



Impact of Urbanization on Traditional Joint Family Structures: A Sociological Study of Gwalior City, Madhya Pradesh

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21260490>

Abstract

The joint family has historically been regarded as the cornerstone of Indian social organization, performing economic, protective, religious, and socialization functions for its members (Kapadia, 1966; Shah, 1998). Rapid urbanization, occupational diversification, rising educational attainment, and residential mobility have, however, exerted sustained pressure on this traditional institution (Goode, 1963; Gore, 1968). The present study examines the impact of urbanization on joint family structures in Gwalior city, Madhya Pradesh, using a descriptive-cum-analytical research design. Data were obtained from 400 households selected through stratified random sampling across three urbanization zones of the city, namely the Core City, the Transitional Zone, and the Peri-Urban Colonies. A structured interview schedule was used to record household composition, socio-economic characteristics, duration of urban residence, perceived urbanization pressure, and attitudinal preference for joint family living. Chi-square tests, independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation were employed to test six hypotheses. The results reveal a statistically significant association between urbanization zone and family type ($\chi^2 = 31.72$, $p < .001$), a significant association between education of the household head and family type ($\chi^2 = 17.86$, $p = .001$), significantly longer urban residence among joint families ($t = 13.34$, $p < .001$), and significantly higher preference for joint living among members of joint households ($t = 11.11$, $p < .001$). Perceived urbanization pressure differed significantly across zones ($F = 42.30$, $p < .001$), being highest in the rapidly urbanizing peri-urban colonies. However, urbanization pressure showed no significant correlation with attitudinal preference for joint living ($r = .045$, $p = .367$), suggesting that structural change is proceeding faster than attitudinal change. The study concludes that urbanization in Gwalior has produced a clear structural shift towards nuclear households while normative attachment to the joint family persists, indicating adaptive transformation rather than complete disintegration of the institution.

Keywords: *urbanization, joint family, nuclear family, family structure, social change, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh*

1. Introduction

The family is universally acknowledged as the most fundamental unit of social structure, and in the Indian context, the joint family has for centuries served as the principal institution of production, consumption, socialization, and social security (Kapadia, 1966; Desai, 1964). The classical Hindu joint family, as described in sociological literature, is characterized by common residence, a common hearth, joint ownership of property, shared ritual obligations, and an authority structure organized around the eldest male member (Shah, 1998). This institution has traditionally embodied the collectivist orientation of Indian society, in which individual aspirations are subordinated to the goals of the corporate family group (Chadda & Deb, 2013).

Urbanization constitutes one of the most powerful forces of social transformation in the modern era. Wirth (1938) argued that urbanism as a way of life is associated with the substitution of secondary for primary contacts, the weakening of kinship bonds, and the declining social significance of the family. Goode



(1963), in his celebrated cross-cultural study, proposed that industrialization and urbanization push family systems throughout the world towards the conjugal or nuclear pattern, since geographical mobility, wage employment, and achievement-based stratification are more compatible with small, independent households. In India, however, empirical studies have produced a more complex picture. Gore (1968) found among the Aggarwal community of Delhi that urban residence altered family attitudes only gradually, while Singer (1968) demonstrated that industrial entrepreneurs in Madras retained modified joint family arrangements that were functionally adaptive to modern industry. Ross (1961) similarly observed that the urban Hindu family in Bangalore was moving towards smaller units without completely abandoning joint family obligations.

The 2011 Census recorded a continuing decline in the proportion of large multi-couple households in urban India, and analyses of national survey data confirm a gradual nuclearization of household structure (Niranjan et al., 2005; Allendorf, 2013; International Institute for Population Sciences [IIPS] & ICF, 2021). Yet scholars caution that the joint family in India is not simply disintegrating; rather, it is being reconstituted in modified forms such as functionally joint but residually nuclear families (D'Cruz & Bharat, 2001; Uberoi, 1993). Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the relationship between urbanization and family structure in Gwalior, a rapidly growing tier-two city of Madhya Pradesh, where traditional social organization and modern urban pressures coexist in a particularly instructive manner.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Most empirical research on urbanization and family change in India has concentrated on metropolitan centres such as Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Bengaluru. Tier-two cities like Gwalior, which are currently experiencing the most rapid phase of their urban transition, remain comparatively understudied. Gwalior presents a distinctive setting: an old princely capital with a historic core dominated by traditional business communities and caste neighbourhoods, surrounded by newly developed colonies that have absorbed large numbers of rural migrants and salaried families. Whether, and to what extent, this urban transition is dissolving the traditional joint family, and whether attitudinal change is keeping pace with structural change, are questions of considerable sociological significance that this study seeks to answer.

