

# Exploring the Influence of Role Dynamics and Status on Collective Family Relationships in the Modern Context: A Case Study of the Medawachchiya Divisional Secretariat Area, Sri Lanka

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## Abstract

This study is based on modern family members within the Madawachchiya Divisional Secretariat Area in Sri Lanka. The research aims to identify how changing roles and social statuses influence family cohesion, expressiveness, and conflict among members. Utilizing mixed-methods approach encompassing quantitative data from 297 participants and qualitative insights from interviews, the study reveals significant correlations between time spent together, collaborative problem-solving, decision-making processes, recreational activities engagement, and religious practices with familial collectivity. Results indicate that quality time shared among family members enhances their collective identity while highlighting economic challenges that reduce opportunities for such interactions. Additionally, findings reveal

that collaborative problem-solving and joint decision-making positively affect interpersonal relationships within the family unit. The discussion underscores how traditional familial structures are evolving due to modern societal pressures, emphasizing that maintaining strong emotional bonds is crucial for fostering harmony. In conclusion, this study suggests implementing community programs to encourage families to engage in recreational activities together and facilitate open discussions about roles within families. Recommendations include promoting awareness of the importance of shared experiences in strengthening familial ties amidst contemporary challenges, rural households in Sri Lanka face. This research contributes valuable insights into understanding modern familial dynamics and offers practical solutions for enhancing collective relationships among family members.

**Keywords:** Changing, Family Relationship, Role and Status, Sri Lanka

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## Introduction

In modern global society, characterized by rapid technological advancements, human relationships have become increasingly complex. While technology has facilitated significant progress and interconnectedness, it has also posed challenges to the integration and continuity of social structures. The family unit, representing the smallest segment of society, is crucial in fostering social cohesion. Examining familial roles, specifically those related to husband-wife dynamics and parent-child relationships, reveals that these roles are dynamic and influenced by social mobility (Hofferth & Iceland, 1998).

Social modernization has further complicated the traditional framework of familial collectivity, leading to an escalation in risks associated with family disorganization. This phenomenon is marked by rising incidences of domestic violence, divorce, suicide rates among family members, and substance abuse (Benson et al., 2003; Amato & Keith, 1991). Consequently, this research aims to explore the trajectory of familial collectivity regarding established statuses and roles within family structures in contemporary society.

The family is recognized as the smallest unit within the social system, with the term "family" deriving from the Latin word "famulus", meaning servant. A family typically comprises a man, a woman, and their children united in mutual service to one another. Murdock (1949), who analyzed familial structures from a functionalist perspective,

identified four fundamental universal functions that families fulfil:

1. Sexual Regulation
2. Reproduction
3. Economic Cooperation
4. Education/Socialization (Murdock, 1949).

Talcott Parsons (1955) further elaborated on functionalism by distinguishing between detailed and macro analyses of society regarding how individuals perform these functions. In traditional societies, these functions often manifest implicitly through individual behaviors; in contrast, modern societies tend to fulfil these roles more formally (Parsons, 1951). He argued that subsystems within human society rely on integration for their operation and stability.

However, when this integration breaks down, often due to cultural conflicts, economic crises, or political instability, the essential functions that underpin societal existence can erode (Giddens, 1990). This disruption can lead to role conflict within families as subsystems of society and directly contribute to disorganization among family members while increasing feelings of anomie. Given that collective relationships among family members significantly influence social cohesion, this research investigates the nature of these relationships within modern complex social systems and identifies various factors impacting them.

## Problem Statement

In the context of modernized social systems, families are increasingly

encountering significant challenges, particularly in the form of spousal crises and parent-child conflicts. These challenges manifest through various deviant behaviors, such as divorce, abandonment, separation, domestic violence, and even partner suicide. This raises a critical question: Are these familial crises primarily a result of the pressures exerted by modernization within the social system itself, or do they stem from the evolving dynamics of status and roles among family members, influenced by broader societal changes? Understanding the root causes of these complexities is essential to address the growing threats to family cohesion in contemporary society.

### **Research Questions**

1. How are collective relationships, status dynamics, and roles within modern families evolving, and what impact do these changes have on family cohesion?
2. What are the specific deviant behaviors that threaten family cohesion, and how are these behaviors influenced by external social factors?
3. What interventions can effectively address the crises observed in modern family structures, and how can they be tailored to mitigate the impact of evolving familial dynamics and external influences?

