

Changes in Indian Social Structure: A Perspective of Post Graduate Students of Panjab University, Chandigarh

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Abstract: A social structure is a nexus of relationships. It is sustained by those members who participate in social relationships. Social change means change in social structure i.e. change in social values, institution, property relations, economic pursuits, personnel and role distribution in modern society. Social change is always relative terms of time, space and economy. In this study researcher tried to find out the perspective of Post Graduate Students of Panjab University towards changes in social structural aspects. In this study 60 post graduate students were selected randomly from the university campus out of which 30 were male and 30 were female. It was revealed from the study that some changes in social structure were found in the age of marriage of boys and girls, property rights, religion, caste system, status of women, and joint family system etc.

Keywords: Indian Social Structure, Social Change

1. INTRODUCTION

Social Structure

Social structure refers to the pattern of social relationships in a society. Such social structure regulates the interactions among members of the society, providing guidelines within the cultural norms for achieving the goals, defined by cultural values. Generally, social structure maintains societal stability. However, when the social structure and the societal values become incompatible, the structure must embrace social change to allow the society to survive and continue healthy development (Jacobs, Garry et al. 1988).

The concept of social change implies changes in characteristics of group of individuals and these changes usually are beneficial to society. Changes in social structure may result in negative side-effects also, that undermines or eliminates existing ways of life that are considered positive. On the whole social change has resulted in evolution in humanity, indicating that humankind is progressing toward a society to live in peace and prosperity.

The term social change refers to qualitative changes in the structure and functioning of society that help society to better realize its aims and objectives. Development can be broadly defined in a manner applicable to all societies' at all historical periods as an upward ascending movement, featuring greater levels of energy, efficiency, quality, productivity, complexity, comprehension, creativity, mastery, enjoyment, and accomplishment (Mondal Puja).

According to Radcliff-Brown- Social structure is a part of all social relations from one person to another person. Social structure is the set of actually existing relations with concrete reality at a given moment of time with human beings which linked together with concerned persons. Social structure refers to the enduring orderly and patterned relationships between the elements of a society.

Raymond Firth said that it makes no distinction between the short-lived and is the most enduring elements in social activity. It makes almost impossible to distinguish the idea of structure of society from that of the totality of the society itself.

Ginsberg viewed that the study of social structure is concerned with the principal form of social organization i.e. type of groups, associations, institutions and the complex of these which constitute societies.

Karl Mannheim revealed that social structure refers to the web of interacting social forces which have raised the various modes of observing and thinking. Social structure is an abstract and intangible phenomenon. Individuals are the units of association and institutions and they are the units of social structure. These institutions and associations are inter-related in a particular arrangement and thus create the pattern of social structure. It refers to

the external aspect of society which is relatively stable as compared to the functional or internal aspect of society. Social structure is a living structure which is created, maintained for a time and changes.

Social Structural Aspects

Social structure refers to the way a society is organised. It is about the way that various parts of the society fit together and work together. In the society there are some norms i.e. ideals and values which facilitate in formation of social structure. The people attach emotional importance to these norms. The individuals perform their roles in accordance with the accepted norms of society. The proper functioning of social structure depends upon proper assignments of roles and statuses.

For the proper enforcement of norms, every society has an approved system. The integration and coordination of the different parts of social structure depend upon conformity of social norms. The stability of a social structure depends upon the effectiveness of its approved system.

The anticipated response system calls upon the individuals to participate in the social system. The successful working of social structure depends upon the realisation of duties by the individuals and his efforts to fulfil these duties. The action is the root cause which weaves the web of social relationships and sets the social structure in motion. The whole social structure revolves around it.

Thus Social structure is an abstract entity. Its parts are dynamic and constantly changing. They are spatially widespread and therefore difficult to see as a whole. Social structure denotes patterns which change more slowly than the particular personnel who constitute them.

Social Structure of India

Caste system – The social structure is based upon the caste system. The society is divided into four major castes- the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, a Vaisyas and the Sudras. The Brahmins are the priests and are considered to be the uppermost caste. They devoted their time to studying, teaching, performing sacrifices, and officiating religious services" (Nigosian). The Kshatriyas are the warriors, their job was to "Protect, administer, and promote material welfare within the society" (Nigosian); Vaisyas are the business class, who are the farmers, merchants, and traders who really contribute to the economy of India. The fourth and last of the Varnas are known as the Sudras who are labourers that supply the manual labour needed for the economic well-being of India and the Sudras are the working class. The Dalits are treated as untouchables as they do the menial jobs of removing the night soil or cleaning the streets. The Constitution does not permit the practice of untouchability and those practising it can be mistreated. Now of course, with growing urbanization, the caste system is becoming obsolete.

