

# A Comparative Study on psychological well-being among nuclear and joint families in urban population, Chennai

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**Abstract:** Background: Family is a group of people related by blood, emotions, marriage, adoptions. Family is where our roots take hold and from there, we grow. Family play an important role in shaping an individual's personality, values and behaviour. In India, the joint family system has been in existence since ancient times. However, with the passage of time, the joint family system has disintegrated, giving rise to the nuclear family system. The nuclear family is a biological phenomenon of private human society. It not an adaptive form in an evolutionary series of human development nor a functional aspect of industrial aspect. Rather it a practically human time in social space. Nuclear family is the unit of husband - wife and parents - children. Whereas joint family is nothing but an extension of nuclear family in which the spouse was not separated after their marriage due various reasons.

**Objective:** To make a comparative study of the various aspects of psychological factors e.g., happiness, cheerful, etc among the members of nuclear and joint family and to promote a positive mental health among the members.

**Conclusion:** We concluded that studying the psychological well-being of the nuclear and joint families helps finding differences in social support, communication, and their stress levels and enhancers. It can provide a vision into the effects of family structure and their roles playing on mental health, which may inform interference and support systems for individuals in different family setups. In joint families, the people can provide emotional support, develops communication around everyone, and shared responsibilities, which leads to a strong social network. Nuclear families, provides more privacy, allowing for better /quality individual decision-making and reduced conflicts among the family members.

**Keywords:** Joint family, nuclear family, responsibilities, psychological wellbeing, mental health, emotional support, privacy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Family is a group of people with common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. In this the individuals related through blood, marriage or adoption and share a commitment to one another. Family is basically divided into nuclear family (parents, children) and Joint/ extended family (multiple generation residing together).

Major Types

1.Nuclear Family: small consists of couple and their children.

2.Joint Family: multiple generations (grandparents, parents, children) and relatives (uncle's, aunt's, cousin's) residing in a single house.

3.Extended Family: A broad family, includes blood relatives and in-laws beyond nuclear family such as grandparents or cousins, not live in a same house but closely related.

Family plays a crucial role in psychological well-being.

It provides Emotional support, Security and Stability.

Positive family provides open communication and attachment and gives healthy emotional environment. While negative family/Conflicted family can cause more anxiety and depression.

Important roles of family in mental health.

1. Emotional support: In our family, we can share our feelings to others and tell what are all happened today to others. So that, it reduces our anxiety and stress
2. Security: we can tell any problems to them and they safeguard us if any problem arrives.
3. Communication: we can improve our communication in family. We can tell whatever, they don't judge us
4. Modelling: Family members, modelling our characters, thoughts, skills. Either we can become good/bad citizen based on our family.
5. Nurturing Resilience: Strong family bonds help in people to build resilience and manage our difficulties easily

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A random sample of 80 members are taken with inclusion criteria of people married for 5 years and the data is collected using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale 28 from the urban population, Chennai

### SCORING:

The scores are given based on the results obtained from the questions from 1 to 5 for each question

**Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics**

Name	
Age	
Locality	Pudupet
Occupation	Professional Semi profession Skilled Semi-skilled unemployed
Education	Professional Post graduate Graduate High school Secondary Primary
Year since married	10-May 15-20 20-25 25-30 30+
List of people living in your family (from oldest to youngest)	1 to 10
Type of family do you belong to	Joint family Nuclear family
Relationship with the head of the family	Head of the family Wife Mother Father Mother-in-law Father-in-law Daughter Son

- For an individual the score may range from 14 to 70
- The score obtained from nuclear family and joint family is added up and the mean score is calculated for both the groups separately
- After obtaining the mean score, compare the mean score of both the groups and results are obtained accordingly.

**QUESTIONNAIRES**

**THE WARWICK-EDINBURGH MENTAL WELL BEING SCALE-28**

Please tick (✓) the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've had energy to spare	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling good about myself	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	3		
I've been interested in new things	1	2	3		
I've been feeling cheerful	1	2	3		

■ Satisfaction  
■ Affect  
■ Competence  
■ Relatedness  
■ Autonomy

Figure 1. Scoring Criteria of Study Participants

**3. RESULTS**

**Table 2. Distribution of Psychological Well-being Scores Across Gender, Family Type, Education, Income, and Occupation Categories**

Score Category	Gender (Male)	Gender (Female)	Joint Family	Nuclear Family	Education (1-2)	Education (3-4)	Education (5-6)	Income (1-2)	Income (3-5)	Occupation (1-2)	Occupation (3-5)
Low (14-42)	18	20	22	16	24	10	4	26	12	22	16
Moderate (43-59)	22	24	24	22	18	20	8	20	26	18	28
High (60-70)	2	3	2	3	1	3	1	1	4	2	3

A total of 79 respondents participated in this study. The sample consist 43 females (54.4%) and 36 males (45.6%). 42 responses (53.2%) belonged to nuclear families and 37 (46.8%) to joint families. The majority of responses (46.8%) are from the head of the family, then by wives (46.8%), daughters-in-law (2.5%), mothers (2.5%), and mothers-in-law (1.3%). In the education, the largest group had secondary-level education (secondary: 48.1%), followed by graduate level (24.1%). In occupation, the majority fell under skilled (53.2%), followed by professional (27.8%).

