

## STATUS OF THE FAMILY IN THE DIGITALIZED WORLD

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### Abstract

The family unit encounters exceptional obstacles and prospects in the current dynamic and fast-changing digital environment. This study article examines the diverse effects of digitalization on the family's position to comprehend how technological progress influences familial dynamics, communication methods, and social exchanges. The primary research inquiry driving this study is: What is the impact of digitalization on the family's position in modern society? A comprehensive methodology was utilized to investigate this inquiry, involving a literature study, qualitative interviews, and quantitative surveys. The study examines the historical background of family structures and charts the development of familial connections in response to technological advancements. This study investigates the impact of digital gadgets, social media platforms, and online communication tools on family dynamics, analyzing the difficulties and advantages they bring. The findings indicate that digitization has enabled new communication and interaction within families. However, it has also brought forth challenges about privacy, managing screen time, and cyberbullying. Additionally, the study emphasizes the varying effects of digital technology on different demographic groups, taking into account aspects such as financial status, cultural norms, and generational disparities. The findings have broader significance beyond academic research, providing valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and practitioners. These insights emphasize the importance of developing strategies that effectively utilize digital technology while minimizing its negative impact on family cohesion and well-being. This research ultimately enhances our comprehension of the family's position in the digitalized world, underscoring the significance of cultivating beneficial digital behaviours and advocating for significant face-to-face connections among family members.

**Keywords:** Digitalization, Family dynamics, Technology, Communication, social media.

### INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, digital technology has become integral to almost every area of contemporary life, fundamentally transforming our work methods, communication, and engagement with the world. The impact of digitization is widespread and continuously growing, evident in the widespread use of smartphones, social media platforms, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things. The rapid progress of technology has fundamentally changed cultural norms, habits, and institutions, leading scholars and practitioners to analyse its extensive consequences.

In the middle of the digital revolution, the family institution finds itself at the crossroads of tradition and innovation, dealing with the various advantages and difficulties presented by the digitalized world. The family, conventionally considered the fundamental building block of society, functions as the leading centre for the process of acquiring social norms, providing emotional assistance, and taking care of individuals<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, the intricate workings of family life are susceptible to the significant influence of digital technology. The digitalization of family life has given rise to numerous challenges and concerns, ranging from changes in communication and media consumption patterns to adjustments in parental duties and child-rearing methods.

In light of this situation, it is crucial to examine the family's position within the digitalization framework, investigating how technological progress influences familial ties, values, and experiences. Through an analysis of the point where technology and family life collide, we can understand how kinship, intimacy, and domesticity are changing in the digital era.

The primary research inquiry that directs this study is: What is the impact of digitalization on the family's position in modern society? This comprehensive investigation acts as a guiding principle, directing our examination of how digital technology intersects with family dynamics and structures. By carefully analyzing this subject, we aim to reveal the intricate relationship between technological advancement and the welfare of families, providing insight into both the advantages and disadvantages of living in a digitally connected society.

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE FAMILY**

The institution of the family has experienced substantial changes over the course of human history, influenced by cultural, economic, and technical factors. Traditional family systems were commonly defined by male-dominated power, extensive familial connections, and inflexible gender expectations<sup>2</sup>. In agrarian societies, families functioned primarily as agricultural entities, with labor frequently structured based on familial relationships, and with specific responsibilities assigned to men, women, and children.

These traditional family arrangements operated based on hierarchical ties and set social standards. Marriages were frequently orchestrated to establish connections between families or to form economic unions, rather than being based on personal choice or romantic affection. The exercise of parental authority was of utmost importance, with children being required to comply with and show reverence for their elders.

The Industrial Revolution had a significant impact on family dynamics, leading to a transition from rural to urban lifestyles. The process of urbanization and industrialization resulted in the disintegration of extended families, as people relocated to urban areas in pursuit of job

prospects. The nuclear family became the prevailing household arrangement, consisting of parents and their children living separately from extended relatives.

The 20th century witnessed significant changes in family dynamics due to societal transformations, including the emergence of women's rights movements and alterations in family law.<sup>3</sup> The concept of the nuclear family as the idealized standard was progressively questioned, as various family structures, including as single-parent households, blended families, and same-sex families, received acknowledgment and approval.

Technological progress has significantly influenced the development of family dynamics over time. The advent of the printing press expedited the spread of knowledge and ideas, hence impacting educational methodologies and parental ideologies. The introduction of household equipment, such as washing machines and refrigerators, brought about a significant transformation in domestic tasks, leading to changes in gender roles within the family.

In the second part of the 20th century, the widespread availability of mass media, such as television and radio, brought new forms of entertainment and ways of sharing information into people's homes. These media technologies had an impact on both leisure activities and family routines, as well as played a role in the spread of cultural values and standards on a global scale.

