

Nuclearization of Family as a Transformative Process from Expressive to Instrumental Social Capital in Pakistan

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Abstract

The institution of family switched over to many forms in its adaptation sojourn to the emerging needs. More and more families nuclearize in response to the demand of globalization in Pakistan. Movement from joint family to nuclear family is a shift from solidarity/ cohesion function (expressive) of traditional society to get wealth/fame of modern society (instrumental). It is generally believed that Nuclearization of family leads to deficit in social capital by loosening strong 'intra' family ties; however, he transformed structure of family caters to the emerging needs and individual aspirations. The study is carried out in Kothal township Kohat employing ethnographic approach. Individual and group interviews are conducted for collection of data. The aim of this paper is to see the emerging patterns of social capital building in the form of 'inter' community links because of Nuclearization of family in response to growing pre-requisites of modern life.

Introduction

Structure of family is consistently changing according to the requirement of the age. Being a foremost institution, it has become a focus of public concerns and academic debate. In developed countries it has got diversity of forms and household structures, ranging from lone mothers to non-heterosexual families. However, in developing countries, its plurality responds simultaneously to the low pace of development. The changing patterns in family structure for good (Beck, 1992; Beck-Gernssein, 1995.2002; Finch and Mason, 1993; Weeks, 1995), or for bad (Davis 1993; Morgan 1995; Murray 1994) have a key role in overall mechanism of development process.

As a result of globalization, broad social changes have occurred. These changes have profound impact upon family on one hand and it offers many solutions to the resulting situation, on the other hand. Nuclearization is a process of switching over to one form of resources (expressive) to another form (instrumental) of social capital. This change is not automatically happening in isolation. Rather it is a response toward growing individualism and globalization, low level of participation in family and neighborhood commonalities, trend of exclusiveness and decreasing political engagement (Edwards, Franklin and Holland, 2003). Intense specialization of work has compartmentalized homogenous society. In realization of the 'ideal', humankind especially the poor and disadvantaged lost one thing i.e. each other (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). This U-turn

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to missing links has clear implications for concerns about general existence and generation of social capital.

According to network view of social capital, it can be defined as ‘resources embedded in one’s social networks, resources that can be accessed or mobilized through ties in the network’ (Lin, 2005). These ties, here means ‘intra’ and ‘inter’ family links helps in perpetuation of existing resources (Bourdieu, 1997), or producing future prospects for parents and ‘intergenerational closure’ for community (Coleman, 1991, 1997).

James Coleman (1988) has treated ‘family’ as a locus of social capital building. He was more concerned with parent’s investment in children for reciprocal benefits and sustenance of cohesive norms and sanctions as means of social control. Changing patterns of ‘family’, according to Coleman (1997), have weakened the ‘intra’ and ‘inter’ bonds that led to deficit in social capital. Even the nuclear family in industrialized society is seen structurally deficient where one or both parent work outside the home. The general conditions too weaken the social bonds that cater more for free-riders, lowering interdependency and taking away the status of family as the ‘nucleus of social organization’ (Coleman, 1991). Stressing upon bonding social capital places Coleman in the camp of ‘communitarian view’ of social capital (for detail see Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). For Coleman (1997), social networks provide reciprocal help, information flow and social control to the concerned community. He attempts to combine organization theories and economic rationality to understand the action of individuals in social ties based on trust for mutual facilities and retention of community norms (Edwards, Franklin and Holland, 2003). That is why he stresses upon close networks and feel satisfied with the expressive purpose of social capital in traditional family structures and for the same reasons, he laments over the modern family structures as deficient in social capital (Coleman, 1997).

Robert Putnam decentralized family in his macro level analysis of social capital. Although he mentions the loosening bonds of family as indicator showing decline in social capital yet he looked forward to ‘bridging’ ties among individuals that would ameliorate the loss. Poor can rely on ‘bonding’ links just to ‘get by’ and to ‘get ahead’; more diverse relations are required in modern world (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

According to Fukuyama (1999), the process of social capital building initiates in family but it should transcend the familial boundaries. However, it is true in many cases that strong ‘intra’ ties among families shade weak ‘inter’ community links or vice versa. Switch over from ‘intra’ family links to ‘inter’ community ties have important implications especially in today’s world. This shift from Coleman’s bonding to bridging networks and Fukuyama’s a positive speculation of strengthening the weaker bonds for capturing resources is somewhat optimistic view.