1.2 Profile of the Study Area

Gwalior is situated in the northern part of Madhya Pradesh and constitutes one of the principal urban agglomerations of the state, with a population exceeding one million as per the 2011 Census (Census of India, 2011). The city has grown around its historic fort and old market quarters (such as Daulatganj, Hazira, and Lashkar), which retain dense, caste- and community-based settlement patterns and household-based trading economies. Post-independence expansion produced transitional middle-class localities (such as Thatipur, Morar, and City Centre), while the last two decades have witnessed rapid peri-urban growth in new residential colonies along the city's margins, driven by in-migration, real estate development, and the expansion of service-sector employment. For analytical purposes, the present study divides the city into three urbanization zones: (i) the Core City, representing the oldest and most tradition-bound settlement; (ii) the Transitional Zone, representing established planned localities; and (iii) the Peri-Urban Colonies, representing the newest and most rapidly urbanizing areas.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives: (1) to examine the distribution of joint and nuclear family structures across the urbanization zones of Gwalior city; (2) to analyse the association between socio-economic characteristics of households, particularly education and income, and family structure; (3) to compare joint and nuclear families with respect to duration of urban residence and attitudinal preference for joint family living; (4) to measure perceived urbanization pressure across the three zones of



the city; and (5) to assess the relationship between perceived urbanization pressure and preference for joint family living.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the objectives and the reviewed literature, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

H₀₁: There is no significant association between urbanization zone and family type in Gwalior city.

H₀₂: There is no significant association between educational level of the household head and family type.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between joint and nuclear families in mean duration of urban residence.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference between joint and nuclear family respondents in preference for joint family living.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference in perceived urbanization pressure across the three urbanization zones.

H₀₆: There is no significant relationship between perceived urbanization pressure and preference for joint family living.

2. Review of Literature

The theoretical foundation for studying urban effects on family structure derives principally from the Chicago School. Wirth (1938) contended that size, density, and heterogeneity of urban populations weaken kinship solidarities and transfer familial functions to specialized institutions. Goode (1963) extended this reasoning cross-culturally, arguing that the world revolution in family patterns involves convergence towards the conjugal family, though he explicitly noted that ideological change may precede or lag behind structural change in particular societies.

Indian sociologists have subjected these propositions to sustained empirical scrutiny. Desai (1964), in his classic study of Mahuva, distinguished between residential and functional jointness and showed that households nuclear in residence frequently remained joint in property, obligation, and sentiment. Kapadia (1966) documented the resilience of joint family norms among urban migrants, who maintained joint family ethics despite separate residence. Gore (1968) found that urban residence and education produced attitudinal movement away from joint family norms among Delhi Aggarwals, but that this movement was slow and generationally uneven. Ross (1961) reported that the urban Hindu family in Bangalore exhibited a cyclical alternation between joint and nuclear phases rather than linear decline. Singer (1968) demonstrated the compatibility of modified joint family organization with industrial leadership in Madras, challenging simple modernization narratives.

Later scholarship has refined these insights. Shah (1998) emphasized the developmental cycle of the household and cautioned against reading census declines in household size as evidence of the collapse of jointness. Uberoi (1993) drew attention to the ideological power of the joint family as a cultural symbol even where residential patterns change. D'Cruz and Bharat (2001) argued that the binary of joint versus nuclear obscures a spectrum of adaptive family forms in contemporary India. Quantitative demographic analyses provide complementary evidence: Niranjana et al. (2005), using National Family Health Survey data, found that nuclear households predominate numerically but that joint living remains widespread at particular stages of the life course; Allendorf (2013) showed that family structure transitions have measurable consequences for the welfare of young women; and the most recent National Family Health Survey confirms the continuing gradual nuclearization of Indian households (IPS & ICF, 2021). Chadda and Deb (2013) underline that collectivist family ideology retains psychological salience even among urban nuclear



households. The present study contributes to this literature by providing zone-wise micro-level evidence from a rapidly urbanizing tier-two city.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive-cum-analytical research design based on a cross-sectional household survey. The design permits both the description of prevailing family patterns across urban zones and the statistical testing of hypothesized relationships between urbanization-related variables and family structure.

