38.7 (41)	46.2 (49)	
	Not mentioned	22.9 (88)	7.8 (30)	5.7 (22)	9.9 (38)	53.8 (207)	

Note. Number of cases in parenthesis.

Table 4. Gender Differences in the Percentage Distribution of Educational-Homogamy Marriage Proposals in India, 2016 to 2017.

Education required							
Gender	Education stated	H.S.	Graduation	P.G.	Above P.G.	Others	Not mentioned
Looking for bride	H.S	20 (2)	20 (2)	10 (1)	10 (1)	0 (0)	40.04 (4)
	Graduation	1 (4)	22.2 (92)	6.8 (28)	1 (4)	8.2 (34)	60.9 (252)
	P.G	0.2 (1)	10.5 (60)	22.3 (127)	7 (1.2)	4.9 (28)	60.9 (347)
	Above P.G	0 (0)	10 (8)	12.5 (10)	23.8 (19)	3.8 (3)	50 (40)
	Others	0 (0)	9.8 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	14.6 (6)	75.6 (31)
	Not mentioned	0.5 (1)	17.3 (15)	1.9 (4)	0 (0)	1.5 (3)	88.8 (183)
Looking for bridegroom	H.S	–	–	–	–	–	100 (5)
	graduation	0.4 (1)	20 (57)	6 (17)	0.7 (2)	7.4 (21)	65.6 (187)
	P.G	0.6 (4)	7.2 (47)	17.8 (116)	2.9 (19)	5.1 (33)	66.4 (433)
	Above P.G	–	1.7 (2)	12.8 (15)	33.3 (39)	2.6 (3)	49.6 (58)
	Others	–	0 (0)	10 (3)	0 (0)	53.3 (16)	36.7 (11)
	Not mentioned	–	1.4 (2)	4.7 (7)	0.7 (1)	2 (3)	91.2 (135)

Note. Number of cases in parenthesis. H.S = higher secondary; P.G = postgraduation; – = denotes null cases.

shift toward higher ages, mean age at first birth increasing from 19 years to 21 years of age approximately depicts a deliberate intention toward postponing reproduction (Figures 2 and 3).

Moreover, the proportion of population those who remained childless at age 45 over the period 1992 to 1993 to 2015 to 2016 showed a rising pattern till 2005 to 2006 but declined between 2005 to 2006 and 2015 to 2016 (Figure 4).

The future population prospects suggest that in the coming decades there will be a rise in the proportion of delayed or unmarried individuals in India as a consequence of skewed sex ratios, female educational expansion, rising unemployment, and higher demand for individual choices and freedom (Guilmoto, 2012). As a result of the higher educational status of women, a smaller number of women will enter in marriage markets which can delay the marriages among both male and female (A. Basu, 2019; Greenstone & Looney, 2012; Jones, 2005; Yu, 2005).

Marital Dissolution, Widowed, and Remarriages

Among South-Asian countries, India's divorce rate is comparatively very low. However, the separation rate is three times as large as the divorce rate (Dommaraju, 2016a). Divorce has long been dissuaded in India, but its incidence has risen since the 1970s. Since marriage and divorces are strictly ruled with cultural and religious diktats, there are prominent regional variations across states, with divorces significantly higher in the South and North-East regions compared with the North. These regional differences can directly be compared with women's autonomy and empowerment in these specific regions (Jacob & Chattopadhyay, 2016). Surprisingly, there is very little difference between rural and urban rates of dissolution of marriage across states. Census 2011 reveals that around 2.5 million women—1% of all ever-married women aged 15 to 49 years are either divorced or separated and the population that is separated are almost triple the divorced population: 0.61% of the married

Table 5. Percentage Distribution of Never Married Women by Age.

Age-group	1992–1993	1998–1999	2005–2006	2015–2016
15–19	59.1	67.1	74.2	83.6
20–24	16.9	20.5	23.8	33.2
25–29	4.3	5.4	5.7	8.4

Source. Authors estimation using NFHS I–4 (1992–1993 to 2015–2016).

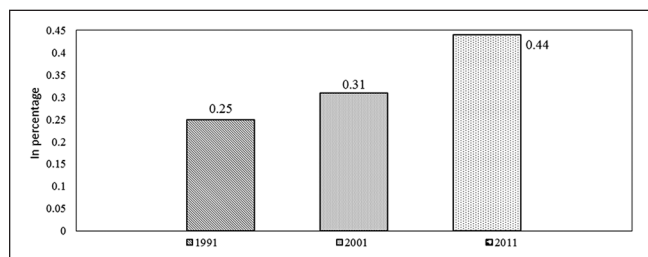


Figure 1. Trends in percentage of never married at age 35 and above, 1991 to 2011.

Source. Authors estimation from Census (1991–2011), Office of RGI, India.

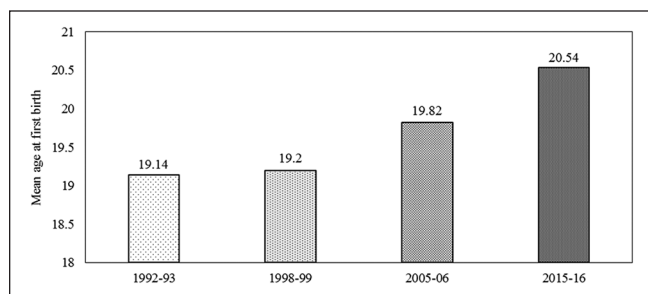


Figure 2. Trends in mean age at first birth, 1992 to 1993 to 2015 to 2016.

Source. Authors estimation using NFHS I to 4 (1992–1993 to 2015–2016).

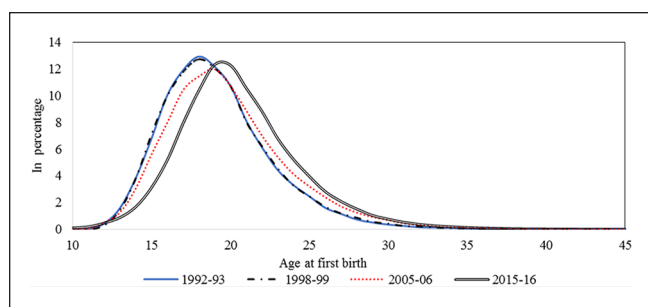


Figure 3. Trends in the distribution of age at first birth, 1992–1993 to 2015–2016.