In addition, the technological advancements of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have brought about a period of unparalleled interconnectedness and exchange of information<sup>4</sup>. The pervasive use of the internet, mobile devices, and social media platforms has revolutionized the manner in which families engage, exchange information, and sustain connections despite geographical separations.

Overall, the historical development of family structures and dynamics demonstrates an intricate interaction among societal changes, technical progress, and evolving cultural standards. By comprehending this historical backdrop, we acquire knowledge about the consistencies and inconsistencies in the position of the family in the digitalized world.

## **TECHNOLOGY AND DOMESTIC LIFE**

Digitalization, defined as the broad use of digital technology and its incorporation into many parts of everyday life, has changed family dynamics and relationships in a dramatic way<sup>5</sup>. Information can be stored, processed, and transmitted using digital devices and networks after it has been digitalized, which means it has been transformed from an analog form.

### **The Rise and Fall of Digitalization**

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A wide range of technical advancements, such as the web, smartphones, social media, and smart home gadgets, are all part of digitalization<sup>6</sup>. These digital tools have been game-changers when it comes to family communication, interaction, and routine organization. Digitalization has far-reaching effects on family life, changing ways of communicating, interacting socially, and managing the home.

### **Having an Impact on How People Communicate**

Due to the widespread availability and instantaneous nature of digital communication, traditional methods of family contact have completely altered. Email, instant messaging, and video conferencing have enabled families to remain connected across great distances in real time, eliminating the need for only face-to-face conversations or handwritten letters<sup>7</sup>. This has significant ramifications for families spread out over different locations, enabling them to stay connected even while physically apart.

On the other hand, there are downsides to the widespread use of digital communication, such as making it harder to distinguish between personal and professional life. It can be challenging to escape from work responsibilities, even during personal time, due to the constant accessibility of cell phones and email. This can lead to feelings of intrusion and tension.

### **Effects on Personal Relationships**

The way people communicate with one another, both within and outside of families, has changed due to the rise of digital technology. One way that social media can help people feel more connected is by allowing them to share updates, images, and experiences with their friends and family. In these online groups, families may talk to each other about parenting, housework, and anything else they have in common.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, family members may experience emotions of inferiority and comparison due to the selective nature of social media. Platforms like Instagram, with their abundance of "perfectly" produced photographs and storylines, have the power to hinder genuine connection and set false expectations. Digital surveillance and privacy concerns may also influence how families use the internet, especially when sharing images of their children and other personal details.

### **Part Played by Electronics and Web-Based Resources**

Computers, tablets, and smartphones all have a part in moulding family relationships and habits. Modern families rely on digital devices for various tasks, including organizing calendars and finances, accessing educational materials, and enjoying entertainment. Automating mundane housework and enabling remote monitoring of home security are two

examples of how smart home technology is improving the quality of life for modern families. Families can find places to connect, work together, and interact with people who share their interests and experiences through online communities and social media. Families can discover social and enriching opportunities in the digital realm through virtual support groups, online parenting forums, and hobby-related material exchange.

On the other hand, worries regarding screen time and digital addiction, especially in young people, are heightened by the ubiquitous nature of digital gadgets and online platforms<sup>9</sup>. Potentially detrimental to social development and mental health is the fact that prolonged use of electronic devices may diminish the importance of physical activity and in-person contacts.

All things considered, digitization has changed the way families live their lives by impacting how we communicate, how we connect with others, and how we do things around the house. Managing one's privacy, setting limits, and limiting screen time are all issues that digital technology raises, despite the fact that it provides unparalleled possibilities for connection and ease. Researchers and practitioners can better understand the many ways digitalization affects family dynamics so they may devise ways to take advantage of the positive aspects while minimizing the negative ones.

## THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Families face new possibilities and threats as a result of digitalization, which changes the dynamics of family unity, privacy, and health in intricate ways.

### Recognizing Obstacles

There are a number of threats to family harmony, privacy, and health that digitalization presents:

The widespread use of electronic devices and participation in online activities has the potential to cause people to spend less quality time with their families because they are too preoccupied with their screens to have meaningful conversations in person.<sup>10</sup> This has the potential to weaken family ties and communication.

There are legitimate worries regarding data security and privacy as a result of the increasing digitization of family life. There are concerns around the collection, usage, and security of the massive amounts of personal data generated by online platforms and social media networks. Dangers include cyberbullying, identity theft, and illegal access to private data can affect families.<sup>11</sup>

Disparities in the availability of digital technology, caused by differences in socioeconomic status, deepen existing inequalities in households and neighbourhoods. A broader digital

divide may emerge when low-income families encounter difficulties connecting with online resources, finding work, and building social networks due to a lack of access to cellphones, high-speed internet, or both.

