

A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FAMILY MEMBER'S DEATH IN THE CONTEXT OF HINDU RITUALS, BEHAVIOUR OF RELATIVES, BELIEF AND ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract:

Family (from Latin: familia) is a group of people related either by consanguinity (by recognized birth) or affinity (by marriage or other relationship). It forms the basis for social order. The purpose of the family is to maintain the well-being of its members and of society. Ideally, families offer predictability, structure, and safety as members mature and learn to participate in the community. The family performs various valuable functions for its members. Perhaps most important of all, it provides for emotional and psychological security, particularly through the warmth, love, and companionship that living together generates between spouses and in turn between them and their children. Death in a family is an inevitable part of life—something that virtually all of us go through at some point—losing someone you love can be one of the most painful experiences you'll ever have to endure. Whether it's a close friend, spouse, partner, parent, child, or other relative, the death of a loved one can feel overwhelming. You may experience waves of intense and very difficult emotions, ranging from profound sadness, emptiness, and despair to shock, numbness, guilt, or regret. You might rage at the circumstances of your loved one's death—your anger focused on yourself, doctors, other loved ones, or God. You may even find it difficult to accept the person is really gone, or struggle to see how you can ever recover and move on from your loss.

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Introduction:

Family, is the primary and important agent of socialization. It is a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, constituting a single household and interacting with each other in their respective social positions, usually those of spouses, parents, children, and siblings. Family teaches you what is life. They love you unconditionally and forgive you irrespective of how big the mistake is. Family is a Universal group which is found in all types of societies.

There are two main types of family

- **Nuclear Family** – This type of family is small in size and includes husband, wife and their children. It is seen in modern societies.

- **Joint Family** – This type of family is big in size and includes three generations living under the same roof.

Whatever is the type of family, the family members are attached and connected to each other very strongly. They share emotional, social, economic and religious bonds. From the birth till death, family is the first and permanent social institution in every individual's life. The bond can only be separated by death.

The death of a family member brings everything to a halt. Losing a parent, spouse, child, sibling or other relative is a shock. At times, the death may occur suddenly or after a long-time illness. Losing a person with whom you have been from your birth is very traumatic. The love, laugh memories that you have

made with that person is unforgettable. Everyone has their own different reactions on death. At first, the death is very difficult and almost unacceptable. After death, you try to talk to that person, you hope that he/she will get up and smile at you, but there is no reaction or movement in his/her body, which is very heart-breaking. There is a hope in your mind that some magic can take place and you can get that member back but during the traditions and rituals your brain starts accepting that it is reality and you start accepting that there is no such magic. Death is a significant and traumatic life event that is virtually a universal experience as the majority of people experience the death of at least one loved one in their lifetime. The death of a family member greatly impacts the rest of the surviving family members. Every death is unique in its own way, so each death should impact people differently. When looking at families as a whole, it is clear that there are major differences between families, meaning there should be differences in how family units cope with the death of one of its members. The circumstances surrounding the death, as well as characteristics of the surviving individual affects how that family and its individual members grieve the loss.

Methodology of the Study:

Research methodology discusses and explains the data collection and analysis methods you used in your research. A key part of your thesis, dissertation, or research paper, the methodology chapter explains what you did and how you did it, allowing readers to evaluate the reliability and validity of your research and your dissertation topic.

Statement of the research problem:

A Study of Family member's death in context of Hindu rituals, behaviour of relatives, beliefs and role of social media.

Objective of the study:

The motive of research is to find out answers to the

question by applying scientific procedures. The chief goal of the research is not only to identify the verity that is hidden but also which has not been discovered yet.

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- To understand socio-economic background of family.
- To understand the impact of family member's death in the context of rituals, behaviour of relatives, beliefs and role of social media.

Sampling frame:

A sampling frame is a list or source from which you will select your sample participants in a pre-determined method. The list will have a structure to it. Meaning, it will have a unique identifier and a contact method for each member of the population. In this way, you can classify and code the information about segmentation characteristics.

Convenience sampling is a type of **non-probability sampling** where the researcher selects sample members from only available and easily accessible participants. For this study researcher will adopt Convenience sampling. Researcher is going to select 20 families as respondents for this study.

Data collection:

Data collection refers to the procedure of gathering and measuring information for research using authentic methods. The data will be collected from two sources i.e., Primary and Secondary.

