The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Strengthening Family Bonds: A Study

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Introduction

Family communication is a key aspect of interpersonal communication, as it forms the foundation of how individuals interact with one another within the family unit. The family, often considered the smallest segment of society, is a space where members openly share their thoughts, emotions, and experiences-ranging from happiness and joy to frustration, fear, and pain. This open exchange is made possible by the trust that develops from an early age. A child, as they interact with parents, siblings, and elders, builds this trust over time, which in turn shapes the topics and nature of communication as they grow. As family members mature, the relationships become deeper and more nuanced, fostering an environment where open and honest discussions can take place.

The style and content of family communication often vary depending on the type of relationship between members. Over time, the role of mass media and new communication technologies, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, the internet, and social media, have become integral to the way families in India communicate. These mass media channels have increasingly occupied both time and space in Indian households, influencing how family members interact with one another. New communication technologies, in particular, have transformed traditional modes of communication within the family, making it essential to understand their impact on family dynamics in contemporary Indian society.

It is crucial to examine how mass media technologies have affected communication patterns in Indian households, the ways in which they shape family interactions, and their influence on the timing and nature of interpersonal communication. This shift in communication practices highlights the changing landscape of family life in India and the role of technology in shaping those dynamics.

Types of Families in India

A family is broadly defined as a unit consisting of two or more individuals connected by marriage, blood, adoption, or consensual union, generally residing in a single household and engaging in regular interaction and communication (Desai, 1994). The structure and nature of families in India vary widely, influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors.

Major Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the patterns and dynamics of interpersonal communication within families.
2. To examine the influence of mass media content and information on interpersonal communication within the family system.
3. To analyze the role of media-sourced content and information in shaping day-to-day family discussions and interactions.

Area of study

Faridabad town was selected for the study especially due to its cosmopolitan and non-uniform distribution of population of all classes throughout the city locations. The study was conducted at six locations covering the entire city and used a stratified sample method (n=1515 family members) who were mainly habitant of Faridabad city. They were mainly recruited via personal contacts and in different classes. All participants or representatives are either responsible member or head of family who are given questionnaire in the local language format after the brief introduction and instructions. The family respondents were divided broadly into two age groups 20-40 years (young generation) and above 40 years (adult generation) respectively.

Sampling method-Cluster sampling method was used for five different geographical locations within the city.

Sample size-The overall 1515 responses collected, 1025 family responses were finalized and included in the study. The family respondents were further divided into two age groups 20-40 years (young respondents) and above 40 years (adult respondents).
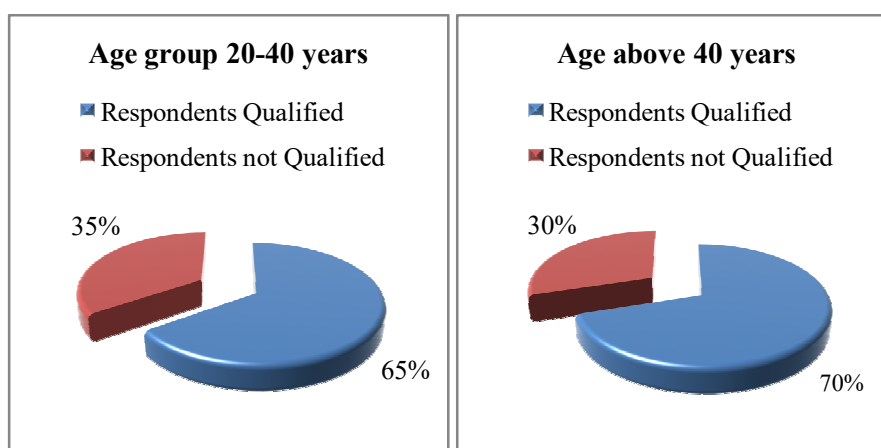
Analysis & Interpretation

Table 5.1: Graphical representation of qualified respondents in the given age groups of Faridabad study