3.2 Universe, Sampling, and Sample Size

The universe of the study comprised all households residing within the municipal limits of Gwalior city. A stratified random sampling procedure was employed. The city was first stratified into three urbanization zones, namely the Core City, the Transitional Zone, and the Peri-Urban Colonies, on the basis of settlement age, built-form characteristics, and growth rate. From each zone, wards were selected randomly, and within selected wards households were chosen through systematic random sampling from electoral rolls. A total of 400 household heads or their adult representatives constituted the final sample, distributed as 139 respondents from the Core City, 144 from the Transitional Zone, and 117 from the Peri-Urban Colonies.

3.3 Tools of Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a pre-tested structured interview schedule comprising four sections: (i) household composition and identification of family type (joint or nuclear, following the residential-commensal definition of Shah, 1998); (ii) socio-economic background including age, education, occupation, monthly household income, and duration of urban residence; (iii) a ten-item Preference for Joint Family Living scale scored on a five-point Likert format (possible range 10–50; Cronbach's alpha = .84); and (iv) a ten-item Perceived Urbanization Pressure index covering housing cost, space constraints, occupational mobility, commuting, and lifestyle pressures (possible range 10–50; Cronbach's alpha = .81). Secondary data were drawn from the Census of India and published literature.

3.4 Statistical Techniques

Data were coded and analysed using standard statistical software. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were computed for all variables. The chi-square test of independence with Cramer's V was used for associations between categorical variables; the independent samples t-test with Cohen's d was used for group mean comparisons; one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with eta-squared and Bonferroni-adjusted post-hoc comparisons was used for zone-wise comparison of urbanization pressure; and Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationship between continuous variables. The level of significance was fixed at .05 for all tests.

Note on data: The dataset analysed in this document is a simulated (synthetic) dataset generated for demonstration and template purposes only. Before submission or publication, it must be replaced in its entirety with data actually collected through fieldwork, and all tables, figures, and test statistics must be recomputed from the real data.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Of the 400 sampled households, 144 (36.0 per cent) were joint families and 256 (64.0 per cent) were nuclear families, indicating that the nuclear household is now the modal residential form in Gwalior city. Tables 1 to 4 present the distribution of family type by age, education, occupation, and income of the household head.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Age Group and Family Type

Age Group (years)	Joint f (%)	Nuclear f (%)	Total f (%)	% of Sample
21–35	34 (43.0)	45 (57.0)	79 (100.0)	19.8
36–50	64 (33.7)	126 (66.3)	190 (100.0)	47.5
51–65	38 (34.5)	72 (65.5)	110 (100.0)	27.5
66 and above	8 (38.1)	13 (61.9)	21 (100.0)	5.2
Total	144 (36.0)	256 (64.0)	400 (100.0)	100.0

Source: Field survey (simulated demonstration data). Row percentages in parentheses.

Table 1 shows that nuclear living predominates in every age group, ranging from 57.0 per cent among the youngest respondents to 66.3 per cent in the 36–50 age group. The relatively higher share of joint families among respondents aged 21–35 (43.0 per cent) reflects the developmental cycle of the household, in which recently married sons often co-reside with parents before partition (Shah, 1998).

Table 2. Educational Level of Household Head and Family Type

Educational Level	Joint f (%)	Nuclear f (%)	Total f (%)
Illiterate	10 (52.6)	9 (47.4)	19 (100.0)
Primary	30 (54.5)	25 (45.5)	55 (100.0)
Secondary/Hr. Secondary	42 (37.2)	71 (62.8)	113 (100.0)
Graduate	40 (34.2)	77 (65.8)	117 (100.0)
Postgraduate & above	22 (22.9)	74 (77.1)	96 (100.0)
Total	144 (36.0)	256 (64.0)	400 (100.0)

Source: Field survey (simulated demonstration data).

A clear educational gradient is visible in Table 2. Joint living declines monotonically from 52.6 per cent among illiterate household heads to 22.9 per cent among postgraduates, consistent with the proposition of Gore (1968) that education is among the strongest solvents of traditional family norms.