### **Objectives**

#### **Main Objective**

The main objective of this study is to analyze the influence of role and status dynamics on the collective relationships

among members of modern families, as well as to propose actionable strategies aimed at enhancing these collective relationships.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To explore the distinct characteristics of the roles and statuses within contemporary family structures.
2. To examine the nature and quality of collective relationships among members of modern families.
3. To assess how variations in roles and statuses among family members affect their collective interactions and relationships.
4. To investigate the challenges modern families face resulting from weakened or disrupted collective relationships.
5. To provide recommendations for interventions to strengthen the bonds and collaborative dynamics between family members in today's social context.

### **Methodology**

This study investigates the concept of collectivity among family members within contemporary rural societies, particularly focusing on the Medawachchiya Police Division, which represents traditional social and cultural norms. A mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques, was employed to achieve this aim.

Data collection was conducted through various methods. A structured questionnaire was administered to 297

married couples in the region to gather quantitative data on their experiences and perceptions regarding family dynamics. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with 34 participants to gain deeper insights into individual perspectives and contextual factors influencing familial relationships.

To further enrich the data, focus group discussions were organized with four groups comprising five married couples each. This approach allowed for interactive dialogue that illuminated family members' collective views and shared experiences.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software, employing Binary Logistic Regression models to examine correlations between independent variables (roles and statuses) and dependent variables (collective relationships). The qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions were systematically analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the underlying themes related to familial interactions.

By triangulating findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses, this study aimed to achieve its objectives by elucidating complex relationships between roles, statuses, and collective dynamics within modern families in rural contexts.

## Literature Review

This literature review aims to explore the impact of family members' status and roles on collective relationships within modern families, particularly in

the context of Sri Lankan rural society. The review synthesizes existing research on family definitions, the nature of collective relationships, and positive and negative influences pertinent to familial roles, drawing on diverse social and cultural perspectives.

A foundational understanding of the family is critical for this study. Burgess (1926) defines families as entities enriched by rituals, strong emotional ties, interdependence, and shared goals. Murdock's (1949) definition further refines this perspective by framing the nuclear family as a social group bound by residence, economic cooperation, reproduction, and socially sanctioned relationships. Both definitions underscore that while marriage may legally formalize familial ties, collective behavior fundamentally sustains these units.

Parsons (1951) has also emphasized the role of collectivity within families. He posits that family institutions are built upon interrelated roles that foster cooperation among members. He highlights three crucial aspects: plasticity, sensitivity, and dependency that define parental engagement in child-rearing processes. This framework emphasizes how fulfilling children's needs requires active participation from all members to maintain healthy dynamics within families.

Further insights into measuring familial collectivity can be drawn from Ting Fok et al.'s (2013) model which identifies key behaviors indicative of strong familial bonds: spending quality time

together; collaborative problem-solving; joint decision-making; and engaging in constructive discussions. Smith et al.'s (2019) exploration into "The Family Meal Model" complements this notion by illustrating how shared mealtime practices enhance communication and strengthen connections among family members.

Research conducted in different socio-cultural environments indicates that leisure activities significantly contribute to relationship quality within families. Zabidi et al.'s (2022) study highlights how recreational interactions between parents and children with intellectual disabilities foster positive relational outcomes such as reduced psychological distress among adults a finding echoed by Nomaguchi (2012) and Roeters et al. (2010).

An examination of religious practices reveals another dimension influencing familial collectivity; King et al.'s (2013) work establishes a correlation between participation in religious activities as a mechanism fostering unity among adult children and their parents while curbing delinquent behaviors amongst youth.

Economic cooperation also plays an essential role according to Murdock's earlier findings which suggest its contribution toward establishing robust interpersonal relations within families. Bonvillain's analysis further supports this idea by defining families as fundamental units of economic stability characterized through mutual labor contributions an observation corroborated by Jovan & Mirjana's research on financial literacy patterns indicating significant correlations

between economic management strategies employed by spouses affecting overall domestic harmony.

Despite extensive scholarship surrounding these themes across various cultures and while much literature explores individual aspects like economic factors or mealtime associations there remains a dearth specifically addressing intertwined variables such as joint recreation or religious participation against socio-economic backdrops unique to Sri Lanka's rural communities.