Particularly among younger generations, problems like digital addiction, sleep disruptions, and sedentary lifestyles can result from spending too much time in front of screens. Disruptions to regular exercise, healthy sleep habits, and brain development could result from unfettered access to electronic gadgets.

### **Considering Possibilities**

Notwithstanding these obstacles, there are substantial chances to improve family communication, cooperation, and connection with digital technology:

Digital tools like email, IM, and video chats allow family members to communicate instantly, no matter how far apart they are, greatly improving communication<sup>12</sup>. No matter where they are or what time zone they're in, families may stay in constant contact, share news, and keep in close touch.

**Better Household Coordination:** Online tools for managing schedules, assigning tasks, and creating shopping lists make life easier for everyone. A family can work together more effectively and efficiently by using shared calendars and applications to keep everyone's schedules in sync, delegate tasks, and keep track of appointments. **Virtual Support Networks:** Families can find others going through the same things they are by joining online forums and social media groups. Families can discover a sense of community and support in online support groups, whether they are looking for guidance on parenting, suggestions on caring for a loved one, or just someone to talk to.

The Internet and other digital technologies have opened up a world of information and possibilities for family education.<sup>13</sup> Parents and children can enhance traditional schooling with personalized learning experiences through online courses, interactive applications, and educational websites. This allows them to explore new hobbies, develop new skills, and more.

Digital media, including picture sharing websites and video conversations, strengthen family ties by allowing members to make and keep memories together regardless of geographical distance. Families can deepen their emotional connections and cultivate a feeling of belonging by recording and sharing special occasions, routine moments, and milestones.

### **HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS**



Cultural and socioeconomic norms impact people's access to technology, their attitudes towards digital devices, and their patterns of digital use, all of which have an effect on how digitalization affects family life<sup>14</sup>.

When considering how digitization may affect family interactions, cultural norms are an important factor to consider. Digital communication patterns and social interaction within families are shaped by collectivist principles, which in some cultures place a premium on interdependence and collective harmony. For instance, in societies that place a premium on extended family networks, people may use digital tools to keep in touch with loved ones across generations and oceans. Different patterns of digital use, with an emphasis on personal communication and self-expression, may emerge in individualistic cultures, which emphasize autonomy and independence.

The extent to which families embrace and use digital gadgets and platforms is also affected by cultural views towards technology, which can differ greatly.<sup>15</sup> Family members' experiences with technology and its integration into their daily lives may be influenced by sociocultural variables like language hurdles, cultural attitudes about privacy and sharing, and religious beliefs.

The degree to which a family has access to and is literate in digital technology is highly impacted by socioeconomic factors such as income, education, and geography. Limited access to high-speed internet, laptops, and cell phones can prevent families from lower socioeconomic status from fully engaging in the digital world.

The digital gap deepens inequalities in family and community life, defined as differences in socioeconomic status and digital access and abilities<sup>16</sup>. It is more difficult for children from low-income families to acquire digital literacy skills and participate fully in school activities since they are less likely to live in homes with internet connections and digital gadgets. This digital disadvantage can hinder full participation in the digital economy and society, which can exacerbate existing inequalities in academic achievement, career prospects, and social mobility.

Additionally, vulnerable communities might be further marginalized and socially excluded when digital access discrepancies intersect with other types of inequality, such as race, ethnicity, and handicap status. There are institutional injustices and physical obstacles that keep people from having equal access to digital opportunities and outcomes, which must be addressed if we are to close the digital divide.

Diverse cultural and socioeconomic settings show that digitalization has diverse implications for different families. Digital technology may help well-off families make the most of their advantages, opening doors to more educational possibilities, more flexible job schedules, and stronger international ties. Alternatively, digital technology may exacerbate preexisting disparities and deepen the digital gap if it is seen as a source of anger by economically and socially excluded minority families.<sup>17</sup>

Cultural norms about family roles and duties may also impact the way digital technology is incorporated into everyday life. Women may be expected to take on greater caregiving and home management roles in certain cultures, while men may be expected to emphasize work-related duties and leisure activities when it comes to internet use.

A complex strategy taking into account the interplay of cultural norms, socioeconomic variables, and structural inequities is necessary to address discrepancies in digital access and usage. Together, community leaders, educators, and lawmakers can make sure that everyone has equal access to technology, teach people how to use it properly, and give families the tools they need to use technology for good.

## METHODOLOGY

An Account of the Research Techniques:

The effects of digitization on family life were thoroughly investigated in this study thanks to the mixed-methods technique. We laid the groundwork with the literature review, which examined previous studies, hypotheses, and empirical data on the topic of digital technology and family dynamics. The literature review served as a springboard for the formulation of research topics and theories by drawing on a wide variety of academic sources.