Educational Profile

	Illiterate	School level	Graduate	Post Graduate	Professionals
■ Age group 20-40 years	12.4	23.5	27.1	19.4	17.6
■ Age above 40 years	15.3	29.5	21.6	15.2	18.4
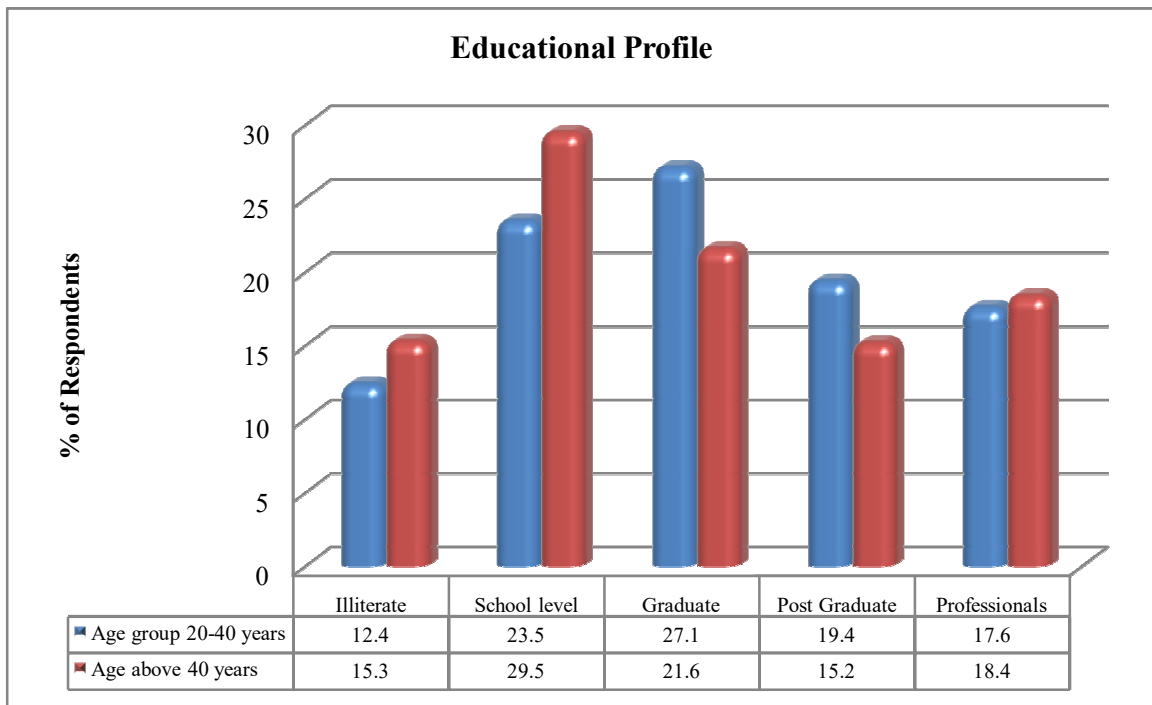
Table 5.2: Graphical representation of educational profile of respondents

Family System

	Nuclear	Joint (including extended
■ Age group 20-40 years	84.9	15.1
■ Age above 40 years	94.36	5.64
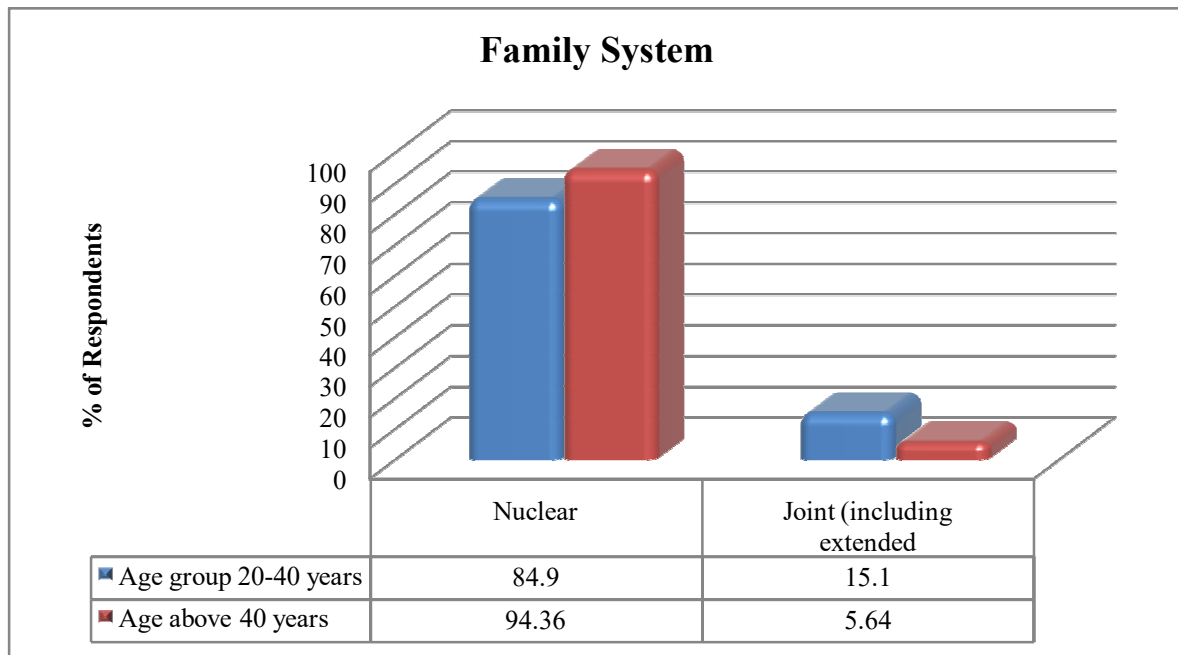
Graph 5.3: Graphical representation of Family System of respondents in both age groups