Consequently, this study seeks not only to address these identified gaps but also aims at investigating the correlation between collective relationships among modern Sri Lankan families through selected variables: time spent together with relatives; collaborative decision-making practices; shared meals; recreational endeavors; combined engagement in religious rituals all alongside examining how educational attainment levels occupational status may influence these dynamics positively or negatively given local cultural contexts.

In sum, through analyzing various dimensions impacting collective behaviors against existing frameworks found within broader sociological discourse as well integrating localized realities the present research will contribute valuable insights toward understanding contemporary familial structures amidst traditional norms prevalent in Sri Lanka today.

## Results

In examining the collective relationships of family members, according to researchers Ting Fok & Allen (2011), the variables of time spent with family members, discussing problems, finding solutions to problems together, making decisions, arguing (Ellis, 2018; Morgen, 1996), eating together (Smith et al, 2019), engaging in recreational activities together, and engaging in religious

activities together were examined in order to identify differences in the factors of Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Conflict. Accordingly, in the present research, a Binary Logistic Regression Model was constructed with the collective relationship of family members, the collective and non-collective categories as the dependent variable and the factors affecting it as the independent variables. The results of that modeling are reported below.

Table 01 Classification Table for the relationship between family members (n=297).  
Source : Field Study, 2021-2023

Observations	Predicted			Percentage Correct
	Family relationship between family members			
	No	Yes		
Family relationship between family members	No	107	5	95.5
	Yes	10	175	94.6
Overall Percentage				94.6

According to Table 01 above, the overall percentage is shown as 94.6%, which shows that the dependent variable is at an optimal level for the regression

analysis. This high percentage suggests that regression modeling effectively differentiates between collective and non-collective family relationships.

Table 02: Model Summary, Collective Relationship of family members (n=297)

Model Summary			
Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	66.112 <sup>a</sup>	.668	.910

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 10 because parameter estimates changed by less

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 10 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001. Source: Field Study, 2021-2023

According to Table 02, Nagelkerke R Square value is (0.910) indicating that approximately 91% of the variance in

familial relationships can be explained by independent variables measured in this study. This demonstrates powerful

predictive capability within the constructed model allowing researchers clear insights into contributors affecting familial cohesion.

Source: Field Study, 2021-2023

From Table 03 the Hosmer-Lemeshow test yielded a chi-square value of (6.160)

Step	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	6.160	8	.629

When constructing the regression model between the independent variable and the dependent variable, the suitability of the modeling should be assessed. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were constructed in relation to the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test.

with degrees of freedom (df) equal to (8) and a significant p-value of (0.629). Since this p-value exceeds (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis; thus confirming our regression model is suitable for analyzing dependencies among relationship dynamics presented through collected data points gathered from respondents throughout study duration conducted.

H0 - The constructed regression model is suitable

H1 - The constructed regression model is not suitable

The results of the analysis conducted with the collective relationship between family members as the dependent variable and the factors affecting it as the independent variables are shown in the table below.

Table 03: The Hosmer-Lemeshow test

Table 04: Correlation between independent variables and dependent variables (n=297)

	Variables in the Equation					
	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Quality Time with Family Members	-4.158	1.216	11.690	1	.001	.016
Collaborative Problem Solving	-2.810	.645	19.007	1	.000	.060
Collective Decision-Making	-2.321	.637	13.276	1	.000	.098
Shared Culinary Experiences	-2.136	.706	9.143	1	.002	.118
Family Outings and Recreational Activities	-1.635	.769	4.525	1	.033	.195
Involvement in Religious Practices	-1.202	.496	5.864	1	.015	.301
Constant	40.330	7.588	28.253	1	.000	3.275E+17

Source: Field Study, 2021-2023

## Quality Time with Family Members

The following hypotheses were developed to test the relationship between among family members and quality time with family members.

H0- There is no significant relationship, between collective relationships among family members and quality time with family members

H1- There is a significant relationship, between collective relationships among family members and quality time with family members

According to Table 04 above, the p-value of the regression test on the relationship between social relationships among family members and quality time with family members is (0.001) and it is less than the significance level (0.05), so the null hypothesis is rejected. That is, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between social relationships among family members quality time with family members.