Source. Authors estimation using NFHS I to 4 (1992–1993 to 2015–2016).

population and 0.29% of the total population is reported as separated, compared to 0.24% and 0.11%, respectively, for divorced individuals. Most researchers attribute the rise of

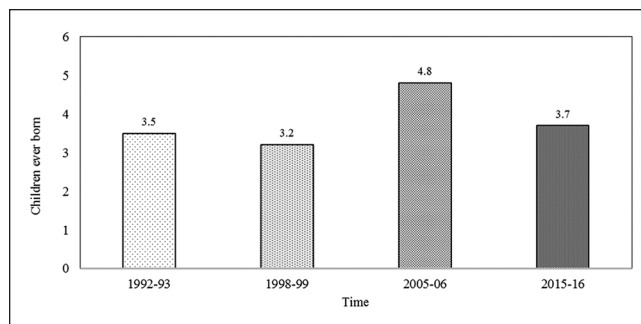


Figure 4. Percentage of women childless at age 45, 1992 to 1993 to 2015 to 2016.

Source. Authors estimation using NFHS I to 4 (1992–1993 to 2015–2016).

Table 6. Percentage Distribution of Population by Their Marital Status by Gender and Place of Residence, 2011.

Marital status	Male		Female	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Currently married	47.77	45.15	51.31	46.73
Never married	50.32	52.48	40.51	42.96
Widowed	1.64	2.12	7.57	7.27
Divorced	0.08	0.13	0.19	0.14
Separated	0.4	0.18	0.43	0.39

Source. Authors estimation using Census of India (2011b), Office of RGI, India.

marital dissolution to growing urbanization, industrialization, increasing education and women’s empowerment and work force participation which then contribute to changes in society, family structure, and marriage patterns, by strengthening women’s agency and providing them alternative arrangements than staying in unhappy marriages (Jones, 1997).

There has also been a slight upward trend in remarriages in India albeit with a gendered context. At the national level, the proportion of widowed, divorced and separated women as a proportion of the total female population is higher than their male counterparts in both urban and rural areas (Table 6).

In India, across age groups, a higher proportion of women in the widowed, separated and divorced category suggests that women might be remarriage less than men. There have been arguments which assert that these higher figures might be due to lower life expectancy among men than their female counterparts. However, keeping in view that the responsibility of care-taking of children and elderly fall solely on women and the social stigma across communities associated with remarriage in India, women have lesser opportunities to remarry. Indian society has always been governed by patriarchal norms and there are different implications of divorce and widowhood for men and women. Widowhood and divorce are potentially distressing events in the life of an

Table 7. Gender Difference in Percentage of Remarriages, 2011–2012.

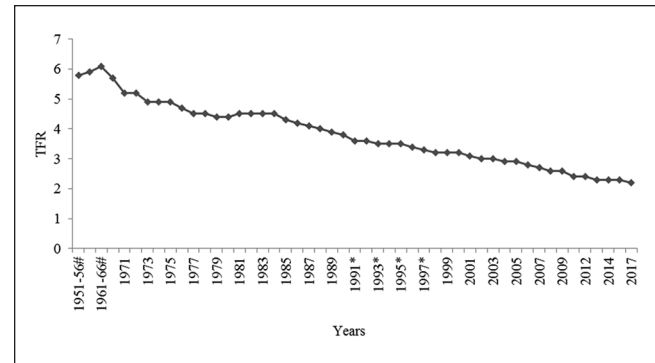
Wife		
Husband	Once	More than once
Once	99.66	0.34
More than once	71.41	28.59

Source. Authors estimation using IHDS 2 (2011–2012).

individual, especially women. They are further complicated due to many rituals and practices associated with these statuses. There are different rules and regulations pertaining to remarriage of widows in different social groups which do not necessarily extend to males who want to remarry. Table 7 also shows a gendered choice of mate selection based on the number of times their partners have been married. We observe that 71% of men who have been married before have female partners who were not married before while the vice versa does not occur (0.34%). However, no data has been collected separately for such step-families where either parent remarried to study its effects on the well-being of other members of the family.

Our results indicate a change in nuptiality patterns that have historically played a significant role in shaping the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) in the western societies (Van De Walle, 1972). However, it might be argued that the magnitude of such changes is still very low and adoption of such behavior is limited to certain groups in the society. We reiterate that absence of reliable data on such issues is one of the main reasons why actual magnitude and diffusion of such behaviors remains unknown in India. Moreover, a major reason for caution and deeper exploration is the contrast with regards to change in marital unions between developed and developing countries. A major difference is observed in the socio-economic strata where such behaviors are more prevalent. Recent evidences from North America have pointed out that people with less education and unsteady jobs are more prone to remain single or get a divorce, that is, mainly people belonging to the lower socio-economic strata (Cook, 2015; Copen et al., 2012; Wilcox et al., 2015). On the other hand, in developing countries people residing in urban areas, with higher education, better jobs and overall better socio-economic status are more likely to indulge in practices such as cohabitation, non-marital child bearing and marital dissolutions, and so on (Y. J. Lee, 2006; Raymo et al., 2015).

Despite low prevalence of “western” behavior regarding formation of unions and dissolution, the accompanying progress in demographic and social indicators might induce macro-level changes in family formation behavior at a higher rate in near future. For instance, currently women experience lower TFR than their predecessors, have higher education and employment opportunities and have better means of communication (Lesthaeghe, 2010). Thus, they are more prone to migrate for better employment or education and

**Figure 5.** Trends in Total Fertility Rate (TFR), 1951 to 2017.

Source. Data Compiled from James and Goli (2016); various rounds of Sample Registration System.

have larger social network group. This provides them opportunities to adopt roles that are contradictory to the traditional ones (daughter, wife & sister) dictated by social norms and culture. As a consequence, phenomenon such as cohabitation/live-in, extra marital union, separation and remarriage, non-marriage, and non-marital sexual unions may experience unprecedented rise. Jones & Yeung (2014) believe that excluding proportions cohabiting, Asian societies might already be ahead in terms of those who are “effectively single” than many European countries.