As stated earlier, the definition of social capital by Lin clearly shows that it is ‘the imbedded resources’ in one’s network. The consequences of social capital have little concerns with the conceptual formulation like ‘trust’ and ‘reciprocity’. At the same time

it is different from 'network' as it is used as a source to harness resources (Lin, 2005). The density or closure of network may increase the chances of individuals or groups to capture social capital (Bourdieu, 1980; Bourdieu, 1983/1986; Coleman, 1990), whereas the openness of a network may offer a diverse stock of resources or information control or influence (Burt, 2001; Lin, 1999).

Lin (1986), when clarifying the concept of so-called 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000), delineates three layers of social relations. First we call it 'bonding' that provides reciprocal support in usually dense social ties among kin and confidants. The middle category consists of links through which resources and information operate but more or less through direct interaction. These relations include both stronger and weaker ones not solely based upon 'bonding' network. The outer layer connects people that instill a sense of belongingness in them. Intense social mobility and changing nature of life only offers a chance to establish relationships in the form of common clan, church or a club which in turn does not automatically create an atmosphere of direct interaction.

Now the resources in these networks i.e. social capital, has two different purposes: expressive and instrumental. Expressive purpose is employed for preserving existing resources and 'bonding' relations are expected to perform the purpose of preservice because of similarity of resources, objectives, obligations, norms and values etc. of the actors in the network (Lin and Ensel, 1989). The instrumental purpose enables the actors to embark upon new strategies/resources to develop in any of the three layers discussed above. Availability of resources in a network is relative: some have sufficient of it whereas others feel themselves at weaker wicket to get instrumental goals. With scarcity of resources in one's 'bonding' network, the actors feel confined and those with higher resources achieve instrumental goals easily (Lin, 2005).

Again there is similarity of social capital available in inner layer of relations that binds individuals as explained by homophily principle (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954; Homans, 1950; Laumann, 1966; Wellman, 1979; Lin, 1982; Mcpherson, SmitLoving and Cook, 2001). This principle explains that there is positive and explicit correlation between intensity of interaction, shared sentiments and shared resources. So, for every individual actor, there are similar resources offered by the closest relatives and friends in a 'bonding' network and usually these resources suffice for expressive purposes and poor use these resources to 'get by'. If the amount of resources present in the closest circle of relations is higher, then it helps the actors to 'get ahead' as employed by non-poor. Bourdeiu (1997) stresses upon the reproduction of class by affluent families that parallel apart the different sects of society and widening the gap of inequality.

On contrary, the hetrophily principle (Granovetter, 1973; Lin, 1982; Lin, 2001; Burt, 1982) states that when 'bonding' network weakens and bridging ties extends, it leads to diluted relationships but offers multiple gains to the actors. These diverse resources facilitate instrumental actions and there are more chances of capturing embedded resources.

The credibility of existence and access to social capital is relative to cultural environment subject to time and space. The role of family is mostly undertaken by state in most of the developed countries; although it exists in many forms. Parents have a limited role in child socialization. But in developing countries like Pakistan, the cultural norms are categorically resisting the momentum of change to the form of family as institution. The traditional structures respond very slowly to modernism. In rural areas, joint family system is still in vogue. Poverty and dependency upon agricultural output maintain its existence. But decreasing level of agricultural economy due to population explosion and globalization lead to looking for new enterprises. Emergence of different sectors and development attract people to cities where more facilities are available. In Pakistan, the status of family is changing with change in economic structure. More and more families are nuclearized that automatically alters the relationships among individuals. Old networks are replaced by new links to acquire more profits.

This study is focused upon the changing conditions that resulted in switch over from one type of social network to another i.e. Nuclearization of family. What type of instrumental resources nuclearized families needed? And how far they been successful in capturing it? And to look for the opinions of relative status of nuclearized families while retrospectively upon the 'bonding' network (joint family).

Methodology

This study was carried out in Kothal Township Kohat where most of the families are nuclear. The process of Nuclearization is not an established entity, so a thorough and deep insight was required to understand the shift from traditional set of relationships to a newly adopted phenomenon. To chalk out an understandable panorama of the reality from hopes and uncertainties, the researchers employed ethnographic technique. The technique was used to understand the newly established web of ties in its natural setting with all possible tools like first-hand observations and conduct individual and group interviews (see Punch, 1998). Secondly, it helped a great deal while participating in the routine life of the people for long time to elicit information in a non-sensitive way (Hammersley, 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Individual and group interviews were conducted to give respondents enough time (see Cavan, 2003) and a forum to recapitulate past experiences in joint families and elaborate the present set up of family and ethnographic notes helped the researcher in filling the gap found in interviews as a cross check in understanding the reality.