In the analysis of family dynamics, survey results indicated that a significant portion of respondents, particularly husbands and wives, expressed varying degrees of agreement regarding the importance of spending quality time together. Specifically, (16.8%) strongly agreed while (30%) agreed that they spend enough time with their family members. Conversely, there were reports showing moderate agreement at (46.1%) and disagreement at (7.1%) concerning whether they feel they are able to dedicate sufficient time to their families. When examining the

relationship between quality time spent and family collectivity, observations and interviews revealed that those who reported spending adequate quality time experienced a high level of familial collectivity. In contrast, families where members felt they did not spend enough time together exhibited lower levels of collectivity. An in-depth discussion with one female participant highlighted how economic challenges significantly impact her ability to spend quality time with her family. She shared that her daily struggle to earn a living limits her opportunities for familial engagement, ultimately affecting the overall cohesiveness within her household. This insight emphasizes the crucial connection between financial stability and familial relationships in fostering collective bonds among family members.

*“Even with the current cost of living, the income is not enough for us to meet our needs... We have two children who are old enough to work but they are not working yet... They do not do any housework either.. I cook in the morning and go to work... I have to come home in the evening and cook. I... They stay at home all day and do nothing but talk on their phones... We don't even know what they do on their phones” (D.1, 2021-2023).*

Previous research has highlighted the significance of spending adequate time with family members to strengthen their collective relationships. In the study area, husband-wife participants are primarily engaged in various occupations, with (23.2%) involved in agriculture, (17.5%) in government jobs, (15.8%) in the private sector, and (15.5%) as self-employed individuals.

Interviews revealed that these economic responsibilities have created a challenge for family members to spend quality time together. Many contributors leave for work early in the morning and return late at night, significantly reducing their opportunities for family engagement. Additionally, insights from an officer at the Children and Women's Bureau of Medawachchiya Police Station indicated a concerning trend: children are increasingly moving away from cultivating strong family relationships and are instead seeking connections outside the family unit. This shift underscores how economic pressures can detract from familial bonds and foster external relationships among younger generations.

*"These days, most of the complaints come from parents regarding their children... Most of the parents come to us to solve the problems caused by the love relationships of girls in the age group of 14-16 years. In this area, the rate of unmarried girls getting pregnant at an early age has increased significantly. Also, many have formed love relationships on social media and disrupted their education.... Most of the school-going boys are addicted to video games.... We have identified the negligence of parents for such behavior of children" (D 2, 2021-2023).*

Consequently, parents lack sufficient time to recognize and understand their family members' differences in behaviors, ideas, and attitudes. This absence of engagement risks the quality of interpersonal and emotional relationships within the family. Furthermore, parental involvement in identifying, managing, and mitigating

risky behaviors among family members is anticipated to diminish. This situation indicates that the evolving roles within modern rural families have begun to undermine familial cohesion, posing a significant challenge to maintaining strong relationships among family members.

### **Collaborative Problem Solving**

The following hypotheses were developed to test the relationship between collective relationship and problem-solving among the family members

H0 - There is no significant relationship between the collective relationships of family members and Collaborative Problem Solving.

H1 - There is a significant relationship between the collective relationships of family members and Collaborative Problem Solving.

According to Table 04 above, the p-value of the regression test on the relationship between the collective relationships of family members and collaborative problem solving is (0.000), which is less than the significance level (0.05), so the H0 is rejected. That is, it can be concluded that there is a causal relationship between the collective relationship of family members and collaborative problem solving.

Therefore, it is essential to determine the nature of the causal relationship outlined in the hypothesis test through empirical investigation. The quantitative data reveal that responses regarding collaborative discussions and problem-solving within

families were as follows: (39.4%) in agreement, (37%) neutral, and (15.5%) in disagreement. Prior research supports the notion that engaging in discussions and collaboratively addressing family issues significantly enhances interpersonal and emotional relationships among family members. Qualitative analysis indicates that individuals who refrain from these discussions have a heightened risk of exhibiting abnormal behaviors and engaging in risky activities.

The absence of conducive environments for open dialogue among family members characterized by a lack of attentive listening and closed-mindedness facilitates an environment where problems can remain unaddressed. Observations suggest that this dynamic particularly impacts children's willingness to disclose their issues, potentially leading to confusion about their behaviors and increased apathy among those affected by problems. Such scenarios can escalate to severe outcomes, including suicidal tendencies, as illustrated by cases identified during interviews with individuals residing within the study area.