Table 5.4: Interpersonal communications in Family system while sharing personal thoughts with other member(s) in the family. (Respondents in the age group 20-40 years)

Relationship	Never	Rarely	Often	Mostly	Always	Total
Husband	2	3	5	22	84	116
Percentage	1.7%	2.6%	4.3%	19.0%	72.4%	100.0%
Wife	2	3	11	27	97	140
Percentage	1.4%	2.1%	7.9%	19.3%	69.3%	100.0%
Mother	3	3	6	13	43	68
Percentage	4.4%	4.4%	8.8%	19.1%	63.2%	100.0%
Father	0	3	5	7	26	41
Percentage	0.0%	7.3%	12.2%	17.1%	63.4%	100.0%
Son	3	3	7	11	9	33
Percentage	9.1%	9.1%	21.2%	33.3%	27.3%	100.0%
Daughter	0	1	2	7	11	21
Percentage	0.0%	4.8%	9.5%	33.3%	52.4%	100.0%
Brother	1	2	2	14	10	29
Percentage	3.4%	6.9%	6.9%	48.3%	34.5%	100.0%
Sister	0	3	3	5	12	23
Percentage	0.0%	13.0%	13.0%	21.7%	52.2%	100.0%
Others	3	4	5	20	7	39
Percentage	7.7%	10.3%	12.8%	51.3%	17.9%	100.0%
Total	14	25	46	126	299	510
Percentage	2.7%	4.9%	9.0%	24.7%	58.6%	100.0%

Chi-square Value	Degree of Freedom	Asymp. Significance
84.665	32	0.000

Significant Value of $\chi2$ at 0.05=46.194

Table 5.5: Interpersonal communications in Family system while sharing personal thoughts with other member (s) in the family. (Respondents in the age group above 40 years)

Relationship	Never	Rarely	Often	Mostly	Always	Total
Husband	0	2	3	20	67	92
Percentage	0.0%	2.2%	3.3%	21.7%	72.8%	100.0%
Wife	0	0	1	43	94	138
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	31.2%	68.1%	100.0%
Mother	2	2	16	19	55	94
Percentage	2.1%	2.1%	17.0%	20.2%	58.5%	100.0%
Father	1	5	3	13	32	54
Percentage	1.9%	9.3%	5.6%	24.1%	59.3%	100.0%
Son	1	3	4	9	26	43

Percentage	2.3%	7.0%	9.3%	20.9%	60.5%	100.0%
Daughter	0	5	5	8	20	38
Percentage	0.0%	13.2%	13.2%	21.1%	52.6%	100.0%
Brother	1	3	3	2	13	22
Percentage	4.5%	13.6%	13.6%	9.1%	59.1%	100.0%
Sister	0	1	1	1	10	13
Percentage	0.0%	7.7%	7.7%	7.7%	76.9%	100.0%
Others	0	1	2	3	15	21
Percentage	0.0%	4.8%	9.5%	14.3%	71.4%	100.0%
Total	5	22	38	118	332	515
Percentage	1.0%	4.3%	7.4%	22.9%	64.5%	100.0%

Chi-square Value	Degree of Freedom	Asymp. Significance
69.703	32	0.000

Significant Value of $\chi2$ at 0.05=46.194

Table 5.6: Interface Interpersonal communication in Family system on contents and information received through social media (Facebook/ Whatsapp/ Twitter etc.) in the age groups 20- 40 years