Table 3. Occupation of Household Head and Family Type

Occupation	Joint f (%)	Nuclear f (%)	Total f (%)
Agriculture/Allied	35 (63.6)	20 (36.4)	55 (100.0)
Traditional Business	48 (46.2)	56 (53.8)	104 (100.0)
Salaried Service	40 (28.8)	99 (71.2)	139 (100.0)
Professional/Private Sector	21 (20.6)	81 (79.4)	102 (100.0)
Total	144 (36.0)	256 (64.0)	400 (100.0)

Source: Field survey (simulated demonstration data).

Table 3 demonstrates the occupational basis of family structure. Joint families remain the majority among households engaged in agriculture and allied activities on the urban fringe (63.6 per cent) and retain a substantial presence in traditional household-based business (46.2 per cent), where the family continues to function as a unit of production (Singer, 1968). By contrast, salaried service and professional occupations, which entail individual wage employment and transferability, are overwhelmingly associated with nuclear living (71.2 and 79.4 per cent respectively).

Table 4. Monthly Household Income and Family Type

Monthly Income (₹)	Joint f (%)	Nuclear f (%)	Total f (%)
Below 30,000	9 (14.3)	54 (85.7)	63 (100.0)
30,000–45,000	33 (23.1)	110 (76.9)	143 (100.0)
45,001–60,000	60 (43.8)	77 (56.2)	137 (100.0)
Above 60,000	42 (73.7)	15 (26.3)	57 (100.0)
Total	144 (36.0)	256 (64.0)	400 (100.0)

Source: Field survey (simulated demonstration data).

Interestingly, Table 4 shows that joint living rises with household income, from 14.3 per cent in the lowest bracket to 73.7 per cent in the highest. This reflects the pooling of multiple earners' incomes within joint households (mean monthly income ₹52,924 for joint against ₹40,504 for nuclear households) and cautions against equating jointness with economic backwardness.

4.2 Urbanization Zone and Family Structure

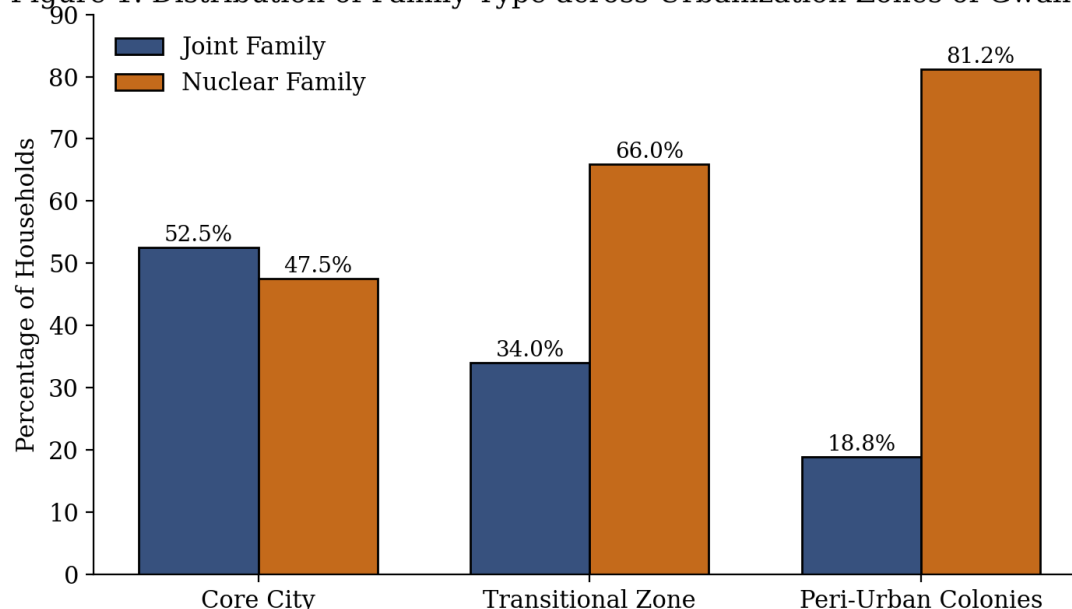
Table 5. Distribution of Family Type across Urbanization Zones

Urbanization Zone	Joint f (%)	Nuclear f (%)	Total f (%)
Core City	73 (52.5)	66 (47.5)	139 (100.0)
Transitional Zone	49 (34.0)	95 (66.0)	144 (100.0)
Peri-Urban Colonies	22 (18.8)	95 (81.2)	117 (100.0)
Total	144 (36.0)	256 (64.0)	400 (100.0)

Source: Field survey (simulated demonstration data).