*"...He has no one to tell his problem There was no one to talk to. He does not associate with many friends. Only our mother and father are at home. We see them only once or twice a week..... After that incident, I felt that our family pays less attention to each other. There are fewer opportunities to talk even with family members. With all the work, there is no time to look after someone else... We lost our younger brother because of that suicide" (D 3, 2021-2023).*

Consequently, while it is evident that discussing challenges collaboratively is crucial for fostering familial collectiveness, contemporary familial structures often lack adequate space for such interactions. Factors such as educational attainment, employment status, and shifts in family dynamics are influential contributors to this issue. Nonetheless, when families engage collectively in addressing individual problems, research indicates a 6% increase in familial cohesion as evidenced by the exponential coefficient (Exp.B) derived from study findings. This underscores that collaborative discussion not only positively influences familial collectiveness but also highlights the detrimental effects associated with failing to engage in such discourse.

### **Collective Decision-Making**

The following hypotheses were developed to test the relationship between collectivism and joint decision-making.

H0 - There is no relationship between the collectivism of family members and joint decision-making.

H1 - There is a relationship between the collectivism of family members and joint decision-making.

The analysis presented in Table 04 indicates a statistically significant relationship between the collective relations of family members and collective decision making, as evidenced by a p-value of (0.000), which is below the conventional significance threshold of (0.05). Consequently, we can reject the H0 and conclude that a meaningful

relationship exists between these two variables.

Decision-making practices serve as another indicator of familial collectivity. Collaborative discussions concerning fundamental aspects such as education, employment, marriage, security, and other lifestyle-affecting matters are shown to foster positive interpersonal dynamics and emotional ties among family members. Data collected from the study area reveal that a substantial percentage of rural families specifically 45.8% of married couples, 70% of unmarried youth, and 61.7% of adolescents engage in joint decision-making processes. This prevalence suggests that awareness regarding the importance of collaborative decision-making may be lacking among adult family members.

A closer examination reveals the influence of status differentiation and role dynamics on decision-making within families. Traditionally dominated by patriarchal structures where fathers served as primary decision-makers, modern familial roles have evolved; mothers increasingly assume responsibility for making decisions due to various factors including higher educational attainment among women, husbands' employment away from home in various sectors, increased ability for mothers to identify family needs accurately, and elevated levels of alcohol consumption by heads-of-household.

As women take on dual responsibilities both economic contributions and household management the opportunities for collective decision-making diminish

significantly. This shift not only contributes to growing indifference among family members but also correlates with rising dissatisfaction within family life as supported by qualitative insights gathered during interviews.

*"We have five children. All of them are married now. The youngest son lives with us. He also has two children. The other children have not moved away from us because they got married, they are just settling here... Our grandfather taught us to keep the family like a temple. That is something I kept in mind when I was building my family. Something I always told my children. Cleanliness, unity, obedience, staying away from sinful activities, all these things should be in the family. Only then will a family be beautiful. I raised my children in that way. The way we talk and work always set an example for the children. Most of the time, we ate together. Even if we couldn't have breakfast or lunch, we would join together for lunch. It is still the same today. During mealtime, we happily shared and taught the children to eat. Even though I was the father of the house, I looked into everything about the children. They got married for our own good. That is why I, one of us, Children talk. It is the same now. Even when making decisions in their family lives, they ask me. All our children have a wonderful bond of brotherhood. They are very close to each other. They are affectionate.. There is good harmony between us. I feel very happy when I think about my children...."* (D 4, 2021-2023).

An illustrative above statement from a 62-year-old male participant emphasizes

that families who engage collectively in decision-making experience stronger emotional connections and enhanced interpersonal relationships when addressing issues impacting both individual lives and familial wellbeing. Families demonstrating this cooperative approach report satisfaction with their shared life experiences characterized by economic collaboration, concern for security needs, high educational attainment levels among children who marry suitable partners.

Moreover, this tendency towards collective action extends into political realms where alignment on ideologies or shared viewing experiences (such as watching television programs) also manifests cohesively within households. Notably, the exponential coefficient (Exp.B) derived from this research illustrates an increase in familial cohesion by approximately 9.8% resulting from collaborative decision-making efforts amongst its members.

### Family Outings and Recreational Activities

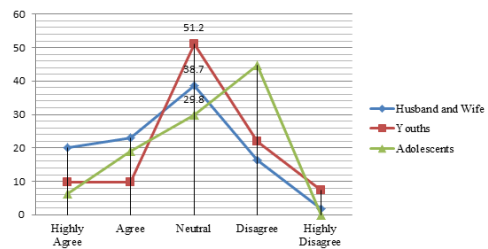
The following hypotheses were formulated to investigate the causal relationship between family cohesion and participation in recreational activities:

H<sup>0</sup>: There is no causal relationship between family cohesion and family outings and recreational activities.