- 1) **Primary Source:** Researcher will collect data through Interview Schedule as a primary source. Researcher will prepare the interview schedule according to the objectives of the study.
- 2) **Secondary Source:** Besides Interview, the researcher will collect the data from online sources, books and unpublished dissertations.

Data analysis:

Data analysis is the process of extracting important details from the large scale of data collected during the field work. It means reducing the data and interpreting

it. With the aid of Interview Schedule, researcher will gather the data systematically and this collected data will be analysed manually or with the help of computer.

Content and discussions:

It is an approach used analyse human interactions by addressing the meanings that people impose on objects, events or behaviour. According to the theory, people behave based on what they believe and not on what that is objectively true. Society is constructed on human interpretations. Death is a sociological issue that affects everybody from different cultures, religions, and areas of the world, each one views death in a different way. The meanings and symbols of death are different within each society. Whether it's words, gestures, rules or roles, social interactionism focuses on the way people act through symbols, and the way we interpret and give meaning to the world through our interactions. A funeral is an important symbolic code that represents the feelings and meanings in which particular societies view death.

It is a macro sociological theory by Emile Durkheim which focuses on how the structures, institutions of society are interrelated and connected together. Every structure in society works together to maintain the stability of society. Family, relatives, neighbours all together are connected socially. They all together take different responsibilities in order to complete the last rituals of the deceased. All the close and faraway family members come together in order to complete the last rituals. Irrespective of gender, caste, religion etc for the sake of social bond come together for the deceased.

The attachment theory is designed to explain the evolution of that bond, its development, and its implications for human experience and relationships across the life course. In a family all the members are attached with each other emotionally and mentally. In this bond of attachment if one of the members, suddenly leaves that is dies, it creates a shock to other members of the family. It disturbs the functioning of

the family completely. Death of any member in a family breaks the other members emotionally and mentally.

Social change is a concept that explains how the relationships and interactions of people can alter social and cultural values, norms and institutions with time. It is inevitable for a society to go through change socially. social change, in sociology, the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behaviour, social organizations, or value systems. It shows how and why the death practices changes. It analysis dying from the stone age to the globalised present.

The rational choice theory states that people make decisions that benefit or align with their personal goals after logical analysis. In simple terms, whenever an individual is given choices, they are most likely to opt for a choice that will maximize their advantages. During the death rituals of the deceased, relatives come only when there are good facilities available for them. For ex- place to stay, food etc. They come only if it is beneficial to them.

Human beings are born as physical beings and are shaped by cultures. Dying reverses this process as dying person falls from culture back into the nature. So, if a person is hospitalised, is in coma or not responding is a person who is socially dead as he is not connected to the society by his own. Family Members start adjusting with the situation and behaves as the person is no more as there is no interference of that person in the life. The person is physically alive but is dead socially.

This theory shows the relation between mortality experience with the fear of death and the formation of defensive mechanisms to mitigate such fear. The inevitability of death influences everybody with a permanent concern, or terror of death. It affects the psychological thoughts and the social behaviour of the individuals. Now a days due to the media and

advancement in the technology. Talking about death is no more a taboo. Due various real and fake information about death, individuals have a different mindset and fears about death. There are various conditions on individuals before few hours of death.

Disengagement theory is a now-discredited theory of aging that posits that successful aging involves a voluntary disengagement from the social roles of active adult life. It describes how older adults are freed from social norms, disengage in response to their impending death, Once the person becomes old, he tries to disengage himself from his responsibilities. He gives forwards his roles and responsibilities to the family members. On the other hand, the society also starts disengaging with the individual. There is a lot of change in a individual's life, as their ego changes. Their aim towards life changes in-fact, ends.

The Kübler-Ross model, commonly known as the Five Stages of Grief. It shows how people generally deal with death, loss, and grief. There are five stages

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

According to this theory an individual through various stages of grief. Firstly, it is very difficult to accept the reality that the person who was with you just few minutes ago is now no more. The pain is unexplainable. This kind of situations totally disturbs the mental health of the individuals. It also destroys and disturbs the family functions and structures.

Karl Marx's theory of alienation describes the estrangement of people from aspects of their human nature. Once an individual is died, he is totally alienated from the society and its bonds. He is free from human nature. Now he has his own new world where there is no human interference. He is no more a part of human society.