The purpose of these quantitative surveys was to collect information on how families are using technology, how they prefer to communicate, and how they feel the internet has affected their family's unity and happiness. Items were modified from validated scales and measures when applicable, ensuring that the survey instrument was carefully developed to ensure validity and reliability. For a more representative sample, researchers used convenience sampling and actively sought out volunteers from a wide range of demographics.

To round out the survey results, qualitative interviews added depth and richness to the participants' actual experiences, attitudes, and viewpoints on digitization and family life. Participants' voices and stories were captured authentically through the use of semi-structured interview techniques, which allowed for flexibility and investigation of emergent topics. To ensure that the qualitative data acquired was as rich and diverse as possible, researchers used purposeful sampling strategies to recruit participants from a wide range of demographics and life experiences.



**Methodology Justification:** We opted for a mixed-methods strategy because we believe it will provide the most complete picture of the complicated phenomenon we are studying. The study sought to triangulate findings, strengthen the validity of conclusions, and offer a comprehensive picture of the complicated interaction between digitization and family dynamics by mixing quantitative survey data with qualitative observations from interviews.

In order to conduct statistical analyses and draw conclusions that may be applied to a larger population, quantitative surveys were developed. By contrast, qualitative interviews offered more background and detail by recording, in the interviewees' own words, the intricacies and subtleties of the participants' experiences. The study sought to address the research topics thoroughly by integrating various supplementary research methodologies, which allowed it to surpass the constraints of any one methodological approach.

Despite the mixed-methods approach's virtues, it is important to recognize its limits. First, because people voluntarily participated in the study, there's a chance that their sample isn't really representative of the community at large due to the convenience sampling methods used. Response bias may have also been introduced due to the use of self-report measures in interviews and surveys; participants may have given answers that were socially acceptable or biased. Further, the study's cross-sectional design makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the relationship between digitalization and family outcomes; further longitudinal studies are needed to understand better the dynamics and changes that occur over time.

## FINDINGS

The study's results provide light on how digitization has altered family status in essential ways:

**Communication Patterns:** Most participants said they talk to their families quite a bit via digital means, with video calls and text messages being the most popular. Participants voiced their displeasure with the pervasiveness of digital distractions and multitasking during family interactions, which they felt could have improved the quality of conversation.

**Interactions with Others:** Sharing news, images, and stories with friends and family is a big part of family life, and social networking sites make it easy to do just that. The importance of digital literacy and ethical online conduct was underscored when participants voiced worries about how social media can affect their self-esteem, privacy, and interpersonal connections.

**Obstacles to Privacy:** Participants expressed strong privacy concerns, especially when sharing personal information and photographs online. The significance of digital citizenship and data literacy in this digital era is highlighted by the fact that many families have instituted privacy settings and rules for the use of digital devices in order to safeguard their privacy and security.

Despite the difficulties brought about by digitization, individuals did find ways to strengthen family bonds and unity through the use of technology. A sense of community and belonging can be fostered in this increasingly digitalized world by the use of digital tools that allow for

shared experiences and bonding, such as virtual family meetings, online games, and collaborative projects.

## DISCUSSION

This study sheds insight on the intricate relationship between digitization and family dynamics by interpreting its findings in the context of previous literature and theoretical frameworks. Discussion is on how the results shed light on the family's place in today's technologically advanced society, drawing on pertinent theories from fields including sociology, psychology, and communication studies.

We talk about how digital technology has changed family life, for better and worse, and how it affects things like communication, well-being, and family unity. Privacy concerns, issues with screen time management, and the digital divide are some of the negative consequences of digitalization, which also brings new possibilities for connection, convenience, and cooperation. This discussion aims to enhance our understanding of how family relations are changing in the digital age by critically examining the findings in light of previous studies.

The conversation also delves into what the results mean for practitioners, educators, and policymakers, stressing the need of taking a comprehensive approach to tackling the problems and making the most of the potential presented by digitalization in the sake of family well-being. We highlight the need of cross-sector collaboration in achieving positive outcomes for families in this digitalized environment and offer recommendations to improve digital literacy, healthy digital habits, and family navigation of the digital terrain.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, this research sheds light on how the family stands in today's increasingly digital society. The study uses a mixed-methods approach to thoroughly investigate how digitization has altered family relationships, communication habits, and privacy worries. Growing digitalization has advantages and disadvantages, and the results show how digital technology is changing family life.

Supporting families in managing the intricacies of the digital ecosystem, increasing digital literacy, and encouraging responsible digital citizenship should be the top priorities for research, policy, and practice going forward. Together, we can overcome the obstacles presented by digitalization and make the most of its opportunities to strengthen family bonds and improve overall health. The goal is to build a digital environment where families thrive. If we are serious about helping families thrive in the modern day, we must first comprehend the family's place in the digital landscape.

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