H<sup>1</sup>: There is a causal relationship between family cohesion and family outings and recreational activities.

As indicated in Table 4, the p-value

obtained from the regression analysis concerning the relationship between family cohesion and family outings and recreational activities is (0.033), which falls below the conventional significance level of (0.05). This allows us to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that a significant causal relationship exists between familial collective connections and participation in shared recreational activities.



Figur No. 01: Descriptive survey on and family outing and recreational activities (n=297)

Source: Field data, 2021-2023

According to Orgburn and Nimkoff (1955), a functionalist perspective suggests that engaging in recreational activities fosters closer relationships among family members. Data derived from husband-wife respondents and unmarried youth reveal that while engagement levels among families are moderate overall, adolescents report notably lower levels of involvement in such collective experiences.

Interviews conducted within this study's rural context indicate that opportunities for leisure travel, engaging in games, hosting gatherings, and overall joint participation have diminished significantly. Contributing factors include high workloads, economic

constraints attributable to contemporary living conditions such as safeguarding crops against wildlife and an increased emphasis on individual pursuits facilitated by social media platforms. The repercussions of these changes manifest as heightened selfishness among members, rising incidences of aggressive behavior, closed-minded attitudes towards each other's perspectives, restricted interpersonal skills development, and an increasing tendency toward subjective orientation.

The research findings demonstrate that when families engage collaboratively in enjoyable activities together, quantified through an exponential coefficient (Exp.B), the level of familial collectivity increases by 19.5%. This highlights the critical role of communal experiences for enhancing emotional bonds within families.

Traditionally within rural societies, shared mealtimes have constituted essential rituals for fostering collectivity; however, this practice faces erosion amidst societal shifts toward more complex lifestyles. Evidence indicates that opportunities for communal dining have notably decreased due to various educational commitments or employment obligations affecting household members' availability. Even when occasions arise for shared meals, today, often compromised by distractions such as television viewing or social media use, the values traditionally associated with mealtime interactions, such as love, attention, respectfulness towards one another, all appear diminished.

Focus group discussions further elucidate how busyness and neglect contribute profoundly to this trend away from meaningful interaction during meals. In contrast to these observations, there are families where collective dining remains prevalent; here, a nurturing environment was also noted, characterized by open dialogue during meal times across generations, including youths who actively collaborate with their elders on various matters. Qualities such as obedience, attentive listening, security, resilience against challenges, positive dispositions, and respect for established customs were prominent features observed among youth raised within these supportive familial structures, all contributing significantly to their personal development and reflecting positively on overall familial contentment.

A poignant reflection from a 68-year-old male respondent encapsulates these sentiments regarding his family's harmonious existence:

*"There are 7 members in our family, myself, my wife, my son, my daughter-in-law and their three children. I do farming. We all live very happily and harmoniously at home. We are used to talking and solving everything. That is something I have done since childhood. I learned them from my uncle. There were 10 brothers and sisters in our family. When my uncle was at home, we would all gather and teach them how to live in society. We would discuss the problems of each person. We would listen to their needs. In the evening, we would all sit in the yard and tell stories. We would sing songs. We would have fun. In the past, there*

were very few televisions and radios. We didn't have any of that. We would listen to stories in the evening. When my uncle ate, all the children would eat together. Our mother would first share the food with my uncle, but she would eat after we had finished sharing it with us. She had amazing qualities. Even though she had not studied "I know exactly about society. The things that were taught to us then are valid for children today. I teach them to my sons and teach them to their children. Children need to be disciplined and disciplined. It is impossible without it...to raise children these days...we are used to living with religious values. We worship Buddha in the evening at home. At that moment, the people at home join in. I feel great happiness in family life according to the pattern of all this happening" (D 5, 2021-2023).

