

## **QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS IN FAMILIES OF KERALA**

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### **Abstract**

*This study is intended to understand the quality of relationship dynamics prevailing in families of Kerala. Family is a premier laboratory for understanding more about how relationship dynamics is associated with child development. Husband-wife or father-mother relationship is the primary and most significant amongst the nexus of affiliations on which a family revolves. Drastic changes have taken place in families of Kerala at economic, social, cultural and psychological levels that have a colossal impact on our mantle as parents in the context of globalization, commercialization and liberalization. The kind of relationship dynamics which the joint family system provided to children have been deteriorating fast. Nuclear family has been substituted with the joint family system in Kerala. Whether this recast in the family configuration and relationship dynamics is good or bad for children is the research question. The sample consists of 1080 secondary school students. Multidimensional*

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### **Keywords:**

Relationship dynamics.

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*Relationship Dynamics Scale developed by the investigators is used to assess the quality of Relationship dynamics. Trainglation is also done .The findings indicate that Quality of Relationship dynamics in most of the families in Kerala is unhelpful for the balanced development of personality of children.*

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## **1. Introduction**

Effective functioning of the family is ungovernable due to the considerable demand exerted on family by the society in the new era. The family is being subjected to dumbfound demands that inexorably usher to breakdowns in its most foible affiliations. Unfortunately, the most foible bond of all appears to be in the practices of bringing up the children. Hence, "personalities" of new generation children in Kerala are becoming continuously more unfit because of the ways in which parents bring them up.

Family is a premier laboratory for understanding more about how relationship dynamics is associated with child development. Husband-wife relationship is the most crucial amongst the bonds of affiliations on which a family moves on its orbit. Good relations ease the partners to fulfill their duties excellently as parents and assist in the actual socialization of the children. However, nuptial quarrels lead to disorganization in the family and has fatalistic outcomes on the bringing up of children. According to Booth & Edwards (2008),

“the merit of transactions between a husband and a wife has repercussions on the whole family”.

### **Need and Significance of the Study**

The social portray of Kerala shows that it is a society that has undergone rapid and significant reforms in the last decennium. Kerala has seen a fall in birth rate, a rise in life time, a decline in the infant mortality rate, and an almost total immunization of children (Manual of Health Statistics in India 2015). The attainments in the area of health are on par with those of developed

countries. However, collateral to these gains are, many bleak tendencies that have also developed. Despite customary convictions in sturdy and enduring conjugal bond, divorce rates are increasing among couples. The alcohol gobbling rate has also increased and is now one of the exorbitant in the country, with the average age of first alcohol consumption falling between 1994 and 2011 from 19 to 14, according to a report by the Indian Alcohol and Drug Information Centre. Moral principles of behaviour and orthodox backup systems that synchronized and sustained individuals in foregoing generations are gingerly being debilitated.

The family structure has over the past few decades shifted away from traditional joint family systems toward increasingly nuclear groups. The children born in the nuclear family become only the parent's responsibility, whereas a child born in a joint family is welcomed and looked after by almost every member of the family. The load of responsibility of child rearing on the shoulders of parents is shared to a large extent by other members in the family. Child's emotional needs are well taken care of in a joint family because a child is never left alone. Somebody or the other is always attending to the child in the absence of his/her parents. Interaction among family members is very high in joint family system comprising mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, son, daughter, uncles, aunts, cousins etc which can produce joy, accomplishment and a sense of well being for each member of the family including children though it may also result in friction, arguments and tensions at times, which in turn will lead to the development of good life script in children. Children from joint family reported good social adjustment and high resilience when compared to those in nuclear family (Sahar and Muzaffar 2017).

The swift growth of consumerism, and the development of a unrelenting ambitious manner of living, have all collaborated to generate ethos where people are more easily susceptible to suicide, and it has been observed that most of the families in Kerala display spending plans run over their deep pockets. This "debt trap" creates another source of stress that may be, to a great extent, responsible for the decline of mental health of people in general and children in particular (National Mental Health Survey of India 2015–2016).

Another phenomenon with a strong impact on the life of children in Kerala is that of migration for work abroad. Concretely, every year, more and more people, especially from modest but also from poor strata of the population choose to migrate due to lack of employment opportunities in their areas of residence or in order to get better salaries. Migration has basal repercussion for women and children. They suffer when the male migrates either alone or with them. The kinship network is broken and the traditional skills are no longer useful in the urban economy (Desai, 1995). However, it has also been suggested that rather than family disintegration, male migration could lead to more capable and self confident women. Moreover, with modernization, industrialization and westernization, the different family patterns exhibited are modified from the patterns that were rooted in local traditions to western model which require more money to spend.