Family vs category

Table 3. Association Between Family Size and Psychological Well-being Score Category

		category		Total	
		low	high		
LIST Of PEOPLE IN FAMILY	2.0	Count	1	0	1
		Expected Count	.5	.5	1.0
		% within LIST Of PEOPLE IN FAMILY	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within category	2.4%	0.0%	1.3%
		% of Total	1.3%	0.0%	1.3%
	3.0	Count	8	4	12
		Expected Count	6.2	5.8	12.0
		% within LIST Of PEOPLE IN FAMILY	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within category	19.5%	10.5%	15.2%
		% of Total	10.1%	5.1%	15.2%
	4.0	Count	14	9	23
		Expected Count	11.9	11.1	23.0
		% within LIST Of PEOPLE IN FAMILY	60.9%	39.1%	100.0%
		% within category	34.1%	23.7%	29.1%
		% of Total	17.7%	11.4%	29.1%
5.0	Count	1	13	14	
	Expected Count	7.3	6.7	14.0	
	% within LIST Of PEOPLE IN FAMILY	7.1%	92.9%	100.0%	
	% within category	2.4%	34.2%	17.7%	
	% of Total	1.3%	16.5%	17.7%	
6.0	Count	2	3	5	
	Expected Count	2.6	2.4	5.0	
	% within LIST Of PEOPLE IN FAMILY	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%	
	% within category	4.9%	7.9%	6.3%	
	% of Total	2.5%	3.8%	6.3%	
7.0	Count	5	7	12	
	Expected Count	6.2	5.8	12.0	
	% within LIST Of PEOPLE IN FAMILY	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%	
	% within category	12.2%	18.4%	15.2%	
	% of Total	6.3%	8.9%	15.2%	
8.0	Count	4	0	4	
	Expected Count	2.1	1.9	4.0	
	% within LIST Of PEOPLE IN FAMILY	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
	% within category	9.8%	0.0%	5.1%	
	% of Total	5.1%	0.0%	5.1%	
9.0	Count	4	1	5	
	Expected Count	2.6	2.4	5.0	
	% within LIST Of PEOPLE IN FAMILY	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%	
	% within category	9.8%	2.6%	6.3%	
	% of Total	5.1%	1.3%	6.3%	
10.0	Count	2	1	3	
	Expected Count	1.6	1.4	3.0	
	% within LIST Of PEOPLE IN FAMILY	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%	
	% within category	4.9%	2.6%	3.8%	
	% of Total	2.5%	1.3%	3.8%	

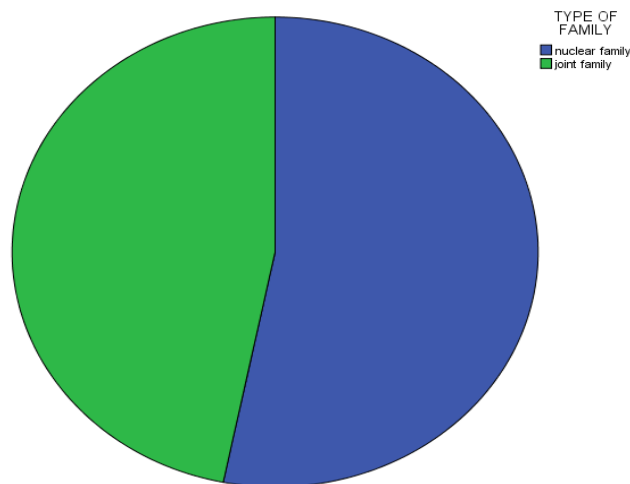
Total	Count	41	38	79
	Expected Count	41.0	38.0	79.0
	% within LIST Of PEOPLE IN FAMILY	51.9%	48.1%	100.0%
	% within category	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	51.9%	48.1%	100.0%

Table 4. Chi-square Test Showing Association Between Family Size and Psychological Well-being Score Category

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.288 <sup>a</sup>	8	.009
Likelihood Ratio	24.279	8	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	.154	1	.695
N of Valid Cases	79		

a. 10 cells (55.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .48.