Family – The family as a unit is given much importance. A society defines family as a primary group. The Indian family has been a dominant institution in the life of the individual and in the life of the community. For the Hindu family, extended family and kinship ties are of utmost importance. The Indian family is considered strong, stable, close, resilient, and enduring. The family system nurtures the well-being of the children and families adhere to a patriarchal ideology.

The traditional, ideal and desired family in India is the joint family. A joint family includes kinsmen, and generally includes three to four living generations, including uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, and grandparents living together in the same household. The elder-most, usually the male member is the head in the joint Indian family system that makes all important decisions and rules, whereas other family members abide by it dutifully with full respect. In the contemporary India there has been the nuclear family, which consists only of parents and children. Even in the more modern and nuclear families in contemporary India, many functional extensions of the traditional joint family have been retained, and the nuclear family is strongly embedded in the extended kinship matrix.

Patriarchal setup – India is mostly a patriarchal set-up, with the father having control over the family unit. The man controls the reins of the family unit. He is the head of the family. The eldest male member mostly takes decisions in the matters of the family.

Matriarchal setup – In Kerala, in the south of India, the woman of the house is the dominant force. She decides the issues of the family.

Women – Historically, women have played a significant role in the social and political structure of India. In the ancient times, women enjoyed much freedom, but with advent of the Muslims the purdah system came into vogue in the northern part of India. In many regions, women remain very submissive, although with the improved education levels, women have become more assertive.

Men – In the Indian society, a man is considered to be the bread-earner and shoulders the responsibility of the family. He is very dominating by nature and prefers to rule over his women.

Marriage – This is an important social obligation which most Indians adhere to. It is given much importance by society. Marriages are generally arranged, but now many are choosing their own partners in urban areas. Children born outside marriage are looked down upon. Marriages are conducted with elaborate rituals and much money is spent on this occasion. Inter-caste marriages are not permitted as a rule, although now it has become quite common in the urban areas.

Birth – This is an occasion for rejoicing. Ceremonies and rituals are held to celebrate the occasion of birth of a son, as birth of a male child is essential to perpetuate the family. According to Hindu religion only the male issue is competent to perform funeral rites and without which no ordinary soul can hope to go to heaven. The birth of a daughter is considered as inauspicious and went without any celebration in Northern Indian society as they feel there is a material disadvantage in having daughters because one is expected to provide a dowry for one's daughters usually more than their affordability, so as to get them respectably married into a family of social standing. It is found from various studies that especially in northern regions that birth of male child is looked up to whereas in some areas, the birth of a girl is looked down upon.

Death – This is also an important occasion in the family system. Death is considered to be inevitable. Ceremonies are held on this occasion and even after the death of a person, yearly rituals are held in remembrance of them. Thus, Indian society is very complex, but yet remains intact as people follow certain guidelines laid down by the society. They prefer not to deviate from it.

Religion- A religion is a set of beliefs that is held by a group of people. There are many different religions, each with a different set of beliefs. Each religion usually has their own type of "devotions" when people worship or pray. They often have rituals (special things that are always done in the same way) for certain times of the year or certain times of a person's life. Other words that are used for religion are "faith" and "belief system". The largest religions are Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Sikhism, Christianity and Judaism. There are many other religions also. People who do not believe in any divinity are called atheists and people who say that they are not sure whether they believe or not are called agnostics. In this present study researcher try to explore the perspective of students towards social structural changes.

Need of the study: Main purpose of the study is to explore the areas where changes are taking place in social structure due to higher education. For this reason researcher had taken the students from the Panjab University who were doing Post graduate courses.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the opinion of Post Graduate students of Panjab University, Chandigarh towards Caste System, Joint Family and status of women of social structure.
2. To know the views of Post Graduate students of Panjab University towards Marriage and Religion components of social structure

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study primarily uses the descriptive research design to collect data from post graduate students of Panjab University. The self-constructed questionnaire on perspective of post graduate students towards change in social structure was prepared. In the questionnaire the asked items were associated with language, Caste system, type of family, Status of Women, Marriage, Religions etc. For collection of data researcher had taken the interview and some of the questionnaires were filled in by the respondents them self in the presence of the researcher. Simple random sampling technique was used to collect the total sample of 60 students in which 30 were post graduate girls and 30 were post graduate boys of Panjab University. Simple statistical technique includes Frequency, Percentage and graphic representation was used.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