Fertility (Low Fertility)

According to the data from NFHS-4, currently, the country stands at a TFR of 2.2, close to the replacement fertility level of 2.1 children per woman. The challenges in reducing fertility in India has been vastly different from those of the developed nations due to the sheer difference in how society and couples in particular view fertility-related choices. Given the scale and ethnic multiplicity of India’s population, with considerable poverty and illiteracy, a decline from around six births per woman to less than three in the last three-four decades marks a significant achievement (Figure 5).

The success story of fertility decline in India is characterized by a strong catching-up process where the greater progress in fertility rate reduction in demographically weaker states has led to gradual convergence in fertility rates across states (Arokiasamy & Goli, 2012; Deb & Chakrabarty, 2016).

As discussed above, the factors driving fertility decline in India do not collineate with historical transition trends. The drivers and causal factors that drove couples to choose a smaller family size are unique and largely policy-driven in India. A large body of research claims that decline in fertility in India is not backed by socioeconomic changes but rather represents a success story of concerted governmental efforts at promoting family planning as part of a global consensus toward anti-natalist policies to reduce population growth. Since 2005, the government of India has significantly increased the budget allocations to improve population and

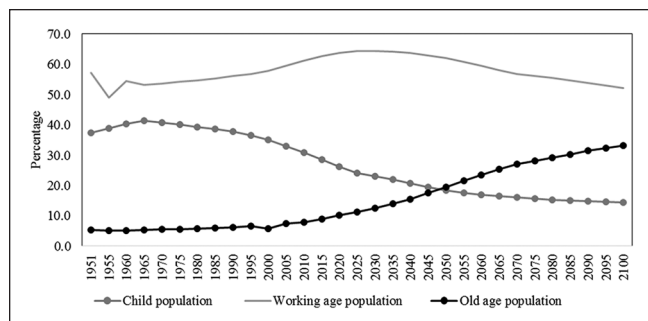


Figure 6. Percentage of child, working, and elderly population in total population of India from 1951 to 2050.

Source: Data Compiled from World Population Prospects (19th Revision), United Nations (2015), James and Goli (2016).

health indicators, particularly in the demographically backward states of the country. Overall, family planning programs and a population stabilization policy drive have accelerated fertility decline in the country irrespective of development indicators (James & Goli, 2016). Thus, a rapid decline of fertility with a lagging socio-economic development may result in diverging destinies for children and elderly in India than their western counterparts. In a collectivistic society, the welfare of children and elderly majorly falls into the familial domain and therefore, the economic, social, and political repercussions of a rapidly falling fertility rate becomes an area of great importance (Goli, 2014). Evidence suggest that any further decline in fertility from replacement level to “low” and consequently to “lowest-low” would mostly depend on behavioral factors (the postponement of marriage and the first birth and the fertility limiting) and the Indian ethos (sex preference) (Goli, 2013).

Transition in the Age-Structure

The fast-paced fertility declines and a complimentary rise in life expectancies have led to an unprecedented change in the age structure of the population with a major bulk of its population moving in the working age group and a declining number of young dependents. According to the World Population Prospects, 2019 the proportion of working age population reached over 65% in 2019 in India. This proportion is projected to keep on rising in the next decade. It is projected that in 2040, it will reach a whopping 68.4% after which it will witness a decline and reach 62.2% in 2050 (Figure 6). A direct consequence of the rapid decline in fertility and the increase in life expectancy during the last 20 years can be seen in the accelerated rise in the proportion of the elderly population. The percentage of the elderly population steadily rose from 5.97 in 1971 to 10.1 in 2020. Further, the elderly population is expected to increase to 225 million from the present figure of 133 million by 2050 (Figure 6).

India is projected to experience an unconventional aging process that is completely different from its Western and

even other demographically advanced Asian counterparts due to the sheer size of its current and future levels of elderly population (James & Goli, 2016). This unprecedented aging expected in the country is going to create huge economic and health care challenges. Ensuring good quality of life with respect to health, living arrangements, social support and economic independence for the older population remains a challenge for India. The question of what happens to the elderly in absence of social security support and declining kinship support is still unanswered (Goli, Reddy, James, and Srinivasan, 2018).

As explained above, the institution of family has diversified as a product of the demographic and socio-economic transition. The demographic and socio-economic transition opens a window of opportunity for wide-ranging social and economic changes (Navaneetham, 2002; Reher, 2011). For instance, family and kinship networks change in a population that moves from first stage of demographic transition to the last stages (Murphy, 2011). According to R. D. Lee and Reher (2011), the changing demographic regime entails not only the “aging of populations” but an “aging of generational relationships” too. Moreover, drawing on literature from multidisciplinary scientific studies based on both pre and post-transitional populations, researchers have concluded that care-taking systems of children in contemporary societies vary greatly from that of their predecessors (Kramer, 2005, 2010; Sear & Coall, 2011). The comparative importance of particular relatives for the well-being of children as well as other family members varies from population to population. This external influence further complicates the study of the relationship between family structures and other family-level variables and children outcomes such as education, health, occupation, and so on.

Studies predict that families in the developing world are behaving differently than the families in the developed world. For instance, Emran (2009) illustrated a comparative research in developed and developing nations on rapidly changing family structures and concluded that difference in social security support and wage rates might explain the differential family formation behaviors of elderly in these regions. McLanahan (2004) also argues as to how differing maternal characteristics lead to differential resource accessibility among the children. Though the study focuses on second demographic transition, the factors driving these differences could easily be applied in the context of developed vs. developing debate. Thus, the contemporary theories regarding family behaviors in wake of demographic transition needs to be revised and rewritten keeping in mind the peculiarities of the developing countries like India.

