

**Modern Family and the Socio- Political Transformations in the  
Urban Context.**

**الأسرة الحديثة والتحويلات الاجتماعية والسياسية في السياق الحضري**

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**Abstract:**

Throughout history, the family has undergone several social transformations reflecting on its structure, roles, and functions. The number of extended families witnessed a gradual decrease until the nuclear family became the dominant feature in modern societies because of a number of economic, technological, and cultural factors. These transformations had a major impact on both the individual and the family. The latter no longer undertakes the entire various social, cultural, economic functions... etc., but has become limited to the functions of education and cultural development. The individual has become more liberated than before within the extended family.

**Keywords:** Family, Social Change, City, State.

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## **An introduction:**

The family is a key primary group in society for a number of considerations, including that it is the initial educational institution where the process of socialization is carried out, and in which the individual learns values, social norms, rules of good conduct, and general guidelines for life.

The family has always been the institution that undertakes multiple and diverse functions. It is specialized in the processes of reproduction, upbringing, education, and cultural development, as well as granting the social status by which its members are able to build successful social relationships and to assume positions and responsibilities. In addition to the functions of religious guidance and entertainment, the family also was a self-sufficient economic institution, consuming what it produced, saving, investing, and persuading its members to learn trades, crafts, management skills, and various economic activities.

However, the prevailing development in modern societies has had a prominent impact on both the structure and functions. Structurally, the extended family has gradually dwindled, paving the way for the emergence of a different family pattern, which is the nuclear family or conjugal family. Functionally, the nuclear family, especially in urban areas, has no longer become able to undertake the aforementioned traditional roles. Instead, its role has been restricted to reproduction and social upbringing, which allows various social institutions to take hold of other economic, educational, and religious functions.

Accordingly, the study attempts to answer the following main question:

- **What are the factors that have led to changes at the level of the structure and functions of the modern family?**

The study's sub-questions are as follows:

- **What is the nature of the changes that have affected the modern family?**
- **How has social theories explained these transformations?**
- **What are the effects of these changes on the family on one hand and on the individual on the other?**

## **I. Study Concepts:**

1. **The family:** Although the family is one of the key social institutions on which the social structure is founded; there is no clear definition agreed upon

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among scholars. Therefore, its definitions vary according to the various intellectual and theoretical orientations of scholars.

Linguistically, the concept of family is defined as: the strong shield, the man's people and kin, and it refers to the group bound by a common matter, and its plural is families (Al-Qaseer (1999). p 33).

The Sociology dictionary states that: "The family is a group of individuals bound together by marriage, blood, and adoption, and they interact with each other. This interaction may occur between husband and wife, between mother and father, and between mother, father, and children, forming a social unit characterized by certain features" (Sumpf & Hugues (1973), p131).

In the 1940s, the American anthropologist "George Peter Murdock" conducted a survey that included 250 human societies, through which he found that the family makes up a universal human social group; and that there are three distinct types of family organization. The first is the "nuclear family", which is made up of a man, his wife, and their offspring. The second is the "extended family", which is formed from two or more nuclear families bound together through the extension of the parents' relationship with their married son, who prolongs his living with them even after marriage. The third is the "polygamous family," which consists of two or more nuclear families related by collective marriages.

He also considers the family as a social group distinguished by a shared residence, economic cooperation, and a reproductive function, with at least two of its members having a sexual relationship recognized by society. The family is made up of at least an adult male, an adult female, and a child, whether from their offspring or by adoption (Al-Ahmar (2004),p16).

"Émile Durkheim", on his part, regards the family: "as not merely the natural gathering of parents and their children, but rather a social institution constituted for social reasons, and its members are bound together legally and morally". This means that, according to Durkheim, the family cannot be viewed just as the natural framework through which biological, sexual, and emotional desires between a man and a woman are fulfilled. It surpasses this to become an institution in every sense of the word, with the necessity of an organizational framework that determines the rights and duties of each family member. Therefore, this institution becomes a social necessity, with multiple functions including economic, social, and educational roles. However, this is controlled by a social system that determines the relationship between its members. The latter is both legal and moral at the same time.