TABLE NO.1: Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Personal Information

Items	Frequency	(%)
Distribution of Age		
23-24	31	(51.66%)
25-26	22	(36.66%)
27-28	07	(11.66%)
Distribution of Caste		
General	54	(90%)
SC	06	(10%)
Distribution of Religion		
Sikhism	34	(56.66%)
Muslim	04	(6.66%)
Hindu	20	(33.34%)
Buddhism	02	(3.34%)
Brought Up Place		
City	22	(36.67%)
Town	06	(10%)
Village	32	(53.33%)

Table I shows the personal information of the sample gathered, in which 51.66 percent respondents were in the age group 23-24 years, 36.66 percent were in 25-26 years, 11.66 percent respondents were in the age group of 27-28 years (figure-1). So it is concluded that maximum students fall in the age group 23-24 years. From the gathered sample only 6 (10 %) students belonged to scheduled caste category whereas 90 per cent were in general category (figure-2). Above table also revealed that in the sample about 56.66 percent students were Sikh, 33.34 percent were Hindu, 6.66 percent were Muslim, and only 3.34 percent belonged to Buddhism (figure- 3).

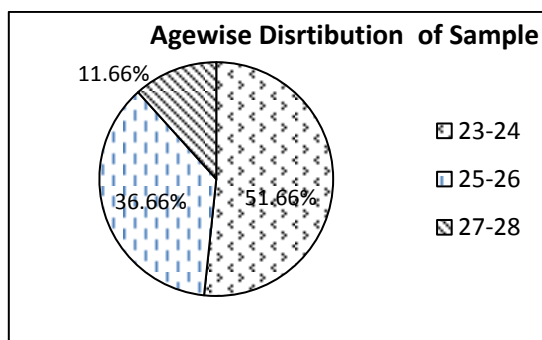


Figure 1

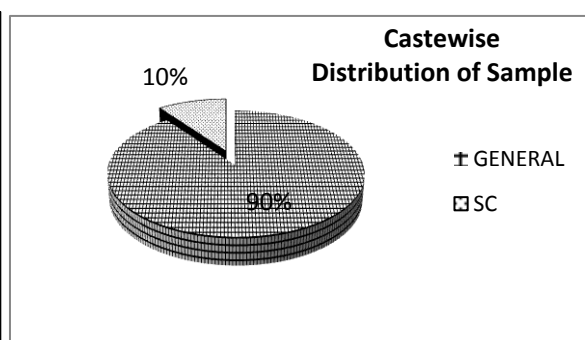


Figure 2

When asked from the respondents about their place of brought up to which 22 (36.67%) respondents said that they brought up in city, 6 (10%) at town, 32 (53.33%) at village.

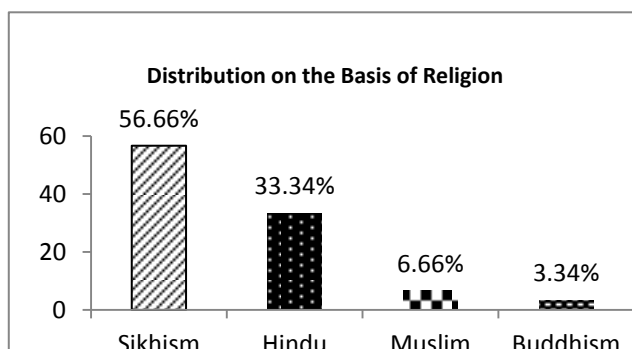


Figure 3

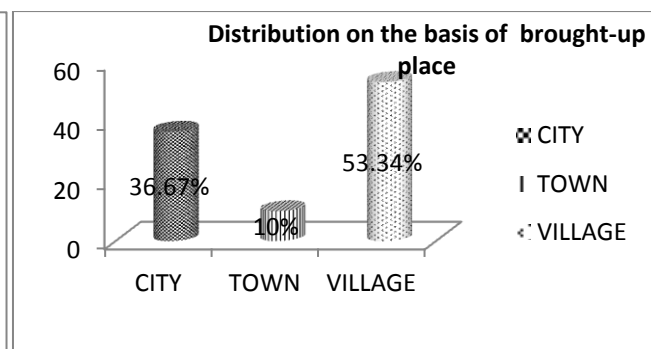


Figure 4

TABLE NO. – II: Distribution of Respondents' on the basis of Languages Known To Them

