

One Day National Conference on

**FAMILIES IN TRANSITION: THE
SOCIOLOGUOF INDIAN HOUSEHOLDS IN
CONTEMPORARY TIMES**

Editors

Dr. M. Kousalyadevi

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MIND READING
Publications

Madurai

Title: One Day National Conference on
Families in Transition: The Sociologuof Indian Households
in Contemporary Times

Editor's Name: Dr. M. Kousalyadevi
Dr R. Kavitha

Published by: Mind Reading Publications
Madurai - 625 011

Publisher's Address: Mind Reading Publications
1068, HIG, TNHB Colony,
Madurai - 625 011
Tamil Nadu, India

Edition Details (I,II,III): I

ISBN: 978-93-92150-24-1

Month & Year: March, 2025

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Pages: 146

Price: ₹ 445.00

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STRUCTURAL TRANSITIONS IN INDIAN FAMILIES AND ORGANIC FOOD CONSUMPTION

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Abstract

Nuclearization, rural-urban mobility, and developing digital divisions are examples of structural changes in Indian households that have had a major impact on food consumption patterns, especially the rising demand for organic food items. The transition from joint to nuclear family structures has changed how households make decisions, resulting in a greater focus on food quality, convenience, and health. Urban nuclear families are more likely to consume organic food due to lifestyle-related health concerns and exposure to global food trends. On the other hand, despite their frequent lack of access to markets and digital marginalization, rural families continue to be vital producers of organic food. Migration from rural to urban areas has undermined traditional food systems and decreased the generational transfer of indigenous agricultural knowledge about organic farming methods. Organic food markets are now more widely accessible because to digital platforms and e-commerce, yet unequal access to technology exacerbates socioeconomic inequality in families. These structural changes demonstrate how family dynamics, technology, and sustainability interact to influence how people consume food. Designing inclusive policies that support family-based organic farming, close digital barriers, and advance fair access to organic food across different Indian households requires an understanding of these trends.

Keywords: Structural transition, Indian families, organic food consumption, nuclear families, sustainable food systems.

Introduction

Rapid urbanization, industrialization, globalization, and technological innovation have all contributed to significant changes in Indian family arrangements in recent decades. Nuclear and single-parent households are gradually replacing the traditional joint family structure, especially in urban areas. Everyday life has changed as a result of these structural shifts, including eating habits, health habits, and purchasing patterns. The increasing knowledge and use of organic food products among Indian families is a noteworthy consequence of this change.

In India, family customs, regional farming methods, and intergenerational knowledge networks have all historically been strongly associated with food intake. However, these customary food networks have been upset by rural-urban migration and shifting labor patterns.

Urban nuclear families, who are frequently cut off from their agricultural roots, rely on digital platforms and market-based food systems to satisfy their nutritional demands. Because of worries about food safety, lifestyle diseases, and environmental sustainability, there is a greater demand for organic food products.

However, despite obstacles such as restricted digital connectivity, market limitations, and legislative gaps, rural families continue to be the principal producers of organic food. The awareness, price, and accessibility of organic food among various family groups are further impacted by the digital divide. Thus, greater socioeconomic disparities are reflected in the relationship between shifting family arrangements and organic food consumption. Analyzing this link offers important insights into inclusive agricultural growth, family well-being, and sustainable consumption patterns in modern India.

Rural-Urban Migration and its Impact on Food Systems

India's socioeconomic change has been characterized by rural-urban migration, which has had a major impact on conventional food systems and consumption patterns. Rural households face labor shortages and the disintegration of family-based agricultural methods as family members relocate to cities in pursuit of work and higher living conditions. Traditional, subsistence-focused agricultural systems, such as organic and natural farming techniques that mostly rely on family labor and indigenous knowledge, are weakened by this change.

Instead of using locally sourced or self-produced food, urban migrant families are becoming more and more dependent on market-driven food systems. Longer supply chains, an increased reliance on packaged and processed foods, and a decrease in direct communication between consumers and food producers are all results of this dependence.

Due to higher costs and limited availability in low-income urban regions, access to organic food is still uneven even if knowledge of it is increasing among urban households due to health and environmental concerns.

Because younger generations grow disengaged from traditional farming methods and dietary patterns, migration also interferes with the intergenerational transfer of food-related knowledge. However, although these advantages are not always realized, remittances from migrants might help rural people invest in organic agricultural certification and inputs. In general, migration from rural to urban areas modifies the dynamics of production, distribution, and consumption in food systems, underscoring the necessity of integrated policies that reestablish connections between rural producers and urban organic food markets.