As this research was carried out in a township divided in strata based on socio-economic statuses, hence, stratified sampling technique was used to allocate the number of respondents in each sector. Total 80 respondents were taken for individual interview and 10 group interviews were managed. Purposive sampling technique was used to choose required number of respondents in each category. Efforts were made to make the population homogenous and involve the respondents from all walks of life.

Results and discussions

Townships are new entities established by government and private sector in cities in response to growing urbanizations in Pakistan. Usually middle class people, who are serving in government or private organizations, after tiresome calculations, migrate their families to these townships. In present study, majority of the respondents (70%) migrated from rural areas, saying farewell to joint family system. Most of them yearned for those old relations and were fascinated by the strong values and norms of the rural areas. In midst of all this enthusiasm, they declared that our experiences of modern world in cities compelled us to migrate and set up a nuclear family. Most of the respondents were highly qualified (53%) and were serving as single bread winners in government or private organization with average income. As most of the wives of the respondents (36%) were matriculates clearly showing their status as house wives.

Endogamy being a trait of Pakhtun culture is on decline in preferences of new generation. When asked about the type of mate selection, 55% of the respondents chose exogamy as more suitable form of marriage in modern life. This changing trend is a search of new relationships that may enhance the chances of getting more opportunities in vertical mobility.

These people compared the rural and urban settings and found that nuclear family provides more congenial atmosphere for children's education (25%). Most of the respondents are active members of the parent-teacher-councils of their children's schools. They also have direct interaction with the parents of their children's friends. This finding has two implications: first the economic and second the social. The economic factor is more important in our discussion. The respondent opined that joint families used to dilute the efficacy of their income by catering to general needs of the whole family. Lowering yield of agriculture and vast surge of unemployment widened the gulf of dependency on these few bread winners in joint families. In other words, they felt that joint family became a liability upon them: this is what Woolcock and Narayan (2000) calls it as the cost of social capital. Although there are many benefits of dense social ties yet it places non-economic claims on the members' sense of commitment and these obligations have economic consequences.

As far the social factor is concerned, guidance in home work, concept of study room and co-curricular activities are usually lacking in traditional set ups. The respondents told that first the standard of education in rural areas was very low and secondly, it was very difficult to maintain hours of study at home and other co-curricular activities in joint family system. The same evidence is also clear from the following comments of a respondent in another study:

"I like joint family system and rural setting for myself and I visit it off and on but I don't prefer it for my children. I have managed a competitive set of network where they are supposed to acquire all chances and opportunities to excel in their future fields of interest in this competitive world" (Aminullah, 2015).

Whereas in nuclear family most of the respondents (91.3%) were satisfied with the scheme of studies and their progress in education, security system, autonomy in decision making and a free chance of adopting modern life style. In townships/cities, there are many well reputed educational institutions and evening academies where one can afford to admit few (his own) children only because of calculated income/expenditure. Formal security system is maintained by both public and private sectors. The democratic way of relations offer more chances of personal choices in choosing new lifestyles. Memberships in public clubs, friends and colleagues were described as precious assets.

While taking the case against patriarchy, most of the respondents (51.3%) told that joint families in rural areas are vulnerable because of growing materialism/selfishness. This is what one of the respondent said:

Everyone hooks up his/her personal interest without deeming for group welfare. It is system that promotes hypocrisy in members and joint ventures usually lead to a bone of contention. Usually the elder members of family keep children busy in unfruitful agricultural concerns while using an uncivilized language to them. This sort of socialization patterns create psychological problems in children that widens gap between old and new generation.

All these are clear indications that traditional communities have failed to sustain the solidarity function on one hand and spoils the chance of gripping the new opportunities offered by modernism on other. Patriarchy is in state of limbo oblivious of expressive purpose of action and at the same time it is not ready to devolve its powers to new generation. The shift from agriculture economy is gradually changing the trend.

Conclusion

Nuclearization is process that replaces the bonding links with a bridging web of network to harness the resources embedded therein. Multiplicity of ties parallel with diversity of resources expose members to take initiatives in adapting strategies like more investment in children's education, more care regarding health, enjoying privacy and modern life style. The traditional joint family system can't even perform the cohesion/solidarity function because of loosening status of agriculture economy. Townships in cities offer a series of networks that helps in embarking new enterprises. In other words, Nuclearization is more instrumental to 'get ahead'. The nuclear families in Pakistan are satisfied in their struggle for more investment in education of their children. Memberships in formal and informal organizations support them enjoy modern life style with more privacy and security.

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