LANGUAGES KNOWN		FREQUENCY	(%)
Punjabi	Only Speak	06	(10%)
	Both Speak and Write	48	(80%)
Hindi	Only Speak	8	(13.34%)
	Both Speak and Write	52	(86.66%)
English	Only Speak	60	(100%)
	Both Speak and Write	60	(100%)
Urdu	Only Speak	16	(26.67%)
	Both Speak and Write	0	(0%)

Table II shows the languages known to the respondents, to which 80 percent students revealed that they can speak and write Punjabi whereas 10 percent said that they can only speak Punjabi, 86.66 percent students can speak and write Hindi whereas 8 percent can only speak Hindi and not write Hindi, all the students in the sample said that they can both speak and write English and 16 percent said they can speak and write Urdu also (figure-5). Thus it is concluded from the above observations that more than sixty percent students understand the three languages i.e. Hindi, Punjabi and English as maximum students belonged to Chandigarh, Punjab and Haryana state.

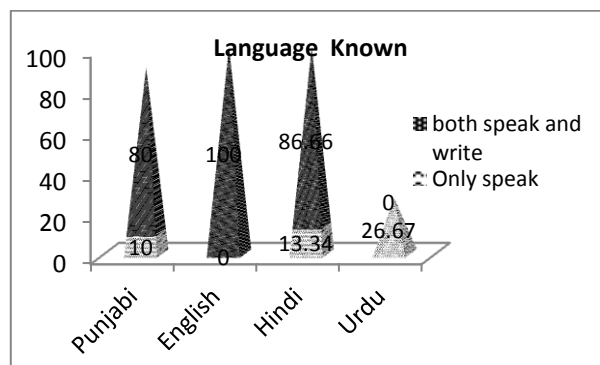


Figure 5

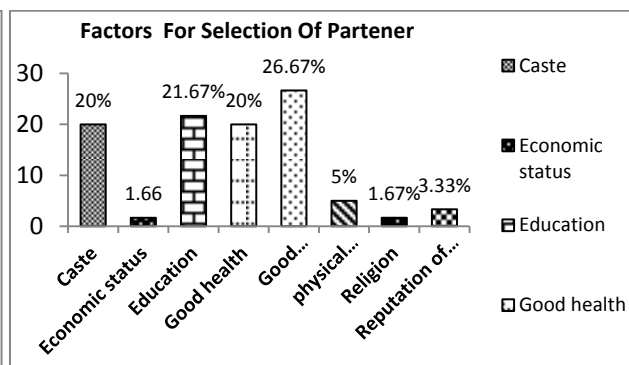


Figure 6

SECTION-II

TABLE NO. –III: Selection of Marriage Partner on the Basis of Caste System as Changes in Social Structure

Responses	Frequency	%
Factors Keep in Mind while Selecting a Marriage Partner		
Good Temperament	16	(26.67)
Education	13	(21.67)
Same Caste	12	(20)
Good Health	12	(20)
Physical Appearance	3	(05)
Reputation of the Family	2	(3.33)
Economic Status	1	(1.66)
Religion	1	(1.66)
Preference of marriage partner from other than own caste		
Yes	36	60
No	24	40

Above table no.III shows the opinion of the respondents regarding factors they would keep in mind while selecting a marriage partner, to which response pattern of the students was as follows: Good Temperament (26.67%), Education (21.67%), Same Caste (20%), Good Health (20%), Physical Appearance (5%), Economic Status (1.66%), Reputation of the Family (3.33%) and Religion (1.67%) (figure-6) were the main factors while selecting a marriage partner. Further 60 per cent students revealed that preference for suitable partner can be of any other caste, whereas 40 percent said that they would like to marry with their own caste (figure-7).