Role of Urbanization in Organic Food Consumption

India's consumption of organic food items has been significantly influenced by urbanization. Fast urbanization has changed eating habits, work schedules, and family routines, especially for middle-class and upper-class urban households. Awareness of food safety, nutrition, and the negative consequences of chemical-based agriculture has increased due to increased exposure to education, media, and global health discourses. As a result, organic food is becoming more and more popular among urban families as a preventative health strategy.

Sedentary lifestyles and increased rates of lifestyle-related illnesses like obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular ailments are frequently linked to urban living. Because organic food items are thought to be safer and more nutrient-dense, urban consumers are encouraged to adopt them due to these health concerns.

Furthermore, even if organic food is more expensive than in rural areas, it is more affordable in urban areas due to larger discretionary incomes.

The growth of organized retail, supermarkets, farmers' markets, and internet platforms that increase the accessibility and visibility of organic food goods has also been made easier by urbanization. For nuclear families and working couples, home delivery services and digital payment methods further improve convenience. However, because low-income urban households frequently struggle with price, the consumption of organic food in urban areas is still socially stratified. Therefore, while urbanization speeds up the consumption of organic food, it also draws attention to disparities in access and consumption habits.

Evolution of Indian Family Structure

In recent decades, social, economic, and cultural shifts have significantly altered the Indian family structure. The predominant kind in the past was the joint family structure, which was defined by close familial relationships, shared housing, joint property ownership, and shared decision-making. Joint families were essential for maintaining cultural values, guaranteeing financial stability, and promoting the generational transfer of information, including agricultural techniques and eating customs.

The joint family arrangement started to deteriorate with the rise of industrialization, urbanization, and modernity, especially after independence. Nuclear families, which are made up of parents and children, were promoted by increased educational options, job mobility, and rural-urban migration. This change was further strengthened by housing constraints, urban living circumstances, and shifting ambitions.

With the rise of elderly-only households, dual-income families, and single-parent households, Indian families have become even more diverse in recent decades. Gender roles and household decision-making have changed as a result of women's growing involvement in school and the workforce. Lifestyle patterns, consumption habits, and dietary preferences have all been impacted by these structural shifts, including an increasing focus on health-conscious diets like eating organic food. As a result, family connections, obligations, and daily routines in modern India have changed, reflecting greater socioeconomic shifts.

Digital Divide and Inequality in Food Consumption

Inequality in food consumption habits in India has been found to be significantly influenced by the digital divide, especially when it comes to organic food items. There are significant regional, socioeconomic, and familial differences in access to digital devices like cellphones, internet connectivity, and digital literacy. Families in cities and with higher incomes are more likely to have access to digital marketing, e-commerce sites, and online information about organic food, allowing them to make well-informed and varied food choices.

On the other hand, many small organic farmers and rural households have limited access to the internet, which makes it difficult for them to interact directly with urban customers, engage in online markets, or obtain price information. Farm revenues are weakened by this digital exclusion, which also increases reliance on middlemen.

Similarly, organic food consumption is mostly a privilege of upper socioeconomic classes because low-income urban households might not be aware of the advantages of organic food or have access to digital delivery networks. Intergenerational learning is also impacted by the digital divide since seniors with traditional knowledge continue to be neglected while younger, technologically connected family members have an impact on dietary decisions. Inequalities in access, pricing, and awareness worsen already-existing social and economic divides as organic food markets depend more and more on digital platforms. Ensuring equitable food consumption and long-term family well-being requires bridging the digital divide through inclusive digital infrastructure, farmer training, and public awareness initiatives.

Conclusion

Food consumption patterns in Indian families have been drastically altered by structural changes brought about by nuclearization, urbanization, rural-urban mobility, and digitization, especially the rising demand for organic food items. Urban nuclear families are increasingly choosing organic food due to its perceived nutritional and environmental benefits as a result of shifting family patterns, lifestyle choices, and health objectives. However, despite difficulties with market access, digital barriers, and dwindling intergenerational knowledge transfer, rural people continue to be essential producers of organic food.

Organic food consumption varies by area and income level due to the growing digital gap and socioeconomic disparities. Digital platforms have increased the demand for organic foods, but they have also made family inequities worse. Integrated policy interventions that support family-based organic farming, close digital and rural-urban divides, and advance universal access to organic food are necessary to address these issues. In order to achieve sustainable consumption, better family health, and equitable development in modern India, it is crucial to acknowledge the relationship between family structures and food systems.

Acknowledgement

The author sincerely acknowledges and expresses gratitude to the Management of NGM College, Pollachi, Tamilnadu for their generous financial assistance through the SEED Money Support for this research work.

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