With the advances of social media for communication, most parents and teenagers today in Kerala are in the habit of using Facebook or Whatsapp or Twitter, etc. Social media has created a virtual sharing society. There are disquiets that many adolescents seem to be surrogating virtual, online interconnections for real-life, social propinquity. Social media and technology together is steadily becoming the number one root of muddles in family, attributable to deprivation of good oral communication or zero interaction among parents, siblings or parent-child. It starves the family of learning and modeling with each other social cues, interpersonal relationship skills, communication skills, and bonding (Andrew Webb 2017).

Parent-child conflicts with regard to individual freedom and double standards giving greater freedom and regard to sons than daughters, is still a recurring feature in Kerala society. A girl child is allowed to remain a child only for a short period of life. It is always stressed that her relationship with her natal home is temporary. Parents tend to treat boys and girls differently not only in terms of scaffolding speech, activity and play but also with regard to food, education and individual material ownerships.

Crimes against children, particularly sexual offences, have increased considerably in Kerala in the last three years in spite of stringent special laws enacted to protect children. The State witnessed a spurt in rape of children and other crimes, including unnatural sexual offences, even

after the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act came into effect in November 2012. Four children, on an average, are sexually abused in Kerala every day (State Crime Records Bureau 2016). A study conducted by Krishnakumar P, et.al (2014) revealed that 36 per cent of boys and 35 per cent of girls had experienced sexual abuse at some point of time. In all the situations mentioned above, children in Kerala are affected very much. However, the complexity of the phenomena that brings changes in the relationship dynamics of the family, its consequences, its impact in children are not studied properly. The investigators noticed that only a very few studies have been conducted in these areas particularly based on Kerala families.. The present study examines the rapidly changing relationship dynamics scenario in Kerala and its quality which has a strong impact up on many psychological outcomes in children.

### **Objective of the study**

To assess the quality level of Relationship dynamics in families of secondary school students of Kerala.

## **2. Research Method**

The methodology of the study involves the collection of relevant data and statistical processing of the collected data with a view to obtain answers to the stated objectives.

### **Sample**

The sample of the study was selected based on multi-stage sampling procedure. During the first stage, districts were the sampling unit. The investigator selected one district using stratified random sampling technique for the three strata of districts viz, North, Middle and South. In the second stage, schools were the sampling unit. During this stage, 4 schools (2 urban and 2 rural) were selected randomly. In the third stage, students were the sampling unit. 90 students (45 girls and 45 boys approximately) were selected from each selected school randomly. Thus the final sample consisted of 1080 secondary school students.

### **Tools Used**

1. Multidimensional Relationship Dynamics Scale developed by the Investigators

## 2. Interview Guide framed by the Investigators

No	Issue	Time
		45''
1	1. Do your children talk to you about their problems in learning?	3''
2	2. Do you help your children to complete their homework?	3''
3	3. Do you prefer to have connection with your children through social media like Face book or Whatsapp or on any social media?	2''
4	Do you like your children very much and do you show it openly to them?	3''
5	Do you accept suggestions given by your children?	3''
6	What are the talents your children have? Do you appreciate their talents?	5''
7	Do you give physical punishment or use unkind words to your child for their faults?	3''
8	Do you say nice things about your children? Or Do you praise your children before others?	6''
9	What are the strategies you use to make your children feel that they are important?	3''
10	Do you eat breakfast/ lunch/ dinner together at your house?	3''
11	Do you often argue with your husband over certain issues at home?	3''
12	Does your husband pay attention to your opinions?	3''
13	Who is leading your family, you or your husband	3''
14	Does your family give priority to male children than females?	3''

### Statistical Techniques

The collected data was coded and tabulated for statistical analysis. Then a descriptive analysis was made with the help of mean and graphical analysis. Triangulation is done in order to understand and cross verify the kind of relationship dynamics prevailing in families of Kerala. The investigators conducted semi-structured interview with three mothers of the subjects with

whom data was collected earlier. One mother each was selected from the three levels of Relationship dynamics scores obtained in the Multi dimensional Relationship Dynamics Scale administered to secondary school students. The selected subjects were asked fourteen questions based on the six dimensions of the relationship dynamics scale. Conclusions were reached based on content analysis.

### 3. Results and Analysis

#### Level of Relationship Dynamics

Relationship dynamics has been classified into three categories based on mean and standard deviation score of relationship dynamics. Students with a score of less than mean - standard deviation were classified as Low, between mean – standard deviation and mean + standard deviation as Average and greater than mean + standard deviation as High level groups. The number and percentage of students under different subgroups and the pictorial representation of the distribution of the scores are given below.