Relationship	Never	Rarely	Often	Mostly	Always	Total
Husband	2	2	13	72	76	165
Percentage	1.2%	1.2%	7.9%	43.6%	46.1%	100.0%
Wife	0	2	10	67	80	159
Percentage	0.0%	1.3%	6.3%	42.1%	50.3%	100.0%
Mother	0	3	3	12	23	41
Percentage	0.0%	7.3%	7.3%	29.3%	56.1%	100.0%
Father	0	1	6	8	19	34
Percentage	0.0%	2.9%	17.6%	23.5%	55.9%	100.0%
Son	1	1	4	5	12	23
Percentage	4.3%	4.3%	17.4%	21.7%	52.2%	100.0%
Daughter	0	2	5	7	18	32
Percentage	0.0%	6.3%	15.6%	21.9%	56.3%	100.0%
Brother	0	0	3	9	16	28
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	10.7%	32.1%	57.1%	100.0%
Sister	0	0	2	6	20	28
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	21.4%	71.4%	100.0%
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	3	11	46	186	264	510
Percentage	0.6%	2.2%	9.0%	36.5%	51.8%	100.0%

Chi-square Value	Degree of Freedom	Asymp. Significance
41.900	28	0.044

Significant Value of χ2 at 0.05=41.337

Table 5.7: Interface Interpersonal communication in Family system on contents and information received through social media (Facebook/Whatsapp/Twitter etc.) in the age groups above 40 years

Relationship	Never	Rarely	Often	Mostly	Always	Total
Husband	3	7	10	52	79	151
Percentage	2.0%	4.6%	6.6%	34.4%	52.3%	100.0%
Wife	0	2	2	64	83	151
Percentage	0.0%	1.3%	1.3%	42.4%	55.0%	100.0%
Mother	0	0	2	2	2	6
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
Father	0	2	0	5	8	15
Percentage	0.0%	13.3%	0.0%	33.3%	53.3%	100.0%
Son	1	1	7	22	34	65
Percentage	1.5%	1.5%	10.8%	33.8%	52.3%	100.0%
Daughter	0	4	5	26	40	75
Percentage	0.0%	5.3%	6.7%	34.7%	53.3%	100.0%
Brother	0	3	6	0	7	16
Percentage	0.0%	18.8%	37.5%	0.0%	43.8%	100.0%
Sister	0	0	0	3	0	3
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Others	0	0	4	8	21	33
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	12.1%	24.2%	63.6%	100.0%
Total	4	19	36	182	274	515
Percentage	0.8%	3.7%	7.0%	35.3%	53.2%	100.0%

Chi-square Value	Degree of Freedom	Asymp. Significance
78.598	32	0.000

Significant Value of χ2 at 0.05=46.194

Table 5.8: Interface Interpersonal communication of media issues that respondents in the age groups 20- 40 years discuss with other members of their family

Media Issues	Never	Rarely	Often	Mostly	Always	Total
Advertisement	0	0	1	2	4	7
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	28.6%	57.1%	100.0%
Budget	0	0	0	1	5	6
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
Business/Economics	0	0	2	1	3	6

Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	16.7%	50.0%	100.0%
Cricket	0	0	4	15	33	52
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	28.8%	63.5%	100.0%
Crime	0	0	2	5	8	15
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	13.3%	33.3%	53.3%	100.0%
Current Issues	0	0	0	3	9	12
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
Discovery	0	0	3	2	7	12
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	16.7%	58.3%	100.0%
Educational	0	0	2	7	6	15
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	13.3%	46.7%	40.0%	100.0%
Entertainment	0	0	3	4	15	22
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	13.6%	18.2%	68.2%	100.0%
Films	0	1	2	3	10	16
Percentage	0.0%	6.3%	12.5%	18.8%	62.5%	100.0%
Greetings and messages on social media	2	4	8	12	26	52
Percentage	3.8%	7.7%	15.4%	23.1%	50.0%	100.0%
International	0	0	0	2	5	7
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
Joke/Quotations on social media	1	8	9	23	42	83
Percentage	1.2%	9.6%	10.8%	27.7%	50.6%	100.0%
Local issues	0	0	0	2	9	11
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%	81.8%	100.0%
Media	0	0	0	0	2	2
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Music	0	0	1	4	5	10
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	40.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Politics	0	0	3	10	15	28
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	10.7%	35.7%	53.6%	100.0%
Pollution	0	0	1	1	4	6
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	66.7%	100.0%
Religious	0	1	3	6	11	21
Percentage	0.0%	4.8%	14.3%	28.6%	52.4%	100.0%
Science	0	0	0	3	3	6
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Serials	0	0	6	12	17	35
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	17.1%	34.3%	48.6%	100.0%
Social	0	0	1	2	5	8
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%	100.0%