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In general, we can define the family with a comprehensive and exclusive definition based on the following points:

- The nature of the family itself as key primary group in society.
- It consists of a number of individuals bound by marriage (as is the case between husband and wife), or blood (as is the case between parents, children, and relatives), or adoption (as is the case between the adopted child and family members).
- They all live in one house and share a single social and economic life.
- Family members interact according to specific social roles (the role of husband and wife, the role of father and mother, and the role of brother and sister).
- Mutual social, legal, and economic obligations start to exist between the family members.
- Each family member owes an obligation to perform duties such as caring for and raising children, and in return, each member has a set of rights.
- The family tries to preserve a unique cultural pattern, derived from the general cultural pattern. (Haroun (2006-2007), p65).

It is also noteworthy to mention that there is a difference between the concept of "family" and the concept of "household". The former (meaning family) consists of the husband, wife, and their unmarried children who live in one house; whereas the latter is composed of the husband, wife, their unmarried male and female children, married children and their offspring, and other relatives: uncle and aunt, who all live in one house under the supervision of the head of the household. In addition to that, there are other differences between family and household, specifically the small size of the family in comparison to the household, as well as the household's greater link to the village than the city, and vice versa, as the family exists widely in the city than the household.

Because our study is centred on the social change of the family in the urban context, we will define this urban unit, which is the city, and identify some of its characteristics as part of the human ecology composed of four main components: environment, population, social organization, and technological level, as determined by "Duncan" and "Storr" (Haroun (2006-2007), p66).

## **2. Definition of the city:**

Sociologists have differed in determining a clear and comprehensive meaning of the city. Some define it according to the number of population, while others define it regarding the economic basis and residential unit, or on the basis of urban and demographic aspects.

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The city, or the urban context, is the essence of the urban life history. It is the living organism as stated by Le Corbusier. It is the people and transportation, trade and economy, art and architecture, bonds and emotions, government and politics, culture and taste. It is the honest expression that reflects people's culture and the development of nations. It is a picture of human struggle, victories, and defeats. It is an image of strength, poverty, deprivation, and weakness.

Terminologically, it is defined by "Taylor" according to population size and the diversity of population patterns, while "Dickinson" defined it as a specialized activity area, which is necessarily of an economic nature. (Haroun, 2006-2007, p. 65)

As for "Ibn Khaldoun", he regards the city as a non-agricultural society whose people are specialized in trade and industry. He stated in his 'Introduction' that human societies consist of two types: nomadic society and urban society. He states: "Among this society, there is the nomadic one, which is found in the outskirts, in the mountains, in the deserts, and on the edges of the sands". He refers to the nomadic society. Concerning the urban society, he is defined as follows: "and among it, there is the urban one, which is found in the cities, villages, and towns".

### **3. Definition of Social Change:**

Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, viewed that change is the law of existence, unlike stability, which he considered death and non-existence. A person cannot step into the same river twice due to new waters coming around him. Thus, change is a cosmic phenomenon that touches all levels of existence, in inanimate matter, living matter, and especially in social life. Social change is considered as the successive differences occurring over time in certain social relations such as norms, roles, status, social structure, the role of women, and property... (Haroun, 2006-2007, p. 66). Therefore, social change is one of the key characteristics of society. This characteristic is not subject to any specific will, but rather is the result of social trends and cultural, economic, or political factors that intertwine and influence each other (Abd Al- Hamid & Rashwan (2002). P 60).

Social change is part of a larger and broader process known as cultural change encompassing both the material and non-material aspects of culture, including sciences, arts, philosophy, technology, language, literature, and other cultural forms and patterns. Social change requires a change in social relations as a result of changes in economic and political conditions (Al- Qaseer (1999), p77).