Change in Household Structure

Changes in household size indicate a clear transformation in living arrangements as well as reflect changes in the household composition owing to change in demographic

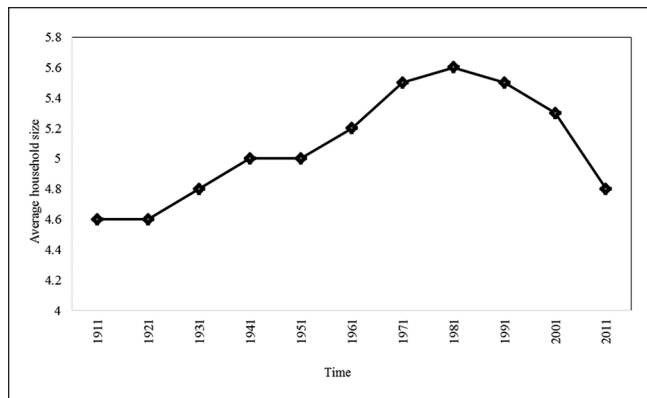


Figure 7. Trends in average household size, 1901 to 2011. Source. Data compiled from (1911–1951) from A. M. Shah (1996) & Census of India (1961–2011), Office of RGI, India.

behaviors. This transformation especially attains nuances of meanings in India since its fertility is predicted to reach replacement level or even below in future along with a rapid change in age structures. In India, one major school of thought in the debate of disintegration of joint families is that while the joint family may have been the ideal form of family, in actual fact, such families were not the norm (Shah & Patel, 2011; Uberoi, 2004). Many researchers seem to support this claim which goes against the major Indological view of families. For example, micro-level studies have emphasized that joint families were mainly concentrated among the “elite” higher castes and with financial means to support a large family (Caldwell et al., 1984; Gough, 1956; Kapadia, 1956; Kolenda, 1968; Madan, 1989; Shah, 1968, 1996). Caldwell et al. (1984) found that the joint families are more common among households which possess a large size of agricultural land.

Figure 7 shows the average household size according to the India census figures from 1901 to 2011. The figures indicate that the size of the household has more or less remain stable after a slight increase. In other words, despite evidence to the contrary as presented by other countries, Indian families have remained stable at least in terms of their size.

Despite predictions of a rise in one-person households in Asia in the next few decades, one-person households in India is still very uncommon when compared to their prevalence in other parts of Asia (Dommaraju, 2015). The proportion of single -person households rose from 3.6 to 3.7 from Census 2001 to 2011 (Census of India, 2001, 2011a). Thus, it may be reiterated that families in India have not “disintegrated” but have rather transformed in terms of their structure and composition. The most recent data based on IHDS-2 shows that the joint family set-up with older parents, adults and children living together is the most common family types after families in which children living with older person (Table 8).

Thus, evidence suggests that the joint family system’s cultural, religious and demographic importance is greater

Table 8. Various Family Typologies and Their Share in Total Population, 2011 to 2012.

Family type	Percent
Single person households	1.17
Adult male and female	8.17
Adult male and female with male children	4.78
Adult male and female with female children	5.02
Adult male and female with male and female children and older person	20.33
Male older person	9.77
Female older person	10.46
Male and female older person	5.76
Male and female older person with child	32.41
Others	2.13
Total	100

Source. Authors estimation using IHDS 2 (2011–2012).

than its actual prevalence at any point of time in India. Moreover, as pointed out by Uberoi (2004), though nuclear households are predominant in terms of absolute numbers, more people might live in joint or similar family systems. Thus, to study the future of Indian family constellation, it is important to assume that each individual most often start their life in the patrilineal joint family and is thus at some stage of their life affected by the “push” and “pull” that coexist in such family structure. Thus, tracing the life cycle of individuals or groups to visualize the transition from one family form to another throughout their life span might assist in explaining outcomes observed at individual level such as type of employment, quality of inter-personal relationships, well-being of elderly, women autonomy, and more.

What We Need to Study and the Future Perspective

Defining Families and Collecting Quantitative Data

Till date studies concerning family formation behaviors, trends and patterns regarding different forms of families have either been theoretical in nature with very less investigation on the macro- economic effects of changing families or have limited themselves to investigations pertaining to a small area or community which renders generalization of their findings impossible. The first recorded systematic study into this domain seems to be in 1940s (D’Cruz & Bharat, 2001). The early works regarding family systems were focused on patterns of family formation rather than dynamics within the families that may change over time leading to changes in family patterns themselves (Banerjee, 1944; Kapadia, 1966; Karve, 1953; Prabhu, 1991; Srinivas, 1942). Also, most of the studies were not able to visualize family formation beyond the dualism of joint and nuclear, thereby negating the plurality of families which is an essential