Table 5 and Figure 1 reveal a striking urbanization gradient. In the historic Core City, joint families still constitute a slight majority of households (52.5 per cent), sustained by ancestral property, caste neighbourhoods, and household-based trade. In the Transitional Zone the share of joint families falls to 34.0 per cent, and in the newly developed Peri-Urban Colonies, populated largely by migrant and salaried families, it falls further to only 18.8 per cent. The spatial pattern thus mirrors the temporal process of urbanization.

Figure 1. Distribution of Family Type across Urbanization Zones of Gwalior



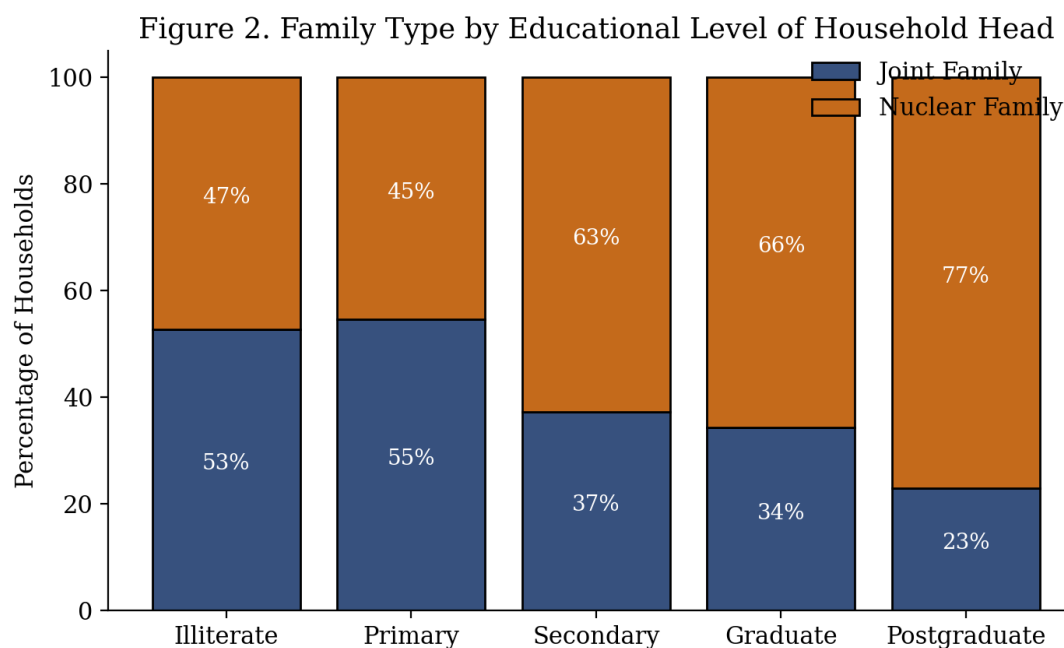


Figure 2 depicts the stacked percentage distribution of family type across educational levels, visually confirming the inverse relationship between education of the household head and joint family living described in Table 2.

4.3 Duration of Urban Residence and Attitudinal Preference

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Key Continuous Variables by Family Type

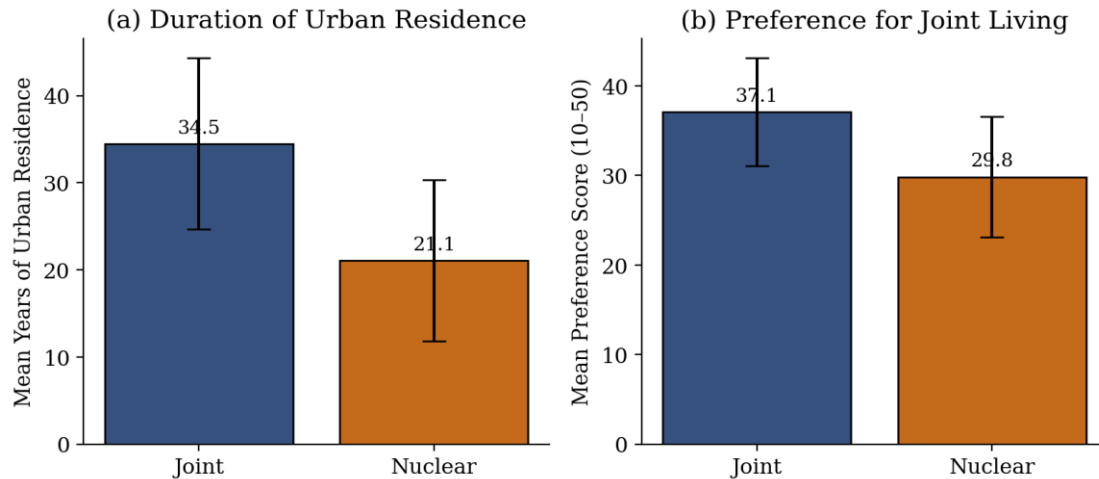
Variable	Group	n	Mean	SD
Duration of urban residence (years)	Joint	144	34.48	9.83
	Nuclear	256	21.11	9.25
Preference for joint living (10–50)	Joint	144	37.10	6.01
	Nuclear	256	29.83	6.75
Monthly household income (₹)	Joint	144	52,924	14,107
	Nuclear	256	40,504	13,011