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## **II. Family Patterns in the Arab World and in other Human Societies:**

### **1. Family Patterns in Arab Societies:**

The path of the development of the family in the Arab world is different from that in the Western world, in spite of some similarities. The extended family, in its various forms, tribal, clan-based, or transitional, existed in earlier periods before the rise of Western capitalism in the East. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the nuclear family emerged and it has since continuously evolved, gradually crystalizing to find a place among other traditional patterns starting from the post-19<sup>th</sup> century period. Some researchers divided the development of the Arab family into four stages: the pre-Islamic period, the early Islamic period, the second stage which lasts from the 5<sup>th</sup> century AH to the 13<sup>th</sup> century AH, or the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD, and finally, the fourth stage from the 14<sup>th</sup> century AH, corresponding to the 20<sup>th</sup> century AD. (El-Jouyeir (2009). P28).

#### **A. The First Stage: The Pre and Early Islamic Periods:**

The existing family pattern during these periods was the tribal family. It was characterized by its strong connection to the tribe, to the extent that the loyalty of its members extended beyond the family itself to encompass the tribe, in the form of the individual's oldest ancestor. This was because of the nature of life in the Arabian Peninsula, which imposed the cooperation of large numbers of relatives to secure a livelihood. The urban family was not different from its nomadic counterpart at this particular stage.

#### **B. The Second Stage: between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries AH:**

This stage is distinguished by the emergence of the clan family in the Arabian Peninsula, which means a relative shift from the large tribe reliance to a kind of independence and clan reliance. This is mainly because of the improvement in living conditions compared to previous periods. This occurred after the developing military and political role of the tribe, and meanwhile, the disruption in the economic and social structure leading to the emergence of new family patterns: the extended large family and the family with composite lineages. Some researchers emphasize that the tribal cultural pattern was prevailing until the mid-Abbasid dynasty. A thing necessitated an influence on social and political relations. At that time, family loyalty leaned more towards the Islamic religion than anything else.

#### **C. The Third Stage: from the 5<sup>th</sup> Century AH to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century AH:**

In the Mamlouk era in the Levant, there emerged extensive and dispersed peasant families, marital families with genealogies, and branched urban families, most of which were connected to their counterparts in previous stages. The marital

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families with genealogies provided independent homes for their married children. Nevertheless, what is notable is the weak paternal authority over the children and a kind of relative freedom for the wives. Additionally, the family in the city mainly relied on its economic income from the countryside.

#### **D. The Fourth Stage: from the 14<sup>th</sup> century AH, corresponding to the 20<sup>th</sup> century AD:**

This stage is related to the current conditions of the Arab family. Two types emerged: the extended transformed family and the nuclear conjugal family. The first type appeared after the rise of new colonial trends represented by the British and the French. They abolished the feudal system and replaced it with the capitalist system advocating for private ownership of the means of production, hence facilitating individual ownership of land and property. In addition to that, it created various types of jobs and professions until the youth held government and free jobs providing the greatest degree of economic independence for individuals and paved the way for the emergence of the independent nuclear family (El-Jouyeir (2009). P29).

### **2. Family Patterns in other Human Societies:**

Since society is made up of a set of interconnected main systems with complex relationships. They are characterized by continuous interaction to the extent that it becomes difficult to distinguish the boundaries of one system from another, including the economic, educational, and religious and the family systems.

Understanding these systems unavoidably leads us to understand human societies. However, the family differs from other systems and exists even in the most primitive and least civilized societies. It cannot be limited to one and unique pattern; rather, there are different patterns that vary according to the structure of each society. It is important to consider that any society may recognize more than one family pattern. It may even extend to the prevalence of several patterns at the same time, with one dominant and other sub-patterns or secondary patterns.

Therefore, they can be presented as follows:

#### **A. The Nuclear Family:**

This type of family is characterized by its small size and is considered the main unit of family organization. The nuclear family may be part of an extended family, or it may be independent. Generally, members of this type of family are characterized by individuality and liberation from family control. This results in prioritizing the individual's interests over those of the other family members.