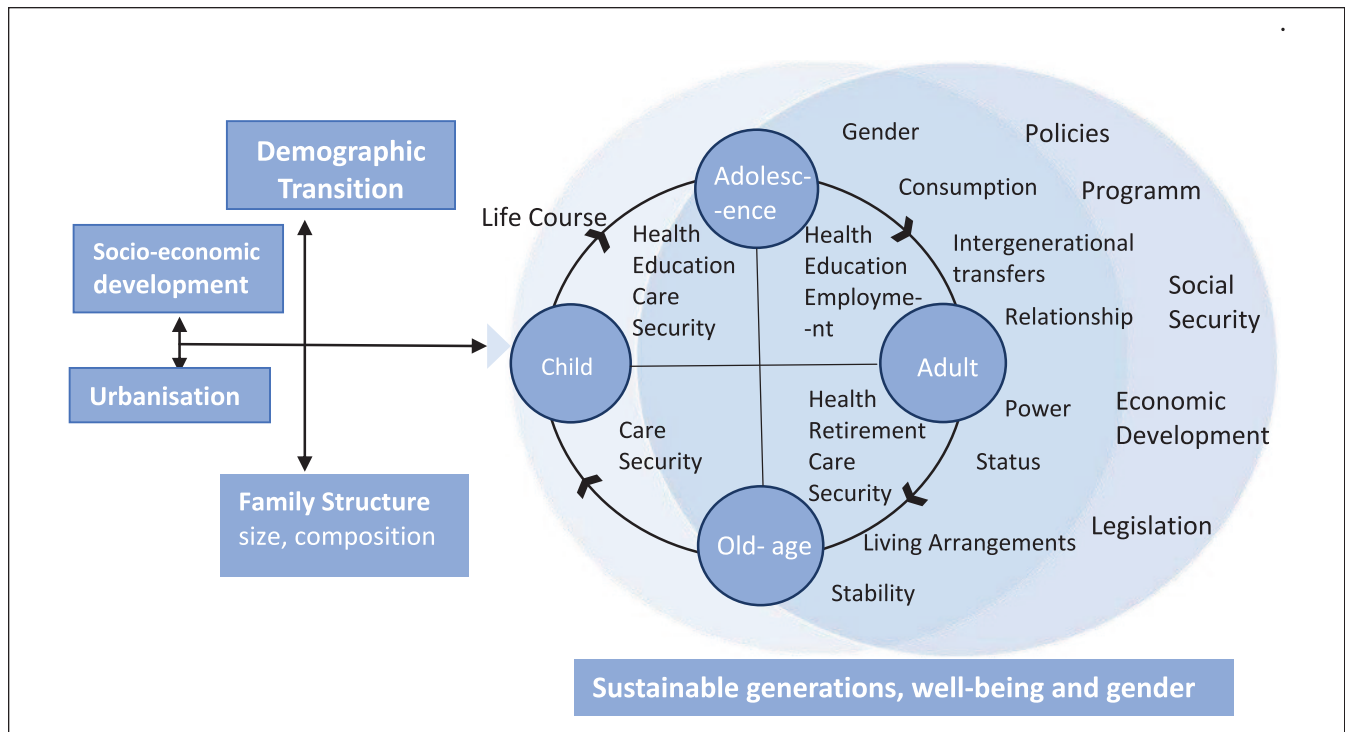


Figure 8. Logic model illustrating the causes and consequences of family demographic transition.
Source. Adapted from Padmadas, Vegard, James and Goli (2018).

feature of Indian society. Later, many noticeable efforts were made to classify and categorize families into distinct groups (Bharat, 1994; Gore, 1965, 1968; Gulati, 1995; Kolenda, 1968; Mandelbaum, 1959). Moreover, no recent studies have attempted to recreate a conceptual framework enunciating the changing pathways and associations of families with other social, economic, and demographic variables. Padmadas, Vegard, James & Goli (2018) have attempted to develop a broad conceptual framework focusing on the life-course events and stages of an individual (Figure 8).

In absence of established cause and effect theories regarding families in India, it is difficult to develop globally comparative studies on the changing family demography scenario in India. Moreover, family is a dynamic concept, thus creating long-term longitudinal studies would help in capturing the dynamic and time dependent predictor variables such as behavioral outcomes for birth and marriage cohorts. For example, Bailey (1960) points out that an individual fulfills multiple roles in their life-course. Often these roles compete with each other. He said 'son in a joint family may also be the husband of a woman and through her, he is the son-in-law of another joint-family. He points out the instance of the push and pull experienced by an individual, such as being a son and son-in law.

Distinguishing families and households. Most of the large-scale surveys in India, define households based on co-residence

and sharing of the same kitchen. However, it is largely agreed that families can exist beyond the perimeters of residence with strong emotional, behavioral and financial interdependencies (Bender, 1967; Borell, 2003; Shah, 1974; Uberoi, 2004). For instance, increasing employment and education-related migration has led to emergence of a new form of families known as trans-national families (Singh, 2016). In India, such families play a crucial role in economic well-being of specific regions through remittances. Ratha et al. (2016), estimated that India received a total of US\$78.6 billion as remittances. Moreover, such families also serve as effective mediums of cultural and behavioral diffusion. However, to study such family forms, we need to capture the much larger and dynamic concept of "families" rather than "households" in future surveys. The lack of uniform definitions of the concepts regarding structure of families that can be operationalized in large-scale surveys and the conflation of families and households are two of the basic issues that need to be dealt with to advance more complex and dynamic ideas of family demography.

Non-Marital Unions

A live-in relationship is an arrangement where a heterosexual couple lives together, without entering into a formal relationship called marriage. It is also commonly known as "Cohabitation." In India, live in relationships have been a taboo even before the British Raj. Despite its impetuous

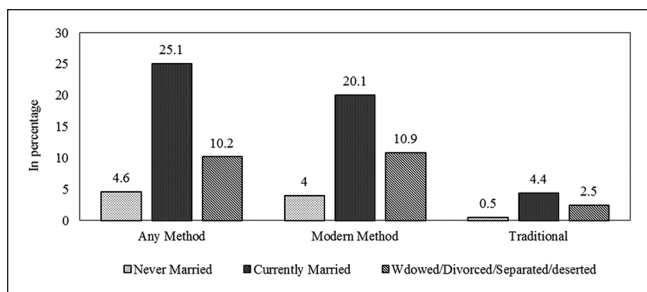


Figure 9. Contraceptive use by marital status of men.
Source. Authors estimation using NFHS-4 (2015–2016).

entry into modernity, India still struggles with ideas that confront their cultural beliefs such as non-marital cohabitation between men and women. However, in wake of economic liberalization, social change, and structural changes in the economy, many young couples in big cities like Bangalore, Mumbai, and Delhi are opting to live together. Changes such as the greater access to mass media has exposed common man to “different possible lives,” in Appadurai’s (1996) words. They have also been an instrument of change regarding people’s attitudes and behaviors toward age old practices such as marriage and reproduction (Jensen & Oster, 2009). The decision to cohabit reflect the changing ideational setups regarding cultural institutions like marriage, family, and living arrangements. First, patriarchal cultural norms under the institution of marriage in India advocate for people to remain virgin until they are married, particularly for females, but a live-in relationship contradicts this tradition. Second, the growing trend symbolizes a more individualistic decision-making process regarding mate selection unlike seen in the traditional mate selection process that is heavily influenced by other family members and close kin. There are no official figures as to the prevalence of such living arrangements in India since no national-level survey has yet ventured in this domain of research.

Non-Marital Sexual Behavior

In the developing countries, the transition to marriage continues to occur almost certainly for women and men. Though age at marriage is clearly rising among younger cohort but age at first sexual union is declining. This indicates the departure of entry into sexual union from an individual’s entry into the marital union. As discussed earlier, the expectation of the society for young men and women to remain sexually inactive prior to marriage seems to be a declining trend as more and more young men and women are migrating to urban areas and are entering into sexual unions before entering into marital unions. As such our estimates show the current use of contraception by marital status of men and women using information available in NFHS-4. We observe that a similar pattern of preference of

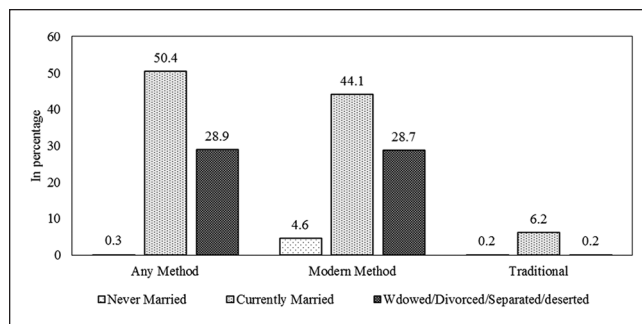


Figure 10. Contraceptive use by marital status of women.
Source. Authors estimation using NFHS-4 (2015–2016).