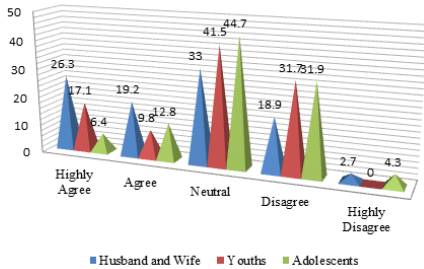


Figure 2: Descriptive survey on family members' cooperation in religious and cultural activities (n=297)

Source: Field data, 2021-2023

Responses from all three groups within modern rural society indicate that cooperation related to religious activities occurs at a moderate level; however, there appears to be a trend towards decreasing participation as evidenced by figure 02. Specifically, collective participation in significant events such as religious pilgrimages was reported to be infrequent

among families. Interviews reveal that such communal undertakings are notably lacking within these households.

A concerning trend has emerged among unmarried youths and adolescents who exhibit negative attitudes toward essential values like restraint, obedience, educational aspirations, including both formal schooling and Dhamma education, as well as involvement in voluntary organizations or children's clubs. Moreover, respect for elders and adherence to traditional rites such as New Year celebrations, Malvara (first menses day) rituals, marriage ceremonies, and funeral observances are waning within this demographic group. This departure from established customs can be attributed largely to media influence coupled with shifts in attitudes characteristics of contemporary lifestyles among younger generations. Interviews conducted during this study further indicate that many participants feel constrained physically and mentally when attempting to engage meaningfully with their spiritual practices after returning home from agricultural work each evening; instead of participating collaboratively in such activities they often prefer engaging with television or mobile devices.

Consequently, interpersonal communication levels within these families have decreased significantly. This lack of connection correlates with an increased propensity for deviant behaviors including aggression towards others, disrespectful conduct toward elders, acts of disobedience, substance abuse involving alcohol or drugs, along

with smoking habits noted among younger individuals.

Importantly however, research findings illustrate that familial cohesion increases by approximately 30.1% when all members actively participate within shared cultural or religious contexts, as indicated by an exponential coefficient (Exp.B) derived through analysis. This lends credence not only towards understanding how crucial joint involvement proves beneficial but also serves highlighting potential areas requiring attention for future intervention initiatives aimed at reinforcing positive familial dynamics rooted deeply into cherished traditions alongside evolving societal norms.

## **Discussion**

The family unit serves as a foundational element of social structure, with the significance of organic relationships among its members highlighted by Radcliffe-B (1952) through functionalist theory. The present research underscores the importance of togetherness for fostering interpersonal and emotional relationships among family members. Key variables examined include quality time spent together, collaborative problem solving, collective decision-making, shared culinary experiences, family outings and recreational activities, and involvement in religious practices.

A notable correlation emerged between collective familial relationships and quality time spent together. It was found that family engaged in private sector employment or self-employment have significantly less opportunity to spend

quality time with one another (Adam & Yousif, 2016). Previous studies indicate that certain family structures such as single-parent households afford even fewer chances for such interactions (Carlson, 2012). As corroborated by both prior literature and current findings, reduced opportunities for engagement can negatively impact interpersonal dynamics across generations.

Despite traditional expectations where men primarily carry external responsibilities (Levy & Widmer, 2002), our findings reveal an increasing participation of women in outside employment while still managing household duties (Yalman, 1967; Levy & Widmer, 2002; Kawak, 2005). This dual burden results in diminished time available for familial connections due to economic pressures stemming from low incomes and high living costs coupled with rising educational expenses (Adam & Yousif, 2016; Pannilage, 2017; Weeratunga & Hugo, 2014). Consequently this study highlights a concerning trend: adolescents increasingly exhibit negative emotional connections with their parents which correlates with higher tendencies toward risky behaviors a finding consistent with existing literature on familial relations (Pannilage, 2017).

Moreover, the present study confirms prior research indicating that collaborative problem solving enhances inter-family relationships positively through open communication channels enabling expression of opinions and moral development, thus fostering stronger bonds among members (Horstman et al., 2016; White, 2000; Haris & Kumar,

2018). Families that engage collectively demonstrate improved relational dynamics while those avoiding discussion around shared issues risk developing weak interpersonal ties leading them towards harmful behaviors (Carmo et al., 2011).

In tandem with collaborative approaches is the role of collective decision-making within families a crucial aspect influencing (Light et al., 1985). Our research indicates moderate levels of involvement among all family members regarding decisions impacting daily life; however it also reveals a significant disparity between husband's participation compared to wives' input (Ericksen et al., 1979; Musa, 2014). Despite traditional patriarchal norms prevalent in rural society remaining strong; female housewives assume much responsibility towards child-rearing processes likely due to education advancements reflecting an evolving dynamic (Falkingham & Baschieri, 2020 ). Such discrepancies contribute further fragmentation into cohesive responses leading many toward feelings associated more closely accompanied by hopelessness oppressed spouses (Pannilage, 2027).