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### **B. The Accompanying Family:**

What characterizes this pattern is the existence of relationships founded on

emotion, understanding, and mutual agreement among its members. It is also related to the stage in which the performance of the traditional economy weakens, causing a decline of certain traditional functions, such as religious, educational, and recreational guidance, which are usually undertaken by the traditional family. Consequently, neighbourhood relationships and traditional forms that undertake the function of informal control, particularly in urban areas disappear (El-Jouyeir (2009), P30).

### **C. The Conjugal Family:**

The main relationships in this pattern are based on the husband and wife more than on blood relations. The husband and wife, along with their unmarried children, undertake the major functions of the family. In addition, this pattern cannot transform into an extended family pattern.

### **D. The Kinship Family:**

The nature of the relationship in this pattern tends to focus on the bonds that govern the relationship between parents and children, as well as the relationships between siblings, more than on the relationship between the spouses, that is, the husband and wife. In other words, the blood ties between members of the same family precede those founded upon the relationship between the husband and wife. Additionally, this type of family may transform into another type, which is the extended family, thereby giving rise to two or three generations under its care.

### **E. Cooperative Family:**

This model mediates between the nuclear family and the extended family. It is characterised by more cohesiveness and unity. The individualistic tendency is reduced compared to the nuclear family. This is put down to the continuous and strong relationship between parents and children even after marriage, which manifests in increasing mutual visits and an expansion of the scope of consultation and reciprocal cooperation among its members.

### **F. The Equality Family:**

This type is characterized by equality among all parties, particularly between the wife and husband. It prevails widely in modern societies. Neither spouse has any preference or privilege over the other. It is also known as the democratic family model.

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### **G. The Extended Family:**

It consists of more than two generations, which includes grandparents, married children, and grandchildren, in addition to their unmarried children. Thus, the nuclear family usually transforms into an extended family.

### **H. The Maternal Family:**

It is mainly distinguished by the formal concentration of power and authority in the hands of the mother, particularly after the death of the elder father. Theoretically, it is classified as a kinship family. The foundation of its organization is founded upon blood ties; in addition to that it is matrilineal in descent. The mother is often old, while still keeping the respect of the grandmother.

## **III. Factors of Family Transformation and the Explanatory Theories:**

### **1. Factors of Family Transformation:**

Many sociologists are in agreement that the family used to be self-sufficient. It performed multiple economic and social functions. It undertook various social roles such as social upbringing, religious guidance, and providing status, protection, entertainment, and education. Additionally, the family represented a self-sufficient economic unit, producing and consuming its own goods, without the need for banks, factories, or stores (Abd Al- Hamid & Rashwan (2008)).

However, the development affecting the social life in the city led to a radical change in the nature of the family, causing the emergence of the nuclear family, which replaced the extended family. As a result, many functions previously taken by the extended family were transferred to other social institutions such as schools, kindergartens, and other various economic and social organizations. The explanation for this change is associated with various factors, including:

#### **A. The Geographical Factor:**

The geographical factor represents the components of the natural environment in which humans live, including location, topography, soil, climate, mineral, agricultural, and animal resources. All these elements have a direct impact on the activities of family members, and any change in geographical conditions will lead to changes in the family. Therefore, events such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and extreme heat or cold in certain areas can lead to behavioural changes of family members living in those areas. For example, climate affects the type of crops, industrial production, and commercial activities (Al-Khouli (2006) ).

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## **B. The Population Factor and its Connection to the State's Public Policies:**

There are several indicators related to the population factor that have an impact on family change, including population density, the size of communities, birth and death rates, internal and external migration, the establishment of new urban and residential areas, and the proportion of children and youth, among other indicators that negatively or positively impact work, production, and the economy in general.

It must also be noted that the large number of family members in under developed countries, because of the inclination towards marriage, subsequently leading to a high birth rate and a low death rate, which necessitates nutritional, health, and recreational care. This contradicts with modern life demands and the high standard of living, as well as the conditions of working mothers. Therefore, we see, for example, that a country like China encourages Chinese families to limit childbirth to one child due to the massive demographic growth. In contrast, we notice that some Western countries encourage families to increase birth rates due to the high aging rate in these societies.