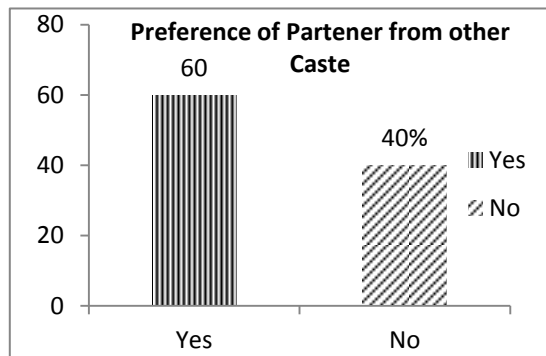


Figure-7

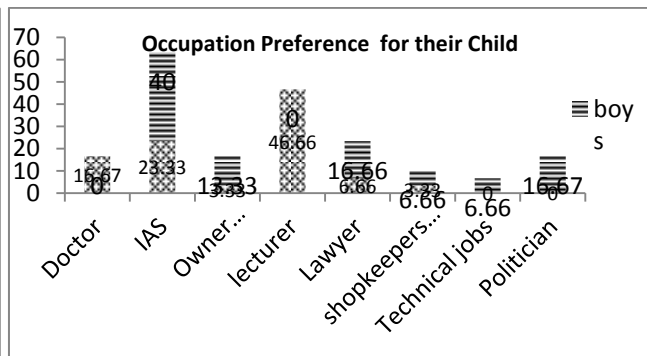


Figure-8

TABLE- IV: Respondents' Preference for Adoption of Occupation of their Children

Occupation	Girls		Boys	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Lecturer	28	(46.66 %)	0	0
IAS Officer	14	(23.33 %)	24	(40 %)
Doctor	10	(16.67 %)	0	0
Lawyer	4	(6.66 %)	10	(16.66 %)
Owner Cultivator	2	(3.33 %)	8	(13.33 %)
Shopkeepers and Businessmen	2	(3.33 %)	4	(6.66 %)
Politician	0	0	10	(16.67 %)
Technical Jobs	0	0	4	(6.66 %)

Table no. IV enquires from the respondents about type of occupation they would like their children should adopt, to which in ascending order of responses respondents' revealed that their daughters should adopt occupation as follows: lecturer (46.86%), IAS officer (23.33%), doctor (16.67%), lawyer (6.67%) whereas very few said that their daughter should have their own cultivation and business but no any respondent liked that their girl child should adopt occupation of technical job or as politician. The occupation preferences for their son as per the respondents' ascending order of reply were: IAS officer 24(40%), lawyer (16.66), politician (16.67%), own cultivator (13.33%).

It was very surprising that no respondent preferred that their son should adopt occupation of lecture and doctor. Thus it is concluded from the opinion of students of Panjab University that they preferred that their daughters should adopt teaching or physician profession but occupational preference for their son was technical or officer jobs.

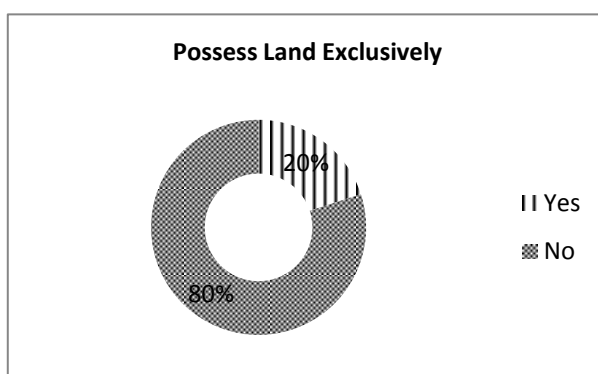


Figure 9

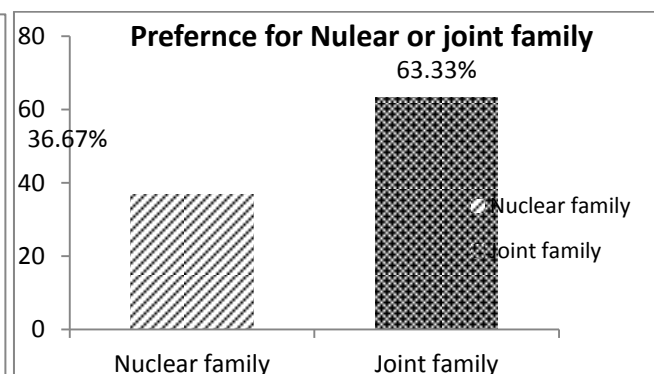


figure -10

TABLE- V: Distribution of the Responses on the Basis of Family Structure as Change in Social Structure

Responses on Family Structure	Frequency	%
• Do you like to live In a nuclear or joint family?		
Nuclear	22	(36.67)
Joint	38	(63.33)