Socio-economic background of the families.

This chapter includes the analysis of socio – economic background of the families that have experienced death. The present study is based on primary data collection in south Mumbai to know the socio - economic status of the respondents and their families. In this study the socio - economic data was collected from twenty families and from every family 1 member was interviewed. With the aid of interview schedule the data was gathered systematically, and this collected data had analysed manually and also with the help of the computer.

- Most of the respondents about 90% have described them as female while remaining 10% as male.
- Most of the respondents about 70% live in a nuclear family while remaining 30% live in joint family.
- Most of the families about 70% have below 5 members in the family while remaining 30% have above 5 members in their family.
- Most of the families have above 50,000 monthly income while other 20% have between 31,000 to 50,000 and remaining 5% have below 30,000.
- 50% of respondents have 1BHK house, while other 40% have 1RK, and the remaining 10% have 2BHK and above.
- Most of the respondents about 85% are Gujrati, while other 10% are Maharashtrais, and the remaining 5% are Marwadi.
- Most of the respondents about 65% are house wives while the remaining 35% are employed in service sectors.
- Most of the respondents about 90% have 1 to 2 children in their family while other 10% have 3 to 4 children.
- Most of the deceased about 50% were under the age group of 60 to 80 years.
- Most of the deceased about 60% were male.
- Most of the death about 80% recorded in this study was between 2018 – 2020.

- Most of the deceased about 75% were friendly and extrovert.
- Most of the respondents about 50% were children of the deceased.
- Most of the deceased about 65% were retired.

Concluding remarks:

Most of the families are nuclear and stay in 1RK or 1BHK, where accommodating the relatives and performing the rituals is a task.

Impact of family member's death in the context of rituals, behaviour of relatives, beliefs and role of social media.

The present study is based on primary data collection in South Mumbai to know the impact on respondent and his/her family members due to the death. In this study the socio-economic data is collected from twenty families and from every family one member was interviewed. With the aid of Interview Schedule, the data had gathered systematically and this collected data had analysed manually and also with the help of computer.

- Most of the people about 40% died as they were aged whole other 30 % due to illness, 25% natural death, 10% due to accidents and 5% due to excessive exercising.
- In most of the families about 65% son/ daughter and grand children were present during death while other 15% siblings where present and remaining 10% relatives were present during the time of death.
- In most of the cases about 55% the individual died at home while 40% in the hospital, 10% on the road and 5% in the gym.
- About 60% of the deceased was not hospitalized during death while the remaining 40% were hospitalized.
- About 90% Hospital formalities were not manageable by the family members while remaining for remaining 10% it was manageable.

- About 45% of the deceased were happy/satisfied with the death while other 45% were Unsatisfied and scared and for the remaining 10% it was a sudden experience.
- About 40% of deceased were hospitalized during the last 3 days of death while other 30% were unconscious and the remaining 25% were all well.
- Son/daughter and spouse about 60% are the most impacted member while siblings were about 15% and remaining 10% were parents.
- Most of the respondents about 40% took more than 3 months to accept the reality of death in the family.
- Most of the deceased close relatives about 65% stay in Mumbai while other 35% stay far-away.
- Most of the relatives about 60% arrived late for the deceased while other 40% were on time.
- About 50% of the families found it difficult to handle the relatives.
- About 60% of neighbours supported for the arrangements.
- About 80% of relatives were non supportive.
- About 50% of families do not celebrate festivals/ events for 4 to 6 months.
- About 90% of families kept the body for about 6 hours While the remaining 10% kept above 6 hours.
- Most of the families about 90% did fire cremation while the other 10% did electric cremation.
- Most of the pandit ji about 90% well performed all the rituals while other 10% did not performed well.
- About 40% of pandit ji demanded for clothes while 25% each for money and silver and rest 10% demanded gold.
- For about 60% social media was not helpful while for other 40% social media was helpful
- About 60% of the deceased did not have a social media account while the other 40% had a social media account.
- WhatsApp about 40% is the most helpful social media platform in the process of grief

- About 50% of people started messaging RIP instead of visiting while other 50% started posting pictures on Instagram and putting comments on posts.