## **C. The Economic Factor:**

There is a strong and reciprocal relationship between the family system and the economic system. The family provides the economy with labour force, and in return, it is the first consumer of the goods and services produced by the economic system. The economic system has encouraged the woman to assume jobs. Therefore, she gains a new role in addition to her traditional one within the home. Noticeably, the impact of the economy on the family has been increased through divorce rates during periods of recession and the rise in the standard of living for families during periods of economic prosperity.

‘Good’ describes the impact of the economy on the family (through industrialization): "As the economic system permeates and extends through industrialization, family patterns change, extended kinship ties weaken, and we move towards certain forms of the conjugal system that come into being. This is the nuclear family, which becomes an independent kinship unit" (Al-Qaseer(1999), p78).

Industrialization in Algeria followed its path immediately after independence, and laden with social virtues aiming at freeing the country from dependency and backwardness. It was followed by large internal migrations towards the major cities where industry was concentrated, such as Algiers, Annaba, and Oran. The

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process of concentrating industry in these cities led to sharpening the gap between the countryside and the city, in spite of the state's efforts at that time through the introduction of many services to the countryside, focusing on the agricultural sector, and establishing agricultural villages. However, that did not prevent the rural population from decreasing at rapid rates. In contrast, cities witnessed a major increase in population size because of the development of major government sectors such as housing, trade, and the growth of road networks. This had negative repercussions on the urban area, as the increasing demand for activities and services resulted in a higher demand for housing in cities. Thus, industrialization had its negative effects on families and society in Algeria, despite its importance in all countries around the world.

#### **D. The Technological Factor:**

The concept of technology refers to the art of modern production; it represents the modern methods and means used in economic and social projects. The purpose of its use is to save the individual's physical and bodily effort when performing the work, thereby saving them more time and allowing for a better standard of living.

The impact of the technological factor on the family appears on two levels: the level of family structure and the level of its function.

As for family structure, it is noticed that families adopting modern technology tend to decrease in size, accompanied by the prevalence of nuclear or conjugal family formation. As for functions, it is observed that they have significantly dwindled. Additionally, a few traditional family functions remain and the most important of which are reproduction and social upbringing.

#### **E. The Ideological Factor:**

Ideology is that intellectual and emotional system that expresses individuals' attitudes towards the world, society, and humanity. The concept of ideology has an influence on the transformation of the family through the increased level of child care in modern societies. They now receive superior care and many services that they couldn't previously meet them. The current increase in child care can be explained by the decrease in their number because of the effectiveness of family planning methods in some densely populated societies and the trend of women to reduce childbirth.

## **2. Theories Explaining Social Change in the Family:**

The transformations that occurred at the level of the family in Europe and America led to the emergence of several sociological theories with the aim of explaining these transformations by analyzing their mechanisms and motivations.

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We will suffice with presenting the three most important theories: the evolutionary theory, the conflict theory, and the structural-functional theory.

### **A. The Evolutionary Theory:**

In the 1950s and 1960s, this theory focused on the permanent changes that occur in the family over its lifespan, attributing this to the dynamics of interactions within the family system. This theory also highlighted the impact of the social environment, considering that external factors impact the changes arising from internal forces. For example, the economic recession gained importance in terms of altering the usual roles within the family, as well as the mother's swift return to work and the early independence of children in their lives (Al-Khouli (1989), p66).

The evolutionary theory regards demographic events in the family, such as marriage, the birth of children, their growth, passing through different life stages, and the aging of the couple, as dynamic political forces that lead to social change and thus affecting the family's structure and functions. Nevertheless, this theory is criticized for assuming, without argument that people marry, have children, and stay together until death, which does not always happen. Divorce rates, for example, are continuously increasing, and this has nullified the compatibility of the theory with modern trends in this field.