• Do you possess land exclusively		
Yes	12	(20)
No	48	(80)
• Do you pool the income for running the house		
Yes	44	(73.33)
No	16	(26.67)
• Do you think it is advantageous to live in a joint family?		
Yes	46	(76.67)
No	14	(23.33)
• Do you attend ceremonies or festivals connected with joint family?		
YES	58	(96.67)
NO	2	(3.33)
• Do you believe in small size of your family?		
Yes	42	(70)
No	18	(30)
• How many children, a family should have to maintain a good living standard?		
1 child	12	(20)
2 children	38	(63.33)
3 children	6	(10)
4 children	4	(6.67)
• Dowry taken by family members during last five years		
Yes	40	(66.67)
No	20	(33.33)

Table no. V reveals the different items related to family structure, to which two third i.e. 38(63.33%) respondents wanted to live in a joint family whereas one third i.e. 22(36.67%) respondents wanted to live in a nuclear family (figure-10). Further 20 percent respondents' revealed that they possessed the land exclusively (figure-9). When asked whether they had pooled their income for running the house, to which maximum 44(73.33%) respondents revealed that they had pooled income jointly for running their house, whereas 16(26.67%) said that they were not pooling their income jointly (figure-11). 46(76.67%) members said that it is advantageous to live in a joint family whereas only 14(23.33%) said that it is not advantageous to live in a joint family. Almost all i.e. 58(96.67%) respondents were liked to attend their joint family ceremonies whereas 2(3.33%) were not interested in their joint family ceremonies (figure-12); they said it is just wastage of time. 42(70%) respondents believed in small size family whereas 18(30%) were against small size family norms (figure-13). When asked how many children they would like to have in their family to maintain a good standard of living, in response to this query two third respondents i.e. 38(63.33%) revealed that they would like to have two children, 12(20%) said that they would like to have one child, 6(10%) respondents said at least three children whereas 4(6.67%) respondents said they would like to have four children to maintain a good living standard. Further two- third i.e.40 (66.33%) respondents revealed that dowry should be given in the form of some gifts to the girls in their marriage whereas only one third were against the dowry .

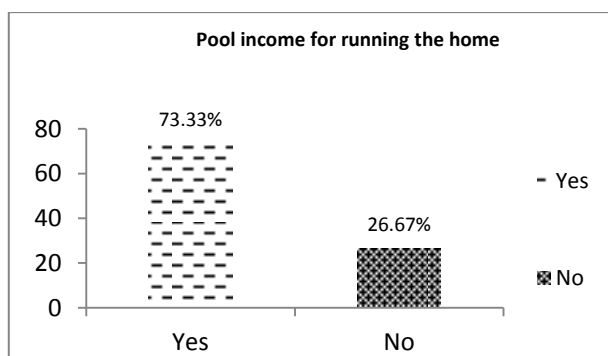


Figure -11



Figure-12

Thus it is concluded from the above observations that there is some change in family structure according to the respondents opinion.