Table 1

Level of Relationship dynamics in High School Students

Sl. No.	Category	Level of Relationship dynamics						Total
		High		Average		Low		
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
1	Boys	90	17.30	347	66.73	83	15.96	520
2	Girls	105	18.75	337	60.17	118	20.53	560
3	Rural	88	15.17	403	69.48	89	15.34	580
4	Urban	107	21.4	281	56.20	112	22.40	500
5	Nuclear family	128	16.84	472	62.10	160	21.05	760
6	Joint- family	67	20.93	212	66.25	41	12.81	320
7	Total	195	18.05	684	63.33	201	18.62	1080

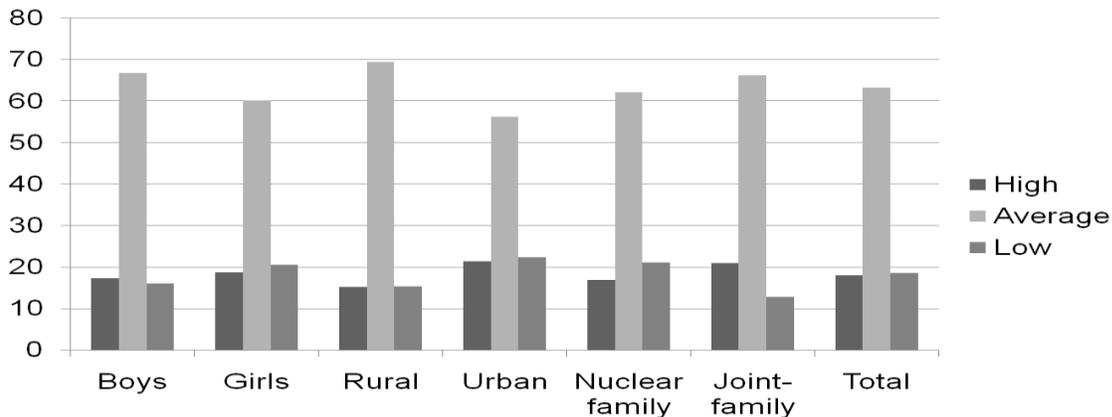


Figure 1  
Multiple Bar diagram representing Distribution of  
Sample into Different Levels of Relationship dynamics

The primary analysis of the results has revealed that the quality of relationship dynamics in families of Kerala is generally unhelpful for the total development of a child. The data collected from the sample relating to Relationship dynamics shows that about 63.33% of the students come under average Relationship dynamics group whereas 18.62% of students are with poor and 18.05% are in good Relationship dynamics group. The good sign of the result is that higher percentage of girls (18.75) than boys (17.3%) and students from joint family background (20.93) than Nuclear family (16.84%) are in the high level group of Relationship dynamics. At the same time in the lower level also the percentage of girls is higher (20.53) than boys (15.96). The percentage of Urban students (22.40) is much higher than Rural students (15.34) in the low level of relationship dynamics. And students from Nuclear family (21.05) are more in the low level than students from the Joint family (12.81). In the average group the percentage of students are; Boys 66.73%, Girls 60.17%, Rural 69.48%, Urban 56.2%, Nuclear 62.10% and Joint family 66.25%.

The findings of the qualitative study conducted for triangulation by the investigator seem to back up the above findings. The qualitative interview findings show that there are three types of Relationship dynamics prevailing in families of the secondary school students of Kerala.

1. Positive parent-child relationship dynamics prevails in the family of the first mother where excellent communication happens between parents and children, enhanced cohesion is there; talents of their children are recognized and fostered. Parents have time to spend with their children, shows affection without any gender discrimination. The first mother belongs to this category and this category of family can be rated as High level Relationship dynamics group.

2. Moderate communication happens between parents and children; Parents recognize the talents of their children but do not have time to foster them. Parents do not have time or have only very limited time to spend with their children, do not show affection openly to their children. Gender preferences are there in the family. The second mother belongs to this category and this category can be rated as Average level Relationship dynamics group.

3. Poor communication between parents and children. Parents neither recognize nor foster the talents of their children. Parents don't care about spending time with their children. Never shows affection openly to children. Children are not respected and are treated as 'mere children'. Male children are given preferences. The third mother belongs to this category and this category can be rated as Low level Relationship dynamics.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The study demonstrated that the quality of Relationship dynamics in most of the families in Kerala is unhelpful for the balanced development of personality of children. Kreidl (2013) found that poor relationship dynamics had adverse effects on children's educational attainment. The findings yielded by the present investigation are largely in harmony with previous research findings of Henderson (2016) who also reported that children's physical and emotional status, as well as their social and cognitive development, greatly depends on the quality of the relationship dynamics of their families. The study revealed the need of the children to demand helpful Relationship dynamics at their homes which will make them more successful in life.

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