### **B. The Conflict Theory:**

Conflict theory considers social life, in general, as characterized by conflicting individual interests. Additionally, social changes are nothing but the inevitable result of these conflicts that destroy the old balance and produce new equilibriums, where the seeds of new disputes immediately appear. The structure of the nuclear family creates specific conditions for the clash of interests among its members. However, internal conflicts reflect the fundamental contradictions within the larger social structure. Marital disputes are often due to the distribution of resources, the burden of work, and the exercise of power within the family. Yet in reality, they reflect grater social conditions that have a significant impact on the family and the relationships among its members.

In summary, the conflict theory attributes changes in the family to three main factors:

#### ✓ **Major Social Transformations:**

These have impacted the family and its functions. The shifts in authority structures, the new patterns of product distribution, and the large social movements all potentially alter the family's outlines.

#### ✓ **Forced Urbanization and Migration from Rural Areas to Cities:**

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This factor has led to significant changes in the lives of many families due to the migration of large numbers of unskilled labourers, particularly those not tied to land, from rural areas to new factories and living in different conditions. Many couldn't find housing close to work, and thereby losing time due to slow transportation, which in its part, led to a reduction in time available for family life.

### ✓ **The Sharp Increase in Economic Activity by Women:**

The increased engagement in economic activities by women caused their attention to divide between family and work, thus, negatively impacting family life (Bayoumi & Nasser (2003), P64).

### **C. The Structural- Functional Theory:**

'Talcott Parsons' sees that the family, continuously, works to establish a balanced and harmonious state as compensation for external influences and tensions. Balance is regarded as the central nature of the family and stability in the family structure, and it is the primary task of the husband and wife. For 'T. Parsons', the family is like a system in which sub-systems are integrated and cannot be understood without referring to the overall system. The family, as a sub-system, is subject to pressures from changes occurring in the larger society.

The influences that occur in the family are reflections of the new circumstances and new cultural values. Perhaps the most significant contribution of the structural functional theory is its assertion on the idea that understanding human behaviour must be through our analysis of the role of norms and values in actions. This helps us understand the conflict of values and norms during major social changes. Finally, it can be said that despite the contributions of these three above theories in explaining the social changes that have occurred in the family within the urban context, they remain insufficient. Consequently, we must look for a multidimensional pattern that puts into consideration social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions. Family transformations' main reference is cultural factors. Today's youth have a new way of thinking that mirrors newly acquired values with liberal inclination and rejection of traditions.

## **3. The Effects of Social Change on the Family and the Individual in the City:**

### **1. The Effects of Social Change on the Family:**

The family has been impacted by the comprehensive social, cultural, and economic changes that modern society has witnessed as a result of

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industrialization, urbanization, and modernization, which caused major changes. The most important of which can be summarized as follows:

- What distinguishes the modern family now is its continuous transformation from an extended family to a nuclear or conjugal family, to the extent that we can hardly find an extended family in developed countries, especially in cities. We can explain this by a set of factors, the most important of which are the complexity of social and economic life, the nature of work, particularly industrial work, the emergence of individual responsibility, the development of the education movement, the emergence of formal and contractual relationships, and the reformation of the social evaluation system to be founded on education, personal abilities, achievements, and individual effort rather than on lineage or tribal and familial affiliations. It is expected that the extended family will completely fade away as a result of the exacerbation of complex material and technological conditions that do not suit its nature (**Bayoumi & Nasser (2003), P71**).

- The transformations that occurred at the level of the extended family led to a complete separation between the family of orientation and the family of procreation. When individuals get married and separate from their families, they form their own conjugal family. This is unlike that of the extended family where the individual's loyalty becomes divided between the nuclear family and the extended family, and the same applies to loyalty.

- The modern family has become more inclined to use contraceptive methods to reduce childbirth, due to the difficult economic and social conditions that do not allow for having many children.

- The so-called feminist revolution contributed to three achievements for women, which were manifested in women gaining their freedom, benefiting from the right to education, and being employed in various jobs and positions that were previously exclusive to men. Undoubtedly, women's education has created a clear awareness among women of their identity, status, position, and role in society in general, and, particularly, in the family.