Sharing meals has been culturally ingrained within Sri Lankan society as pivotal towards promoting interactional discourse but has seen decline recently (Smith et al., 2109). Our findings show an alarming trend where modern rural families exhibit decreased frequency engaging over communal dining experiences primarily attributed lower attention paid amidst busy lifestyles tied upon work commitments away from home

resulting limited opportunities bonding together during mealtimes. Social media usage intensifies this disconnect further, removing supervision traditionally upheld within households, thereby breeding negative attitudes surrounding respectfulness or supportiveness toward one another (Larose Eastin, 1998).

Recreational pursuits offer essential contexts enhancing close-knit bonds while fostering healthy communicative exchanges manifesting positively throughout these interactions (Zabidi et.al., 2022). Yet there appears insufficient organization around such pursuits highlighting socioeconomic barriers alongside increased reliance upon technology instead maintaining leisure activities actively engaging outdoors collectively thus thwarting developmental skills growth possibly giving rise newer risks associated selfish tendencies along addictive habits.

Finally, the significance attributed religious participatory engagement emerges resonantly rooted from notions functionalist analysis whereby institutional roles shape levels adherence ensuring social order exists (Giddens, 2006). While quantitative data suggests moderate involvement, qualitatively depicts declining relevance placed upon these values fostered through busyness occupying mind space diverted elsewhere ultimately escalating probabilities deviance exhibited amongst youth (Mahoney et al., 2003).

Together these facets underscore implications calling forth immediate intervention aimed at reinforcing

cooperative frameworks, re-establishing lost bonds, vitalizing cultural practices, sustaining robust emotionally connected environments conducive to nurturing future generations' welfare effectively navigating modernity's challenges head-on.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This research provides valuable insights into the dynamics of contemporary family structures, focusing on the roles and statuses of family members and their collective relationships.

The study reveals that traditional familial roles are evolving as men and women increasingly engage in external employment while managing domestic responsibilities. This shift highlights a growing trend where husbands may contribute less to household duties compared to wives, thereby altering the conventional power dynamics within families. As a result, there is an increased complexity in understanding how these changing roles impact familial interactions. Our results indicate a significant correlation between quality time spent together and cohesive family relationships. Families that prioritize collaborative problem solving, decision-making, shared culinary experiences, recreational activities, and religious involvement demonstrate stronger interpersonal connections among their members. However, many modern families struggle with maintaining these practices due to economic pressures, leading to weakened bonds.

The analysis shows that disparities in participation levels amongst family

members especially concerning decision-making can lead to fragmentation within familial relations. Lower engagement from certain members can diminish collective efficacy when addressing communal challenges or making decisions impacting overall wellbeing.

The study identifies several key challenges modern families face as a result of disrupted collective relationships: decreased emotional connections among adolescents towards parents, heightened risks for engaging in deviant behaviors, reduced opportunities for quality interactions; declining frequency in shared meals, lack of recreational activities, and diminished involvement in religious practices due largely to busy lifestyles centered around work commitments.

Based on our findings, we recommend implementing targeted interventions designed to enhance the collaborative dynamics within families. First, facilitating programs that focus on improving communication skills among family members can significantly strengthen interpersonal relations. Additionally, creating community initiatives that encourage recreational activities through organized events will promote shared experiences and bonding opportunities. Providing resources or workshops centered on effective time management strategies will enable families to carve out quality time together despite their busy schedules. Furthermore, promoting educational campaigns that underscore the importance of collective decision-making processes can contribute to healthier relational dynamics within

the family unit. Lastly, encouraging engagement in cultural traditions such as communal meals and religious practices will foster emotional attachment while grounding individuals within their social fabric. These interventions collectively aim to reinforce family cohesion, enhance communication, and nurture a supportive environment that emphasizes the value of shared experiences and collective decision-making. By addressing these key areas, we can help families build stronger relationships that contribute to their overall well-being.

In conclusion, this research reveals that strengthening the bonds between modern family members necessitates intentional efforts to uphold communication channels amidst evolving societal norms affecting daily lives, significantly influencing emotional connectivity essential for enduring relational success across generations.

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