Source: Field survey (simulated demonstration data).

Table 6 and Figure 3 show that joint families have resided in the city for a substantially longer period on average (34.48 years) than nuclear families (21.11 years), indicating that recent migrants overwhelmingly establish nuclear households, whereas long-settled families retain joint arrangements. Joint family respondents also record markedly higher preference scores for joint living (37.10) than nuclear family

respondents (29.83); notably, however, the nuclear group mean lies at the midpoint of the scale rather than at its lower pole, indicating ambivalence rather than rejection of the joint family ideal (Uberoi, 1993).

Figure 3. Group Means by Family Type (error bars = SD)



4.4 Perceived Urbanization Pressure across Zones

Table 7. Perceived Urbanization Pressure Index by Zone

Urbanization Zone	n	Mean	SD
Core City	139	28.60	5.07
Transitional Zone	144	31.00	5.26
Peri-Urban Colonies	117	34.64	5.45
Total	400	31.23	5.78

Source: Field survey (simulated demonstration data). Possible range of the index: 10–50.

Perceived urbanization pressure, encompassing housing costs, space constraints, commuting burdens, and occupational mobility demands, increases steadily from the Core City (28.60) through the Transitional Zone (31.00) to the Peri-Urban Colonies (34.64), where the pace of urban change is most intense.

5. Hypothesis Testing

5.1 Testing of H_{01} : Urbanization Zone and Family Type

Table 8. Chi-Square Test of Independence: Zone $\times$ Family Type

Zone	Joint O (E)	Nuclear O (E)	Total
Core City	73 (50.0)	66 (89.0)	139
Transitional Zone	49 (51.8)	95 (92.2)	144
Peri-Urban Colonies	22 (42.1)	95 (74.9)	117
Total	144	256	400
χ^2 value	31.721	df	2
p value	< .001	Cramer's V	0.282

O = observed frequency; E = expected frequency. Significance level = .05.

The computed chi-square value of 31.72 with 2 degrees of freedom is significant at the .001 level, far exceeding the critical value of 5.991. The null hypothesis H_{01} is therefore rejected. There exists a significant association of moderate strength (Cramer's $V = .282$) between urbanization zone and family type: joint families are over-represented in the Core City and sharply under-represented in the Peri-Urban Colonies.

5.2 Testing of H_{02} : Education and Family Type

Table 9. Chi-Square Test of Independence: Education $\times$ Family Type

Educational Level	Joint O (E)	Nuclear O (E)	Total
Illiterate	10 (6.8)	9 (12.2)	19
Primary	30 (19.8)	25 (35.2)	55
Secondary/Hr. Secondary	42 (40.7)	71 (72.3)	113
Graduate	40 (42.1)	77 (74.9)	117
Postgraduate & above	22 (34.6)	74 (61.4)	96
$\chi^2 = 17.857$	df = 4	p = .001	V = 0.211

O = observed frequency; E = expected frequency. Significance level = .05.

The chi-square value of 17.86 with 4 degrees of freedom exceeds the critical value of 9.488 at the .05 level and is significant at $p = .001$. H_{02} is rejected: educational attainment of the household head is significantly associated with family type, with higher education strongly favouring nuclear residence.