Concluding remarks:

From above findings it can be concluded that there are change in rituals from before to after. The relatives that come for the deceased, just come to show up as they are least interested. Their behaviour is fake and are not adjustable. Social media has become a part of grief process too. Social media has brought social change. Instead of visiting and expressing feelings for the deceased, now a days individuals just send RIP messages and uploads stories, posts and status on different social media platforms. Individuals should understand and think emotionally about the deceased and show interest in his last rites as that person is no more going to interfere in our lives ever again.

Case Study:

Case No. 1

No Affection towards the deceased.

Kamla ben was 79-year-old women living in South Mumbai with her family. Her Family included Parimal (Son), Sonal (daughter in law), Komal (granddaughter) and Dev(grandson). Kamla ben loved her family a lot. Her health conditions were average, she was weak due to her age but she was able to do her own work like cooking for herself, getting ready etc. She was very kind, and lovable. She had a very good relation with her neighbours. She uses to take so many efforts for her family. Even after having weakness in her body She use to cook every day and give tiffin to Parimal while he was going to office and to her grandchildren for their college. But her family members never acknowledged her efforts towards them. They use to ignore her and never counted her as a family member. They never respected her. Even the grand children for whom she poured all her love and efforts, they also ignored her. Then to she was following the same routine. Where ever there was a house party, the family asked her to sit

in a corner and not to interfere in the party and not to talk with the guests. She had to cook food by herself, Sonal never cooked for her. During festivals also as she is the elder of the house, she should be respected but she was ignored.

She died in the year 2019, The day she died, her family members busted in to tears but just to show up the neighbours. All the neighbours gathered at her house as she had maintained a very good and lovable relationship with the neighbours. The neighbours had real tears and affection for her but the family members didn't. Family member always treated her as a burden so they were just waiting for this moment, as the moment came, they were happy internally but just to show up they had tears in their eyes. As per the Hindu rituals the body was prepared and taken for the cremation. They did not perform fire cremation as per the ritual but performed electric cremation due to shortage of time. As the grand son had to attend a meeting. The ashes according to the rituals should be poured in a sacred river like ganga, but they poured it in the sea at Marine drive, Mumbai. Just few hours after the rituals all the family members were back to normal as nothing happened. They started laughing and planning for some events as now they don't have any burden with them. Due to the change in generations, there is a social change. Individuals do not follow the rituals, and if they do, it's just to show up family members as they are least interested. The death is same but the way to cope up with the death is changing. Before, people use to follow the rituals with interest so that the soul of the deceased rest in peace. Individuals use to have love, affection and care towards the deceased. They had the feeling of losing someone from life. But now a days, people don't care about the deceased, they just care about their own schedules etc Here, in this situation, Even the attachment theory proves to be wrong as even after staying with for years the members are not attached with each other. They did

not care about the deceased at all. The deceased took lots of efforts in order to gain love and respect but there was no positive output. Even after death the deceased did not receive love and care as the members were least interested about the peace of soul.

Conclusion:

- Death is an inseparable part of life. It is inevitable.
- Death is one of the most certain things but where a person will die is unclear.
- People experience different kinds of emotions after the death of a loved one. Along with grief and loneliness, they may feel guilt, anger, or even relief. The period of mourning allows the family members to come to terms with the death. They also reorganize their family system to deal with the absence of the person who was so important to it.
- When death is expected, family members find it less stressful as they have begun to cope with the coming death by managing a series of smaller losses, including the person's inability to fulfil his or her usual roles or to do specific tasks. In contrast, unexpected deaths like accidents, suicides, and murders bring greater emotional shock. The family members have had no time to get used to the idea that the individual is going to die.
- During the last rituals, the relatives that are there are only there to show up and are least interested. Only the family members are the most affected and are mentally disturbed.
- The relatives are not adjustable and have a fake behaviour.
- The inevitability of death affects those in the past, present and future. While death is constant the customs surrounding the death are ever changing. Some of these customs are the same while many are different. The way people cope with death through traditions, funerals and memorialization has changed.
- The rituals performed before, were performed with interest by the individual in order to provide peace to the soul. But, the rituals performed now are according to the convenience of the performers and not for the soul.
- Pandit ji have made it a business of demanding extra money or metals in the name of peace of soul.
- Even though the way people deal with death has changed it is still a part of life. Death will always be a part of life even if technology has prolonged it.

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