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FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF FORMAL INSTITUTIONS AND FAMILY DYNAMICS IN TWO GENERATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The first enduring social structure in human evolution, no doubt, was system of kinship-family (Turner, 1972). Family consists of a group of people, related individuals, who live together and co-operate as a unit. It is probably the most important social institution. Family's age old ideas, norms, cultural, leadership, and value patterns are greatly changing. Technology, scientific development, western education have effected family structure. Functional theorists (for example Burgess and Locke (1945); Davis (1949); Ogburn and Nimkoff (1955); Parsons and Bales (1955); Mead (1934/1962); Merton, (1968) and several others have shown concern and argued that if a society is to survive and operate with some measure of effectiveness, it must guarantee that certain essential tasks are performed. The performance of these tasks or functions cannot be left to chance. To do so would run the risk that some activities would not be carried out and the society may disintegrate. Although acknowledging that families show a good deal of variation throughout the world, functionalist seeks to identify a number of recurrent functions typically families do perform.

The functional perspective draws our attention to the requirements of group life and to the structural arrangements whereby these requirements are met. However, critics point out that these tasks can be performed in other ways. Indeed, by virtue of social changes, many of the economic, child-care and educational functions previously performed by families have been taken over by other institutions. Even so, the family still tends to be the social unit most commonly responsible for reproduction, socialization, and the other related functions.

Though several functions of family have started getting weakened like education, economic, recreation, security (care of handicapped, sick and aged) and religious yet it continues to discharge some of the basic functions like reproduction, procreation, care and nurture of young ones. These transitions in families are due to increased personal mobility, and personal achievements, declining status ascription, decreasing parental authority and less importance of grand parents. In addition, irresponsibility of children, changing values which are inconsistent to family's values, equalitarian role of male female and increased responsibility of state also play a vital role.

Families in Pakistan mostly in urban areas are also in a state of transition. There are more of structural changes like nucleation of families, migration, education of female, changing functions, single parent families etc., which show a decreasing trend of close relationships in the family. Baqai (1968 , 1975), Khan (1968), Zaidi (1976), Saeed (1983), Jahangir (1984) and Bano (1994) have discussed this

particular phenomenon in more detail. It is difficult to get a true picture of contemporary family and to say whether changes, gradual or fast, will strengthen and promote families or not. To analyse questions such as, whether families are depending on formal institutions completely? Or families are disappearing as an institution? A survey was conducted to study the level of dependency in two generations of urban families on different formal institutions while fulfilling needs of their members.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is an exploratory study to know how far respondents and their parents' families are dependent on different formal institutions in the development processes of their members. This study is an attempt to explore factors responsible for shift of family's functions to other institutions. The survey is based on a multistage stratified random sampling of households covering the areas of North Karachi, F.B. Area and Clifton in Karachi city. Data for the present analysis were collected through questionnaire from a sample of 540 respondents.

OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Institutions may be defined as a set of patterned behaviours and statuses/role relationships that fulfils basic societal needs by providing essential goods or services. Several institutions exist in a society to satisfy personal and societal needs. Institutions related to family, economic, religion, security and education fulfill specialized functions for both the society and the individual (Chaudhry, 1982; White, 1991; Sjostrand, 1993; Turner, 1994). All the institutions are interrelated and events of one have effects on other and vice versa. In present study different formal institutions are operationally defined as:

Social: Inculcate aims of life, production and distribution of capital goods and services, maintenance of law and other provision of recreation.

Education: The norms centred around formal or informal teaching and learning aiming at the adjustment of individuals to the environment.

Religion: The system of beliefs and practices influencing human events where man is helpless to explain. It includes those customs, rituals, standards of conduct, values, organization forms and roles which are primarily concerned with supernatural and the sacred.

Security: A set of norms pertaining to the distribution of power and authority concerning the management and control of society to bring order in life.

Recreation: Interrelated set of roles and norms that fulfill the need of recreation in a society. It includes analysis of games, physical education and other formal and informal recreational activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Family members who live together provide facilities to each other. It is however, important to know what possible facilities parents are providing to their children.

Children need education (both formal and informal), good health care entertainment and sufficiently secured environment. Children, who are fortunate enough to have all or most of the above-mentioned requirements, prove to be an asset for a progressing country. In urban areas where public sector provides many facilities, private sector also plays its role. It is but important to know whether those institutions are providing necessary facilities or not. We also addressed the problem of the satisfactory performance of these institutions. People may have different opinion about the performance of various existing institution such as social, education, religious, security and recreational. We asked respondents and their parents about their opinion regarding their satisfaction with the performance of these institutions. The information is summarised in Table 1 and in Fig. 1. If we consider only social institutes, see Fig. 1(a), we may observed that a vast majority of both respondents and their parents (59.4% respondent and 60% parents) believe that these institutes to some extent fulfill the requisites of children. Those, who believe completely on social institutes performance are not many (35.4% respondents and 27.8% parents), however a small proportion (only 5.2% respondents and 12.2% of parents) is not satisfied at all with the performance of social institutions.

This also indicates that as the time passes more people are having more trust on social institutions. This is strange because, it is believed that older generation had stronger social relationships than the present but as far as social institutions are concerned present generation has more confidence than the previous one.