Social media issues	1	2	9	23	32	67
Percentage	1.5%	3.0%	13.4%	34.3%	47.8%	100.0%
Sports (other than cricket)	0	0	0	3	3	6
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Weather	0	0	0	2	3	5
Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
TOTAL responses	4	16	60	148	282	510
Percentage	0.8%	3.1%	11.8%	29.0%	55.3%	100.0%

Chi-square Value	Degree of Freedom	Asymp. Significance
65.219	96	0.993

Significant Value of $\chi2$ at 0.05=119.871

Key Findings

Mass Media Sources

➢ Despite the rise of digital media, the popularity of print media, particularly newspapers, remains strong. There is little variation in newspaper subscriptions between the two age groups. Over 70.4% of youth and 73.2% of adults subscribe to at least one newspaper.

➢ Television remains the dominant source of entertainment and information in both groups, with 95.1% of youth households and 96.9% of adult households owning at least one television set.

➢ Mobile phone usage is widespread, with approximately 44.71% of young respondents and 53.6% of adult respondents reporting that their households own at least two mobile handsets.

➢ Internet connectivity is also prevalent, with 73.33% of young respondents and 52% of adult respondents having access to at least one internet connection at home.

➢ A significant preference for Hindi newspapers is observed across both age groups. About 70.28% of youth and 76.74% of adults prefer reading Hindi newspapers, while English newspapers are favored by 24.9% of youth and 23.44% of adults.

Interpersonal Communication Patterns in the Family

➢ The highest level of interpersonal communication within families occurs between husbands and wives.

➢ In terms of sharing personal thoughts, wives tend to share more with their husbands than husbands do with their wives, across both age groups. The results from Pearson's Chi-Square test indicate significant differences in how personal thoughts are shared within each group. However, when comparing responses across the two generational groups, significant differences are observed between wives and other family members. No significant differences were found in the communication patterns between other family members-such as

husbands, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters-across the two age groups (young: 20-40 years, adult: above 40 years).

➢ In terms of gossiping, husbands in the younger generation (20-40 years) tend to gossip more to their wives than vice versa. However, in the adult age group (above 40 years), the trend reverses, with wives gossiping more to their husbands than husbands to their wives.

Interface Interpersonal Communication in Family System on Content and Information Received through Mass Media Sources

➢ Commonly discussed topics in both the younger and adult generational groups, based on the content and information received through mass media, include: jokes and quotations on social media, cricket, social media issues, greetings and messages on social media, and television serials.

➢ The results show no significant difference in the types of issues shared within families regarding the content received through mass media across both age groups. This suggests that, regardless of age, family members tend to discuss similar topics influenced by mass media.

Conclusion

➢ Traditional print media, particularly newspapers, continues to be a preferred source of mass media in most households, maintaining its relevance even in the digital age.

➢ Television has become a common household feature, with 95% of households owning a TV set. The number of cable and dish television subscribers is steadily growing, especially among urban households.

➢ Mobile phone usage is rapidly increasing, with many urban families owning multiple handsets-often two per household.

➢ Hindi daily newspapers dominate in terms of subscriptions, outpacing all other types of print media in most households.

➢ With the proliferation of various mass media sources, exposure to different content is rising exponentially. As a result, interpersonal communication within families is increasingly influenced by the issues and topics presented in the media.

➢ Both husbands and wives remain deeply connected through interpersonal communication, particularly when sharing personal thoughts or seeking advice from one another.

➢ Social media has emerged as the dominant source of communication in terms of daily time spent, with both younger and older generations in the family increasingly engaging with it.

➢ Comparative analysis across two generational groups reveals distinct differences in behavior, particularly among wives, who play a pivotal role in sharing personal thoughts and feelings within family communications.

➢ Overall, interpersonal communication within families is perceived as more credible and reliable than information received through mass media, regardless of the generational group.

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