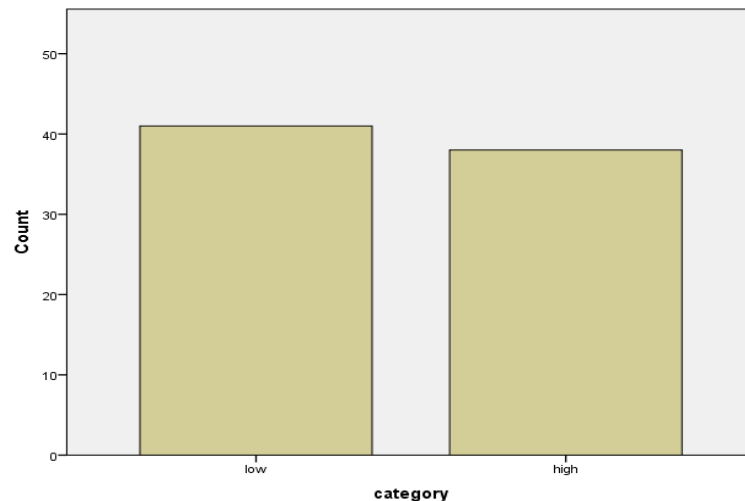
Figure 2. Comparison of Psychological Well-being Scores Between Joint and Nuclear Families



Score Distribution by Category

Respondents were classified into two categories based on their total welfare scores: Low (scores 14–42) and High (scores 43–70). Of the 79 valid cases, 41 respondents (51.9%) come under Low category and 38 respondents (48.1%) fell into the High category

Figure 3. Distribution of respondents according to Psychological Well-being scores



**Association between Family Size and Score Category**

A chi-square test was performed to predict the relationship between the number of people in the family and the welfare score category. The Pearson Chi-Square value was 20.288 (df = 8, p = .009), shows a significant association between family size and welfare score category.

**Key findings:**

- 5 members families show - High scores: 92.9% scored High, while 7.1% scored Low.
- 2 members families (n = 1) and 8 members (n = 4) scored Low category (100%), proving very small or very large families face issues depends upon their situation.
- 4 members families (n = 23) were: 60.9% Low vs. 39.1% High.
- 6- or 7-members families - High scores (60% and 58.3% respectively).

**Inference**

**Family Size**

The significant chi-square result ( $\chi^2 = 20.288, p = .009$ ) shows that family size is related with welfare score levels for mental wellbeing. 5 members sized families appear to reveals the highest welfare outcomes, while 2 members families and 8 members households show lower welfare scores. This non-linear relationship suggests that a family size should be around limited amount which should not become a burden among individual due to resource strain in very large families or reduced social support in very small ones.

**Education vs Category**

**Table 5. Association Between Educational Status and Psychological Well-being Score Category (Crosstabulation Analysis)**

**Crosstab**

		category		Total	
		low	high		
EDUCATION	primary	Count	3	5	8
		Expected Count	4.2	3.8	8.0
		% within EDUCATION	37.5%	62.5%	100.0%
		% within category	7.3%	13.2%	10.1%
		% of Total	3.8%	6.3%	10.1%
secondary		Count	25	13	38
		Expected Count	19.7	18.3	38.0
		% within EDUCATION	65.8%	34.2%	100.0%
		% within category	61.0%	34.2%	48.1%
		% of Total	31.6%	16.5%	48.1%
higher secondary		Count	5	2	7
		Expected Count	3.6	3.4	7.0
		% within EDUCATION	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
		% within category	12.2%	5.3%	8.9%
		% of Total	6.3%	2.5%	8.9%
graduate		Count	3	16	19
		Expected Count	9.9	9.1	19.0
		% within EDUCATION	15.8%	84.2%	100.0%
		% within category	7.3%	42.1%	24.1%
		% of Total	3.8%	20.3%	24.1%
post-graduate or above		Count	5	0	5
		Expected Count	2.6	2.4	5.0
		% within EDUCATION	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within category	12.2%	0.0%	6.3%

	% of Total	6.3%	0.0%	6.3%
professional	Count	0	2	2
	Expected Count	1.0	1.0	2.0
	% within EDUCATION	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within category	0.0%	5.3%	2.5%
	% of Total	0.0%	2.5%	2.5%
Total	Count	41	38	79
	Expected Count	41.0	38.0	79.0
	% within EDUCATION	51.9%	48.1%	100.0%
	% within category	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	51.9%	48.1%	100.0%

**Table 6. Chi-square Test Showing Association Between Educational Status and Psychological Well-being Score**

**Category  
Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.387 <sup>a</sup>	5	.001
Likelihood Ratio	25.044	5	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.140	1	.143
N of Valid Cases	79		

a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .96.