Formal education is one of the most important factor for almost all successes a child achieves in his life. Various institutions are presently available which provide education to children but whether parents provide educational functions to their children or not is an important social factor. We put this question to our respondents and their responses are summarized in Table 1. Fig. 1(b) shows that majority (54.3%) of respondents provide educational functions to their children although 38.3% respondents received these facilities from their parents. On the other hand the proportion of parents who provide educational functions to their children, have declined from 53.7% to 42.7% during the past one generation. This is a result of the basic requirements of education for any kind of progress in the society. It has become a symbol of satisfaction and pride if one's children are studying in good and reputable institutions, which now formally exist.

Religion, in any society plays an important role in binding a family together. Religious education can be achieved in different ways. This particular education is mainly achieved from elders in the family, mosques and now from well established religious institution. The most important of all such is the education one receives at home at the very initial stages of the life. Thus parents and grandparents may be considered as the most important persons who impart religious knowledge to the off springs. As the time passes people have become busier, thus sparing less time for their children. It is however the responsibility of elders that they provide necessary religious information to children and in doing so, they need to be involved.

Our study has addressed the problem if parents provide religious functions to their children and what was the behaviour of the parents of our respondents in this

respect. It may be observed from Fig. 1 (c) that a larger fraction (56.3%) partially provides religious functions to their children while a comparatively lower proportion (45.9%) of our respondents received partial religious knowledge from their parents. It is also obvious that this difference is due to the fact that a comparatively large proportion (38.2%) of respondents' parents were providing complete religious knowledge to their children whereas parents, our respondents, are less in number (32.0 %) who does so. It is also obvious that those who didn't at all give any religious knowledge to their children have decreased from 15.9% to 10.9% in the lapse of one generation. Those who do not provide any religious knowledge to their children are very few and it is a good sign. It indicates that people now are more literate and know that their children should receive more religious knowledge and that they themselves feel responsible for it.

Another important function in a society is security. Parents provide different security functions to their children and it has been a practice for generations. Table 1 and Fig. 1(d) clearly reveals that no drastic change has occurred during past one generation in this respect. Around 35.6% parents of our respondents attempt to provide security to their children whereas 37% of respondents try to provide security to their children. Those who partially provide security functions to their children are 50.4% (respondents) and 50.6% (respondents' parents), respectively. Those who could not provide any security functions to their children are also similar in numbers (12.6% respondents and 13.8% respondents' parents). It is to be noted that no change in attitude has occurred during the last one generation.

Both generations, today's and yesterday's, strongly believe that they can provide better security to their family members as compared to the formal institutions. We may observe that, in our society, old people are considered as responsibility and not as a burden. Family members take care of their elders, and do not show any intention of sending them to old people houses or an orphan to orphanage. This attitude has not changed. There are many social factors, which force family members to take care of all such people themselves as compared to the available institutions.

Recreational activities are also important for a better family atmosphere. Parents provide these activities to their children either themselves or through some institutions. We may observe from Table I and Fig 1(e) that a vast majority (60.8%) of our respondents provide partial recreational functions to their children whereas 69.1% of the respondents' parents were doing so. It may also be observed that almost all (90.4%) respondents provide complete or partial recreation to their children and only a small proportion (9.6%) do not provide any such activity to their children. The case was not much different from the respondent's parents where 87.4% used to provide recreation (completely or partially) to their children. It is to be noted that if elders fail to provide recreation to their children then it is possible that children may get involved in some unwanted activities, which may harm their future.

Sending children out to join in some recreational activities is also risky due to

reasons similar to those mentioned earlier. People now have almost all types of recreational activities easily accessible to their children, such as television, videos, computers, games of other nature, dish antenna etc. Those who are not providing any recreational activity to their children are at high risk as their children may join hands with bad people or may join bad gatherings, thus heartening their parents and families.

SUMMARY

Formal institutions (regarding social, religion, security, recreation etc.) have lesser acceptability in our society. Major steps need to be taken to enhance the working of these institutions attracting confidence of families while performing their functions. This may result in healing their family and society.

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TABLE # 1
RESPONDENTS AND THEIR PATENTS' DEPENDENCY LEVEL ON FORMAL INSTTUTIONS

FORMAL INSTITUTIONS	DEPENDENCY LEVEL COMPLETEY	TO SOME EXTENT	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
SOCIAL				
SELF	191 (35.4)	321 (59.4)	28 (5.2)	540 (100)
PARENTS	150 (27.8)	324 (60.0)	66 (12.2)	540 (100)
EDUCATION				
SELF	293 (54.3)	231 (42.7)	16 (3.0)	540 (100)
PARENTS	207 (38.3)	290 (53.7)	43 (8.0)	540 (100)
RELIGION				
SELF	177 (32.8)	304 (56.3)	59 (10.9)	540 (100)
PARENTS	206 (38.2)	248 (45.9)	86 (15.9)	540 (100)
SECURITY				
SELF	200 (37.0)	272 (50.4)	68 (12.6)	540 (100)
PARENTS	192 (35.6)	273 (50.6)	75 (13.8)	540 (100)
RECREATION				
SELF	160 (29.6)	328 (60.8)	52 (9.6)	540 (100)
PARENTS	99 (18.3)	373 (69.1)	68 (12.6)	540 (100)

(Note : Numbers in Paranthesis represent percentage)