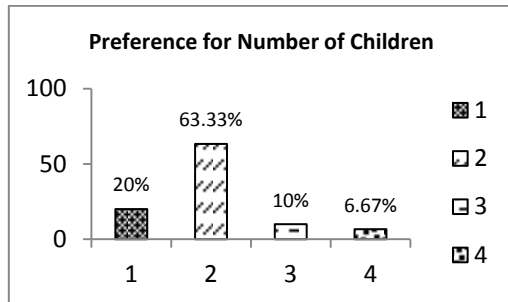


Figure 13

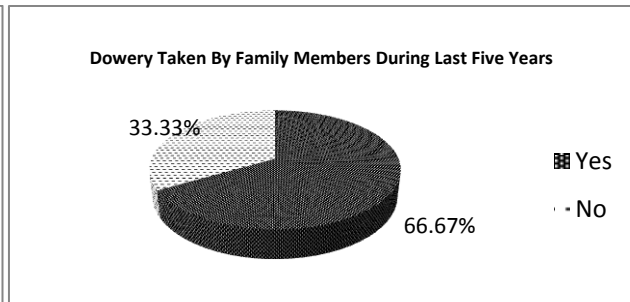


Figure 14

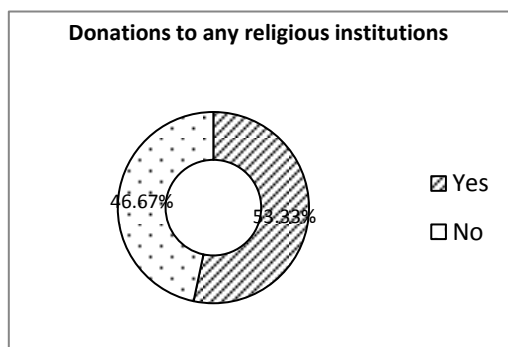


Figure 15

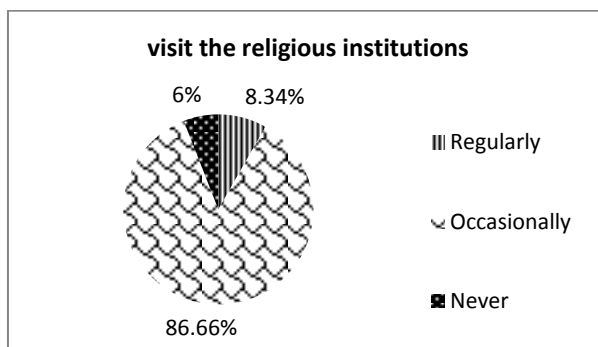


Figure 16

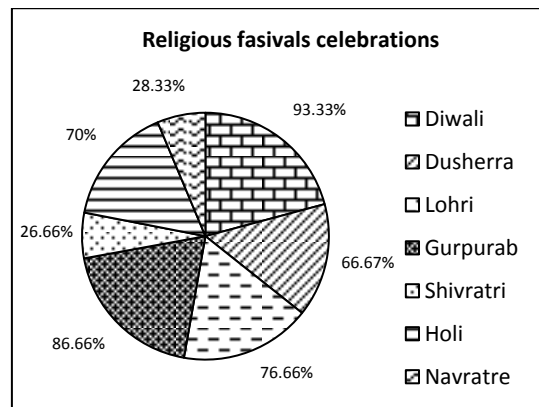


Figure 17

TABLE- VI: Distribution of Sample on the Basis of Responses on Status of Women as Changes in Social Structure

ITEMS RELATED TO STATUS OF WOMEN	FREQUENCY	%
Do you agree that girl child should be Given an equal share in family property?		
Yes	44	(73.33)
No	16	(26.67)
Do you favour the education of girls?		
Yes	60	(100)
No	00	
Do you believe in co-education in schools?		
YES	60	(100)
NO	00	
Do you consult women of your family in your family matters?		
YES	60	(100)

NO	00
Do you in favour of employment of girls?	
YES	60 (100)
NO	- -
Do you believe in co-education in schools?	
YES	60 (100)
NO	00
Do you consult women of your family in your family matters?	
YES	60 (100)
NO	00
Do you in favour of employment of girls?	
YES	60 (100)
NO	

Table VI Shows the opinion of respondents' regarding the status of women in the family, the above observations shows the response pattern of the respondents' as follows: 44 (73.33%) respondents were agreed that girl child should be given an equal share in family property whereas still 16(26.67%) were not in favour of equal share in property. Further all the respondents revealed that they were in favour of education of girls, education of girls in co-education institutions, they liked to consult family matters with women of their families and they were in favour of employment of girl child. Thus it is concluded from the above observations that although many changes were found in thought regarding women status as per students but still 26 percent respondent of Panjab University did not agreed towards equal status to be given to women in property.

TABLE NO. - VII: Distribution of the sample on the basis of Marriage Pattern as Changes in Social Structure

Does dowry has been taken in your family during the last five years?		
YES	40 (66.67%)	
NO	20 (33.33%)	
Do you think that dowry is a necessary factor in marriage?		
YES	7(11.67%)	
NO	53(88.33%)	
What is the proper age for marriage according to you?		
	19-24 years	25-30years
Boys	10(16.67%)	49(81.67%)
Girls	12(20%)	47(78.33%)

Table no. VII shows the opinion of respondents' regarding marriage pattern and dowry system in their family structure. It is seen that more than two third i.e. 40 (66.67%) respondents revealed that their family members had taken dowry during the last five years whereas only one third i.e. 20 (33.33%) respondents said that their family had not taken any dowry, further maximum i.e. 53 (88.33%) respondents felt that dowry is not a necessary factor in marriage whereas only 7(11.67%) respondents said that dowry should be given in some limits i.e.in the form of gold, basic needs of girls, good arrangement in marriage. When enquired from the respondents about the right age of marriage of their children to which 49(81.67%) respondents and 47(78.33%) respondents revealed that right age of marriage for boys and girls is 25 to 30 years respectively. Thus it is concluded that changes in age of marriage of both boys and girls is taking place.