Table 9. Use of Contraception by Type of Last Partner, 2015 to 2016.

Type of sexual partner	In percentage		
	Any method	Modern	Traditional
Currently married	24.6	20.2	4.4
Wife	26.7	21.8	4.8
Live-in partner/girlfriend	30.5	26.4	4.2
Other	6.5	5.6	0.9
Not currently married	47.1	43.8	3.4
Live-in partner	53.8	50.7	3.1
Girlfriend	48.8	45.1	3.7
Other	40.2	37.4	2.7

Source. Authors estimation using NFHS-4 (2015–2016).

modern methods among unmarried males and females emerges (Figures 9 and 10).

According to NFHS-4 report, around 2.9% and 11.2% of never-married women and men respectively in the age group of 15 to 24 were reported having been into sexual unions. The same report suggests that around 48.5% of unmarried women in India have used some form of a contraceptive method. Among them, the highest users are urban and rural female aged 25 to 49 using a modern method, but respective figures for younger age groups were also very high. Use of contraception is also found to be very high among males according to their last partners who were not wives especially among cohabiting couples (Table 9).

The latest round of NFHS has also collected data on multiple sexual partners and high-risk sexual behavior. High risk sexual behavior is defined as “sexual intercourse with a partner who was neither a spouse nor who lived with the respondent but had sexual intercourse in the last 12 months preceding the survey” (International Institute for Population Sciences [IIPS] and ICF, 2017). According to the data, 0.6% of women and 2% men had more than one sexual partner in last 12 months, and 0.7% of women and 7% men had high-risk sexual intercourse in the last 12 months. The survey also revealed that never-married women and men who are yet to

be recognized as at-risk group in India's sexual and reproductive health discourse are more likely to have multiple partners and engage in unsafe sex practices than those who are currently married or formerly married. Younger men (aged 15–19 years) are more likely to have multiple sexual partners and high-risk sexual intercourse (9%) than their older counterparts (IIPS and ICF, 2017).

Alternative union formation behaviors such as cohabitation have yet to assume a normative status in India, rather marital unions have remained stable unlike those in the more developed societies. One of the reasons for the continued importance of marriage in India is strict cultural and social norms that restrict interactions between males and females before marriage. Expansion of education and the increase in migration of young males and females due to education or labor force opportunities along with the proliferation of western ideas and concepts are rapidly changing the pre-marital scenario. This may lead to larger changes in the way partners are selected and post-marital discord and dissolutions. Also, policies and programs regarding sexual health and knowledge in India hardly ever refer to unmarried young men & women consequently leading them to practice unsafe sexual practices.

Alternative Family Formation Behaviors

Reproduction is often considered as one of the primary functions of a marital union. However, a significant proportion of humanity is affected by infertility. Child-bearing is often deemed as the most desired utility of marriage in developing countries and infertility may cause various problems such as social stigma leading to isolation and mental distress and in some extreme instances to explicit ostracism or separation (Rouchou, 2013; Verma & Baniya, 2016). WHO has calculated that over 10% of women are afflicted by infertility. The burden in men is unknown. The overall burden of infertility is significant and has not shown any decrease over the last 20 years. Jejeebhoy (1998) estimated the overall primary and secondary infertility in South Asia among women aged 45 to 49. She found the prevalence of infertility to be 10% in Pakistan, 15% in Bangladesh, 11% in Sri Lanka, 8% in India, and 12% in Nepal. The "Helping Families" survey which was conducted in Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Agra and Kochi, in India among 2,562 respondents with the main objective to provide national level data and information on Indian couples trying to start a family and their related attitudes and behaviors. This study was jointly conducted by Asia Pacific Initiative on Reproduction, Indian Society for Assisted Reproduction and pharma major MERCK. It was found that childlessness was the main contributor behind the growth of the utilization of assisted reproduction technologies. The survey further estimated that nearly 46% of their respondents were infertile. Currently, India faces a serious challenge of increasing

infertility rates, coupled with significantly low treatment rates. The problem is further exacerbated due to the perceived social stigma attached to infertility and childlessness in India.

In India, childlessness or infertility draws a lot of criticism especially for women and is rarely discussed in public domains. In pro-natalist cultures such as those of India and most of South Asia, the negative consequences of infertility are often borne by women, which can be devastating. Therefore, with a rise in infertility, the number of Indian couples turning to artificial methods for reproduction has also increased significantly. However, the arenas of alternative childbearing methods such as surrogacy and adoption draw even lesser discussion and research. The formation of unconventional unions such as same-sex couples and the increasing number of high career-oriented couples and individuals opting for singlehood has all lead to an increasing dependency on alternative ways of childbearing and family formation.

Artificial means of reproduction which are also known as "Assisted reproductive technology (ART)" has witnessed a rapid increase in the last few decades. Until recently, the term "surrogacy" and issues related to it were exclusively seen as "first-world" issues. Due to increased income and a growing Indian diaspora in developed countries, the practice has now found roots in India too. Boom in artificial means of reproduction such as surrogacy has given hope of parenthood to many infertile couples globally. India is increasingly being viewed as a growing market especially by foreign childless couples due to a large number of health care professionals, availability of advanced technology and relatively low-priced technology. A report by the Confederation of Indian Industry calculated that ART practices alone generate around \$2.3 billion annually. Another study estimated that the number of cycles performed using host uterus for transfer increased by more than 3 times between the years 2007 and 2009 (Chakravarthi, 2016).