5.3 Testing of H_{03} and H_{04} : Independent Samples t-Tests

Table 10. Independent Samples t-Tests: Joint vs. Nuclear Families

Variable	Joint M (SD)	Nuclear M (SD)	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Duration of urban residence (yrs)	34.48 (9.83)	21.11 (9.25)	13.34	398	< .001	1.41
Preference for joint living	37.10 (6.01)	29.83 (6.75)	11.11	398	< .001	1.12

Levene's test non-significant for both variables ($p = .857$ and $p = .141$), justifying the pooled-variance t-test. Significance level = .05.

For duration of urban residence, the obtained t value of 13.34 is significant at $p < .001$ with a very large effect size ($d = 1.41$); H_{03} is rejected. Joint families are significantly longer-settled urban residents than nuclear families, confirming that nuclearization is concentrated among recent in-migrants. For preference for joint living, $t = 11.11$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.12$; H_{04} is likewise rejected. Respondents living in joint families express significantly stronger normative commitment to joint living than those in nuclear families.

5.4 Testing of H_{05} : One-Way ANOVA for Urbanization Pressure

Table 11. One-Way ANOVA: Perceived Urbanization Pressure across Zones

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between groups	2332.5	2	1166.2	42.30	< .001
Within groups	10946.4	397	27.6		
Total	13278.8	399			

Eta-squared (η^2) = 0.176. Significance level = .05.

Table 12. Bonferroni-Adjusted Post-Hoc Comparisons of Zone Means

Pairwise Comparison	Mean Difference	t	Adjusted p
Core City vs. Transitional Zone	-2.40	-3.92	.0003
Core City vs. Peri-Urban Colonies	-6.04	-9.13	< .001

Pairwise Comparison	Mean Difference	t	Adjusted p
Transitional Zone vs. Peri-Urban Colonies	-3.64	-5.45	< .001

Negative differences indicate lower pressure in the first-named zone. Significance level = .05.

The F ratio of 42.30 (df = 2, 397) is highly significant ($p < .001$), and urbanization zone explains 17.6 per cent of the variance in perceived pressure ($\eta^2 = .176$). H_{05} is rejected. All three pairwise contrasts are significant after Bonferroni adjustment, establishing a monotonic gradient of urbanization pressure from the Core City to the Peri-Urban Colonies.

5.5 Testing of H_{06} : Correlation between Pressure and Preference

Table 13. Pearson Correlation: Urbanization Pressure and Preference for Joint Living

Variable Pair	n	r	p
Urbanization pressure $\times$ Preference for joint living	400	.045	.367

Significance level = .05.

The correlation coefficient of .045 is statistically non-significant ($p = .367$). H_{06} is therefore retained. Perceived urbanization pressure bears no direct linear relationship to attitudinal preference for joint living (Figure 4). This is a sociologically important null result: while urbanization is reshaping the residential structure of families (as established under H_{01} , H_{03} , and H_{05}), it is not directly eroding the normative valuation of the joint family. Attitudinal attachment to jointness appears to be anchored in cultural socialization rather than in the immediate experience of urban pressure, echoing the distinction drawn by Goode (1963) between structural and ideological change.

Figure 4. Urbanization Pressure vs. Preference for Joint Living ($r = 0.05$)