TABLE NO. -VIII: Distribution of the Sample on the Basis of Religion as Changes in Social Structure

ITEM RELATED TO RELIGION	FREQUENCY	%
Which religious festivals are celebrated in your community?		
Diwali	56	(93.33%)
Dusherra	40	(66.67%)
Lohri	46	(76.66%)
Gurpurab	52	(86.66%)
Shivratri	16	(26.66%)

Holi	42	(70%)
Navratre	17	(28.33%)
Do you give donations to any religious institution?		
Yes	32	(53.34%)
No	28	(46.67%)
If yes, where you have donated		
Gurudwara	23	(38.33%)
Temple	10	(16.67%)
Masjid	1	(1.67%)
How much amount you donate at religious places		
0-250	10	(16.67%)
260-500	8	(13.33%)
10% OF INCOME	14	(23.33%)
Do you visit the religious institutions		
Regularly	5	(8.34%)
Occasionally	52	(86.66%)
Never	3	(6%)

Table no. VIII shows the opinion of respondents with regard to religion as Changes in social structure, to which response pattern was as follow: 56 (93.33%) celebrated Diwali, 52(86.66%) celebrated Gurburab, 46(76.66%) celebrated Lohri, 40(66.66%). celebrated Dusherra, 42(70%), celebrated Holi, 17(28.33%), Navratre whereas 16(26.66%) celebrated Shivratri. Some respondents said they didn't celebrated Dewali festivals because it polluted the environment. Little more than half i.e. 32 (53.33%) respondents said they donate the money at religious places whereas 28 (46.67%) were not like to donate money at religious places. In continuation of the previous response they were asked at what religious place they had donated money, to which two third respondents replied that they donate their money where need arises and only 23(38.33%) respondents said they donated (10 percent from their income) money to Gurudwaras.

Whereas 86.66 percent respondents revealed that they visited their religious places occasionally whereas very few i.e. 8.34 percent visited at religious places regularly and 6 percent said they never visited at religious places

5. CONCLUSION

A descriptive survey method was used to conduct a research study on perspective of post graduate students towards social structural changing aspects. In this study perspective of students' towards changes in social structure was discussed. The questionnaire was consisted of 23 questions related to changes in social structure like caste system, marriage, status of women, religion, and joint family system. In the questionnaire both close ended questions and open ended questions were asked. The data was collected from 60 post graduate students where 30 were girls and 30 were boys. All the participants actively responded to this questionnaire. The main findings of the research study were as follows:

- That the caste of the respondents varies from General to SC. Majority of the respondents were from general category.
- Majority of the respondents belonged to village and belonged to Sikh religion.
- The average age group contacted by this researcher was between 23 to 28 years.
- Maximum number of the students knew English language in written and speaking.
- Most of the respondents wanted their son to be IAS officer or be in technical job whereas they wanted their daughter should adopt occupations like physician or teaching profession.
- Most of the respondents revealed that the most important point for selection of marriage partner would be good temperament of their partner. They further revealed that other factors for selecting life partner in order of priority were: caste, economic status, good health, religion etc. 60 percent respondents said that even if they found suitable partner other than their own caste, they would like to marry them.

- Majority of the respondents possessed joint family property. Most of the students thought that it was advantageous to live in a joint family but there was little difference between to live in a joint family or nuclear family. Majority of the respondents said that for good living standard the we should have more than two children.
- Still 26.67 percent respondents were not in favour of girls' equal share in property and students were anti and criticized of equal share of property among boys and girls.
- Majority of the respondents were in favour of following responses like girls' education in co-education institutions, family consult women's in family decisions and they favoured employment of girls.
- Most of the respondents revealed that proper age of marriage of girls and boys should be between age group 25 to 30 years. Most of the respondents said that dowry was not necessary to be taken but some of the respondents were in favour of dowry to be given to some limits, for example 20 lakhs which includes everything like gold, clothes, arrangement for guests etc. not like by giving big luxury cars etc.
- Majority of the respondents celebrated festivals like Diwali, Gurburab, Lohri, Holi, Dusherra etc but some of respondents were against the Dewali celebrations with crackers because they think that it polluted the environment. Some of the respondents were against the celebration of Dusheherra, their meaning was to say why we should celebrate someone's death .
- Most of the respondent were in favour of donation money at religious places from 10% from their annually income. Maximum numbers of respondents were not interested to go to religious institutions regularly.

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