Adoption is another alternative to childlessness but the practice is not well accepted in developing countries due to emphasis on inheritance based on lineage and purity of blood. According to Adewunmi et al. (2012), culture and family constraints are the main reasons for the unwillingness to adopt children in developing countries. According to the statistics provided by the Central Adoption Resource Authority (Ministry of Women & Child Development, GOI), the adoption rate from 2010 to 2017 has dwindled. The number of in-country adoption in 2010 was 5,693 and inter-country adoption was 628. However, that came down to 3,210 and 578, respectively, between 2016 and 2017. There are two major reasons for the decline in the number of adoptions. First is the procedural delay and second the rise of surrogacy, which has also given Indian couples alternative options of having children (Table 10).

Both adoption and surrogacy although nascent concepts in India, indicate a fissure in the rigid traditional family

Table 10. Adoption Statistics in India.

Year	In-country adoption	Inter-country adoption
2010	5,693	628
2011 (Jan 11 to March 12)	5,964	629
2012–2013 (April 12 to March 13)	4,694	308
2013–2014 (April 13 to March 14)	3,924	430
2014–2015 (April 14 to March 15)	3,988	374
2015–2016 (April 15 to March 16)	3,011	666
2016–2017 (April 16 to March 17)	3,210	578

Source. Central Adoption Resource Authority (2019).

structures and behaviors. Despite being concentrated in only a few urban pockets, they show the possibility of emerging as new, alternative ways of family formation in wake of weakened kinship ties, rapid aging, growing urbanization, expansion of female education and labor force participation, delay in marriages, and growing infertility due to both clinical as well as lifestyle factors.

The Socio-Economic Relevance of the Changes in the Family

Social inequality, population dynamics, and other macro-level parameters are important to know the status of a community, state or country but ultimately above parameters depend on individual outcomes like income, age, health, and wellbeing. Using Goffman's (1959) words, we can say that it is worth serious consideration that the family is both the backstage and the front stage of a very substantial part of people's behavior. However, family as a unit of research has been neglected for a long time. Its role in societal well-being has been increasingly realized in the last four to five decades in the western world, while it is still not a key subject of research in developing countries. Families at the moment appear very different from families five to six decades ago. They are continuously changing along with socio-economic, demographic and health transitions. In particular, the rapid demographic changes such as mortality and fertility decline, population aging, and increasing migration have resulted in structural and normative shifts in the family systems. Change in family systems influences the households in the dimension of social, economic, demographic and health care. In general, shifting attitudes toward the family formation and rapidly rising trend of births outside marriage is a phenomenon restricted to North America, Europe, and Australia, especially to white populations in Europe or migrated from Europe. Brown et al. (2015) reported the distribution of children in different types of living arrangements in the United States to suggest that although the majority of children reside in the traditional families with two biological-married parents, the second most common type of living arrangement for children was single-mother families followed by married step family. Children across the world are experiencing

diverse living arrangements and many of them are experiencing family instability at a greater level. But there is a growing concern that this trend may spill over to developing countries. At present, the global research in family and wellbeing is concerned with investigating behaviors, attitudes, and norms related to marriage, cohabitation, separation, divorce, childbearing, adaptation, gender roles, intergenerational relations, and kinship interactions and individuality and the impact on the family economy, security and members health (Bianchi, 2014; Crosnoe & Wildsmith, 2011; Gray et al., 2006; Haub, 2013; Hofmeester & van Nederveen Meerkerk, 2017; Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008; Klüsener et al., 2013; Ruggles, 2012; Wildsmith et al., 2011).

Unlike developed societies, India is at different stages of socio-economic, demographic and health transitions. The developed world with advanced demographic transition is indicating progress toward second demographic transition characterized by low mortality, lowest-low fertility, rising divorces, and non-marital cohabitation and fertility, whereas India's demography and the economy is at the crossroads (Dommaraju, 2015, 2016; Drèze & Sen, 2013; James & Goli, 2016). Unlike the developed world, the marriage institution in India also behaves differently (Gray & Stone, 2013; Haub, 2013; Klüsener et al., 2013; Srinivasan & James, 2015; Wildsmith et al., 2011). Developed societies have moved away from traditional endogenous hetero-sexual marriages to several new forms of marriages *viz.* mixed marriages, live-in-relationships, cohabitations, same-sex marriages, interracial, inter-regional, and international marriages (Gray & Stone, 2013; Haub, 2013; Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008; Klüsener et al., 2013; Wildsmith et al., 2011); while, in India, traditional marriage institution is still intact, although the new forms of marriages account for a small proportion of all marriages. However, this number is growing in urban India and in the states, which are suffering from the issue of marriage squeeze (Goli et al., 2013; Srinivasan & James, 2015).

Consequences of changes in the family for the vulnerable groups.

The change in marriage institutions, fertility decline, marriage, and employment led migration are bringing tremendous shifts in the intergenerational transfers, family formation, late childbearing, and living arrangements of the

vulnerable populations: children, women and older population in the developed world, likely to happen or happening in India too. Left behind women and older population have been an increasing phenomenon in India, while the single parent, same-sex families, live-in, and cohabiting families which have been a dominant phenomenon in the developed world until now, also picking-up slowly in metro cities of India. The families are becoming more fragile and complex in the developed world, while although this phenomenon is not a dominant feature now but has been observed to be rising in few states and urban India.

The peculiarity of Indian families is, they are at crossroads with mixed features of marriage and family forms of western developed-world and Indian traditional patriarchal norms where men are the primary “bread-winners” and women are over-burdened with the household as well as economic duties outside the household with lower monetary returns. Families are still dominantly patriarchal with limited autonomy and rights for the female members in their own personal and financial resources and decision-making processes which lead to domestic violence and subjugation, thus, future studies on family violence and their control over financial assets should attempt to include more family-level factors such as perpetrators of the abuse, linkage between absence/presence of certain household members, whether transitions such as becoming a mother, transition from working woman to non-working, and so on. Another such new-age phenomenon, owing to the push and pull created by changing families is elder abuse or neglect. As the percentage of the person above 60 increases in India, more resources would also be needed to ensure their well-being. In the past, the family was the institution responsible for supporting the care for the elderly. However, recent data from HelpAge India Survey and other studies show strong evidence for abuse and shifting balance of power between parents and children despite the former being financially independent (Datta, 2018; HelpAge India, 2018; Goli, Reddy, James & Srinivasan, 2019; Varughese & Jamuna, 2018). Moreover, rise in left behind and bed ridden older population demands higher social security and health care needs. Though empirical evidence of such phenomena is meager so far in large-scale surveys such as NFHSs and other large-scale surveys, the transition has started at least among perceptions and views of the young, educated adolescents working in professional fields and global institutions in metro cities of India. The conventional large-scale surveys are not capturing these important phenomena because of their limited scope. Also, the cross-sectional nature of the NFHS data makes it difficult to study the temporal effect of changes in family and individual well-being. Thus, as discussed before, longitudinal studies to account for temporal changes in the socio-economic conditions with a specific focus on the vulnerable groups are urgently needed.