- We have previously mentioned that the family used to perform many functions, including social, economic, and educational ones. Nevertheless, because of the impact of urbanization, industrialization, and modernization processes, these functions have been limited. Consequently, new institutions have appeared and replaced it, undertaking many of the economic, legislative, and religious affairs that the family used to perform. Thus, it is only left with the functions of reproduction and social upbringing (**Al-Qaseer (1999), p82**).

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- Industrialization and modernization have contributed to the disintegration and weakening of kinship relations. This is attributed to a number of factors, including geographical and social transition, the diversity of professions and economic and educational levels, the complexity of life, and the increased social and urban problems. In addition to that, the separation of the family of orientation and the family of procreation causes the independence of spouses in their personal affairs and their liberation from the informal controls that the relatives impose.

- The way family affairs were managed by parents was authoritarian and dictatorship reliant. However, with the changes accompanying the movement of education and communication within society, children adopted a set of ideas and values different from those acquired by the parents under other conditions. This caused a change in the nature of the relationship between parents and children, and between fathers and mothers, transforming from a relationship of submission and dominance to a relationship of dialogue and understanding. Thus, the liberated or democratic model in the family emerged and replaced the authoritarian and oppressive model.

- Families currently tend to live in independent houses that suit their social and economic conditions and are close to workplaces.

- In cities, families have currently shifted towards applying modern parenting methods, with the disappearance of conflicts in child-rearing between husband and wife.

**2. The Effects of Social Change on the Individual:**

- Increased marital age for both genders is due to the enrolment of males and females in various educational stages, as well as the development of social and economic life.

- The Individual has complete freedom in choosing the life partner, particularly among females, which is a new phenomenon. This is accompanied by the prevalence of external marriage practices, where the wife is chosen from social classes not necessarily linked by blood ties.

- The polygamous system diminishes, causing the prevalence of the monogamous system as a result of the high cost of living on one hand, and the housing crisis on the other.

- The transformation at the level of the family structure has liberated young people from many controls and traditional pressures. The youth who has the opportunity for advanced education and a degree of economic independence because of a stable income from work, and a social status in light of a changing

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social system that surpasses what his parents achieved, undoubtedly becomes more liberated and independent from his family compared to the rural youth who grew up in an extended family.

Among the changes that have impacted the family structure in urban areas is the major shift in the positions held by the elderly within the family. It is obvious that the elderly hold a focal position in traditional societies. They often assume family, political, religious, social leadership, and opinion-making. This is attributed to aging as the primary source of experience and knowledge, along with the dignity and respect accompanying it. Yet, these aspects change as society shifts towards economic and cultural advancement. Hence, the elderly lose their status and prestige after the spread of education and the change of the social evaluation system to be subject to achievement, professional and educational status, and the benefits provided to the community. However, the elderly do not easily give up their positions for two main reasons:

- Their glories belong to the past.
- Difficulty in adjusting to changing situations, values, and attitudes.

**Conclusion:**

Through this study, we conclude that the family, as part of the general social structure, namely the society as a whole, has been impacted by many factors that have affected the overall system. They include the technological and economic factors, as well as those related to population density and geographic location. All of the aforementioned have led to major transformations touching both the family and the individual. A new form of family has appeared, known as the nuclear family, which has become the predominant feature of modern societies, especially in urban areas. Consequently, the family has given up many traditional roles it previously undertook. The effects of these changes are represented in the weakening of kinship ties, changes in the nature of relationships between children and parents, the appearance of contraceptive methods, a rise in the marital age, the prevalence of monogamy over polygamy because of economic hardships and housing crises, as well as, women’s gaining the right to education, employment, and more freedom.

Finally, we should mention that some scholars believe that the above changes that have affected the family will result in its disappearance in the classical sense. Meanwhile, others believe that the family cannot fade away because of its possession of inherent qualities that aid the adaption to various changes. This view is what we see goes hand in hand with the nature and essence of the family as confirmed by history.

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