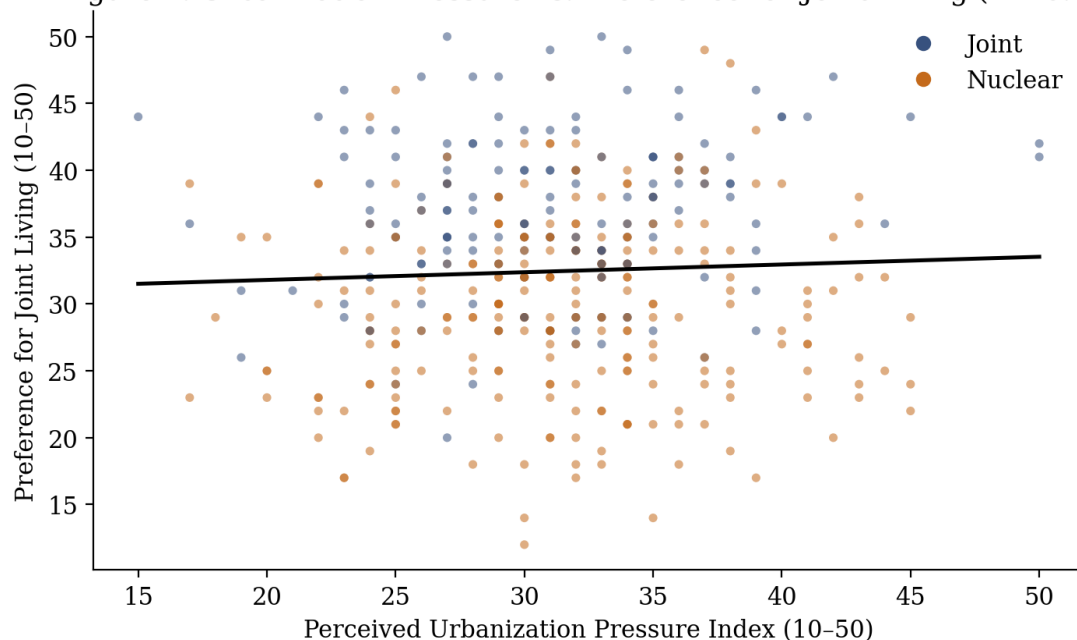


Table 14. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Statement (null form)	Test and Statistic	Decision
H ₀₁	No association: zone × family type	$\chi^2 = 31.72, p < .001$	Rejected
H ₀₂	No association: education × family type	$\chi^2 = 17.86, p = .001$	Rejected
H ₀₃	No difference in urban residence duration	$t = 13.34, p < .001$	Rejected
H ₀₄	No difference in preference for joint living	$t = 11.11, p < .001$	Rejected
H ₀₅	No zone difference in urbanization pressure	$F = 42.30, p < .001$	Rejected
H ₀₆	No pressure–preference relationship	$r = .045, p = .367$	Retained

6. Major Findings and Discussion

First, the nuclear family has become the modal household form in Gwalior city (64.0 per cent of sampled households), yet more than one-third of households remain joint, demonstrating the continued vitality of the institution. Second, family structure follows a pronounced spatial gradient of urbanization: joint families constitute a majority in the historic Core City (52.5 per cent) but less than one-fifth of households in the Peri-Urban Colonies (18.8 per cent). This finding provides micro-level, intra-city confirmation of the macro-level association between urbanization and nuclearization reported in national data (Niranjan et al., 2005; IIPS & ICF, 2021).

Third, education operates as a powerful correlate of nuclearization, in line with Gore (1968), while occupational structure mediates the urban effect: household-based occupations sustain jointness, whereas individualized salaried and professional employment favours nuclear residence, supporting the functional interpretation offered by Goode (1963) and qualified by Singer (1968). Fourth, the significantly higher income of joint households indicates that jointness in the urban economy can be an asset-pooling strategy rather than a residue of tradition. Fifth, and most significantly, the null result for H₀₆ reveals a disjunction between structural and attitudinal change: even nuclear-family respondents record only moderate, not low, preference scores for joint living, and perceived urban pressure does not diminish this preference. The Gwalior evidence thus supports the thesis of adaptive transformation, in which residentially nuclear households retain functional and sentimental jointness (Desai, 1964; D'Cruz & Bharat, 2001), rather than the thesis of family disintegration.

7. Conclusion and Suggestions

The study concludes that urbanization in Gwalior city has decisively restructured the residential form of the family while leaving its normative core comparatively intact. The joint family is receding as a residential arrangement, most rapidly in the newest and most pressured zones of the city and among the educated, salaried, and recently migrated sections of the population; yet it persists as an economic strategy among propertied and business households of the old city and as a cultural ideal across all sections. Policy



and civic planning in tier-two cities should recognize this duality: housing design, elder-care policy, and social security provisioning must serve a growing population of nuclear households, while community institutions can productively build upon the enduring kinship solidarities that residentially separate families continue to maintain. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to trace household developmental cycles, incorporate rural–urban comparative samples from the Gwalior region, and qualitatively examine the modified forms of functional jointness that quantitative categories necessarily obscure.

7.1 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to a single city and a cross-sectional design, which restricts causal inference and generalizability. The dichotomous joint–nuclear classification, though operationally necessary, does not capture intermediate and functionally joint family forms. Self-reported attitudinal measures are subject to social desirability bias. These limitations notwithstanding, the study offers a systematic zone-wise account of family change in an under-studied tier-two Indian city.

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