As family structures diversify as a result of demographic, economic and cultural shifts, researchers need to reconnoiter

new ways of theorizing and measuring family characteristics and relate them to both household level and individual-level outcomes. There are hardly any quantitative studies in India to understand the families in a demographic perspective and relate them to various outcomes. Thus, it is imperative to explore the transition in family structure and its plausible association with household level and individual level outcomes. India often serves as a cautionary tale to those who believe in generalizing family systems and related behavior according to the stories of the Global North. As per the 2011 Census, India comprises of 1.2 billion people living in 331 million households, spread across more than 0.64 million villages and 7935 towns. Indian society displays a considerable variation in terms of household size, structure, marriage practices and kinship patterns between regions, economic, social, religious, and ethnic classes and even between rural and urban areas. It is in fact, often known as the assemblage of micro-cultures and sub-regions with significant sociological importance. Globally much has been discussed about the declining fertility and increasing urbanization and social change in India but not much attention has been paid to the changes brought in families and consequently individuals within these micro-regions and subcultures.

Family arrangements are changing and new family structures are emerging, that is, the type of households and families and the position of individuals or relationships with other members of the family is evolving as individuals organize their lives differently. Research studies on the impact of demographic transition in India reported a sharp increase in the disintegration of the joint family system leading to a higher rate of social insecurity especially to the elderly population (Chanana & Talwar, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The rapid pace of aging in India combined with heavy rural to urban migration streams and rapid dispersal of “modern” ideologies and lifestyles have resulted in a massive number of “left-behind” older population in need of better economic security arrangements. Currently, the government of India mainly banks on family, especially the children for the well-being of the elderly. In the wake of new individualistic tendencies of Indian millennials and growing nucleation of families, the fate of the elderly remains uncertain. It has also greatly contributed to the change in marriage patterns. Such changes are manifested through increased age at marriage particularly among women, choice of spouse selection, the class-based decline in marriages, increase in inter-religious and inter-caste marriages, increase in marital dissolution, new forms of union formation including the rise in cohabitation in major cities (Banerjee et al., 2013; Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; Goldstein & Kenney, 2001; Goswami, 2011; Kashyap et al., 2015; Lesthaeghe, 2010). Demographic transition has also been associated with influencing the gender dynamics. Gender roles are changing as a consequence of women’s increased participation in higher and technical education, increased labor force participation, men sharing domestic responsibilities, and so on (Ghara,

2016; Kashyap et al., 2015; McNay, 2003; Oláh et al., 2018). These changes brought forth by demographic transition needs to be studied critically to see their impact on the family as a unit and consequently on the individuals themselves.

The State and the Family

Understanding families and family demography is a new field in India. In particular family demography through the gendered lens and wellbeing of vulnerable populations (children, women and older persons) perspective have been not studied before. Changing family demography in transiting societies like India offers a lot of scope for research and at the same time, social, demographic and legal policies need to understand new dynamics of family structure, composition and powers related to rights and entitlements and its gender dimensions where women are in the oppressive class in a patriarchal society. Similarly, in a place where social security schemes are weak, and non-existence at various levels and the state's role is limited in ensuring the well-being of people, the change in families which was previously a premier institution that takes care of the wellbeing of family members will have a huge effect on vulnerable members of the family. The women's autonomy and agency are weak in the country. The female workforce participation is less and making a downward trend. The social security schemes for the older population are also weak and less supportive in the age of increasing left behind and bed ridden oldest old population as a result of occupational diversification within the family and migration. Therefore, these groups largely depend on the families for their socio-economic, emotional and physical supports. The changes in family demography expose this group of the population to a number of vulnerabilities and risks.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Demographic studies of the family have not progressed very far conceptually especially visualizing families in different stages of demographic transition in multiple cultural contexts. Despite great efforts by researchers to study family as a unit of analysis, it has been restricted to particular aspects of family life, unable to provide a comprehensive view of the family as a dynamic system related to changes taking place in developing societies such as India. Research has yet to investigate the interrelationships of the family as an operational unit with various other structures of the society and the reciprocal effect of one or other and their interactive effects on individuals. Moreover, in a stable society, roles within families are clearly and consensually defined and understood. During the period of transition, such as in India, these expectations are upset and uncertainties emerge regarding individual responses to these changes. Social, demographic and economic changes are highly skewed processes. Therefore, these processes do not affect each strata of the

population evenly. The lag between onset of transitional processes and the stabilization of social, economic, and demographic structures across the population sub-groups is characterized by pre-transition heterogeneity often concealed as conflict and disorganization until the homogeneous progressive phase of transition begins and statuses are redefined according to the new conditions.

Until now, the social institutions and practices in India have been relatively stable but changes are predicted to occur in the next two-three decades. It is imperative to study these changes and their bi-directional relationships with family demography and related behaviors. The main impediment to the study of family demography and related research in India is first the lack of a comprehensive conceptual framework and second lack of reliable data. Understandably, family demography is currently in its nascent stages as a branch of demography and population studies. Fundamental intricacy inherent in demographic conceptualization and differentiation in functions of households and families have rendered this scientifically important area of study rather muted. Western countries such as U.S. and European nations have multiple sources of data such as American Community Survey, Current Population Survey, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Family Database, Fertility & Family survey, and so on, which provide information on a wide range of issues pertaining to family demography and related domains at sub-national level. Even developing countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, China have family panel surveys focused on intergenerational exchanges and life-course perspectives at sub-national levels. The dearth of available information on family demography in India and in its states, limits the researchers investigating contemporary and emerging issues such as marital happiness, same-sex marriages their sexual behaviors, quality of marriages, complex families, fatherhood in complex families, family disruptions and its long-term effect on child's economic outcome and multi-dimensional deprivation, and so on.

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