The chi-square analysis of education level vs welfare score category provided a Pearson Chi-Square of 21.387 (df = 5, p = .001), proving a significant relationship between education and welfare score.

Key observations include:

- education (graduate) was: 84.2% scored High, contributing 42.1%
- education (secondary) was Low: 65.8% Low vs. 34.2% High.
- education (post-graduate or above) scored -Low category (100%),
- education (professional) scored -High category (100%), this group was very small (n = 2).
- Education (primary) showed a slight lean toward High score (62.5%).

**Inference**

**Education**

The significant chi-square result ( $\chi^2 = 21.387, p = .001$ ) provides evidence that education level is a key determinant of welfare scores of an individual well-being. The pattern is positive — higher education associate with higher welfare scores — but in non-linear pattern. It shows that education empowers individuals and families with knowledge, skills, and awareness that contribute to improved family welfare outcomes.

**Frequencies**

**Table 7. Frequency Distribution of Occupation Among Study Participants**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Professional	22	27.8	27.8	27.8
Semi profession	7	8.9	8.9	36.7
Skilled	42	53.2	53.2	89.9
Semi-skilled	3	3.8	3.8	93.7
Unemployed	5	6.3	6.3	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

**Table 8. Frequency Distribution of Educational Status Among Study Participants**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Profession	8	10.1	10.1	10.1
Post Graduate	38	48.1	48.1	58.2
Graduate	7	8.9	8.9	67.1
High school	19	24.1	24.1	91.1
Secondary	5	6.3	6.3	97.5
Primary	2	2.5	2.5	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

**Table 9. Gender-wise Distribution of Study Participants**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid female	43	54.4	54.4	54.4
male	36	45.6	45.6	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

**Table 10. Distribution of Participants According to Type of Family**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid nuclear family	42	53.2	53.2	53.2
joint family	37	46.8	46.8	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

**Table 11. Distribution of Participants Based on Relationship with Head of the Family**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid daughter-in-law	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
Daughter-in-law	1	1.3	1.3	2.5
head of the family	37	46.8	46.8	49.4
mother	1	1.3	1.3	50.6
Mother	1	1.3	1.3	51.9
mother-in-law	1	1.3	1.3	53.2
wife	25	31.6	31.6	84.8
Wife	12	15.2	15.2	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study contribute to the evidence on the socio-demographic determinants of family wellbeing in Indian households. Two key variables — family size and education level — were found to be significant and related with mental well-being scores among the 79 respondents.

##### Role of Family Size in Welfare

The association between family size and well-being score ( $p = .009$ ) is consistent with prior research suggesting that family members and behaviours play a critical role in shaping welfare outcomes. Families with 5 members proved the highest proportion of high scorers (92.9%), which may show a balanced dependency ratio — there are shoulders to provide support without excessive burden.

The concentration of Low scores among families with 8 members (100%) shows findings from studies on large households in low- and middle-income families, where low resource availability per person, reduced space per individual, and reduced per-capita income can affect overall family and individual mental well-being. The single respondent with a 2-member family also scored Low, possibly due to limited social support or economic producibility of very small households.

However: 55.6% of cells in this crosstab had expected counts below 5, suggesting the chi-square test may be less reliable for extreme family size categories. Future studies with larger samples may yield more stable estimates.

### Role of Education in Welfare

Education emerged as one of the most powerful factors of welfare outcomes in this study ( $p = .001$ ). Respondents with higher education levels (levels 4 and 6) were represented among High scorers, documented positive relationship between education and family welfare. Education increases human per capita — improving employment, income, health, and quality decision-making capacity — all of which leads to better family welfare outcomes.

The unusual pattern at education level 5 (post-graduate), where all respondents scored Low, merits further investigation. This may reflect the specific occupational or life circumstances of this sub-group, small sample size effects ( $n = 5$ ), or possible reverse causality where highly educated individuals have higher welfare expectations and therefore rate their satisfaction lower on self-report measures.

The dominant group — those with secondary education (level 2,  $n = 38$ ) —scored Low (65.8%), reinforcing the importance of advancing educational attainment beyond secondary school to meaningfully impact family welfare.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between variables and family welfare scores among 79 respondents. Using chi-square tests and crosstabulation analysis, the findings we get to find that both family size and education level are significantly associated with mental wellbeing of oneself and their lifestyle and also with surroundings. Family size showed a curvilinear relationship with welfare, with medium-sized families (5 members) giving the best outcomes, while very small and very large families recorded low welfare scores. Education provides a positive association with welfare, with higher education provides higher well-being scores.

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