The Decline of Extended Family Culture in Bangladesh: Historical, Social, Economic, and Islamic Insights

MD Salah UDDIN

PhD Candidate, Dept. of Islamic Philosophy, Marmara University, Istanbul-Turkey

Orchid: 0000-0002-1090-6856
Email: salahuddin@marun.edu.tr

Abstract

The extended family system has long been a cornerstone of Bangladeshi society, deeply intertwined with historical traditions, socioeconomic dynamics, and Islamic teachings. Traditionally, this system provided a robust framework for social support, economic management, and familial responsibility. However, recent decades have seen a significant shift towards nuclear families, driven by various factors. This study explores the multifaceted causes behind this transformation, including the historical evolution of family structures, changing social norms, financial pressures, urban migration trends, and modern family planning practices. Additionally, the research examines the Islamic perspective on family roles and responsibilities, particularly concerning dowry practices, rising divorce rates, and the challenges of elder care. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data, the study provides an in-depth analysis of how these elements have collectively contributed to the decline of the extended family system. The findings offer insights and recommendations for preserving family cohesion and upholding traditional values within the context of contemporary socio-economic changes.

Keywords: Joint Family; Nuclear Family; Islamic Family Law; Urban Migration; Family Planning

1. Introduction

In Islam, family structures are crucial for both individual and societal well-being, as emphasized in the Qur'an and Hadith. Kinship ties, or *silat ar-Rahim*[1], involve fulfilling obligations to parents, children, and

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[1] **Silat ar-Rahim** is an Arabic term that refers to maintaining and nurturing family ties, which is a key concept in Islamic teachings. The term translates to "keeping the ties of kinship" and encompasses the moral and religious duty of ensuring strong relationships with one's relatives, including honoring and supporting them. This principle is deeply rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith, where it is emphasized as a means of upholding family responsibilities and ensuring social cohesion. The Qur'an explicitly instructs believers to be dutiful to their parents and to uphold justice within familial relationships (Qur'an 17:23; Qur'an 4:1). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also underscored the importance of maintaining these ties, stating, "He is not of us who does not show mercy to our young ones and respect to our elders" (Sunan al-Tirmidhi). This concept reflects the broader Islamic value of mutual care and responsibility, integral to the well-being of both individuals and society (Badawi, 1995).

spouses (Qur'an 17:23, 4:1). The extended family system, historically a defining characteristic of Bangladeshi society, aligns with Islamic teachings on mutual support, care for the elderly, and collective responsibility (Hadith, Sunan al-Tirmidhi). In rural Bangladesh, extended families provide economic security and social stability, with Islamic values guiding familial roles and responsibilities (Islam, 2005). This traditional structure, where multiple generations lived together and shared resources, was integral to both the social and economic fabric of rural life (Chowdhury, 1987). The family unit in such settings functioned as a microcosm of Islamic society, with financial burdens and caregiving duties shared among members (Islam, 2005).

However, recent decades have seen significant changes in Bangladesh's family structures due to rapid urbanization and modernization. Migration to urban areas for employment and educational opportunities has led to the rise of nuclear families, contrasting sharply with the traditional extended family model (Islam & Ahmed, 2015). This shift is influenced by global cultural trends prioritizing individualism and personal freedom, which often conflict with the collective values emphasized in Islamic family life (Esposito, 2001). Economic pressures, such as inflation and the need for dual incomes, further exacerbate the decline of large, multi-generational households (Hossain & Islam, 2018). These socio-economic dynamics have significant implications for the care of elderly family members, preservation of family ties, and overall social cohesion within communities.

The socioeconomic changes have led to the gradual breakdown of the extended family system. Urban migration and the shift from agrarian to industrial economies have resulted in smaller, nuclear family structures becoming the norm, particularly in urban areas (Chowdhury, 2015). Rising living costs and limited space in urban settings further contribute to the decline of extended family arrangements (Rahman & Islam, 2018). This transition, while economically advantageous, challenges Islamic family values, particularly the care of elderly parents as mandated in the Qur'an (Qur'an 31:14). This article explores the impact of these transformations on traditional family structures in Bangladesh, analyzing how urban migration, economic pressures, and evolving social norms affect familial responsibilities and social support systems. By examining these changes through the lens of Islamic teachings and contemporary socio-economic factors, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for maintaining family cohesion in a rapidly modernizing society.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore the transformation of family structures in Bangladesh, focusing on the shift from extended to nuclear families. The specific objectives are:

To analyze the historical and socio-economic factors contributing to the decline of the extended family system in Bangladesh.

To examine the role of urban migration, financial challenges, and changing social norms in reshaping family structures.

To evaluate the Islamic perspective on family structures and assess the extent to which Islamic teachings are being upheld or neglected in modern Bangladeshi families.

To identify the impact of dowry practices, divorce rates, and elder care on the weakening of extended family ties.

To propose Islamic-based policy recommendations aimed at preserving family cohesion and supporting vulnerable family members.

3. Methodology

This study aims to explore the transformation of family structures in Bangladesh, focusing on the decline of extended families and the rise of nuclear families. To achieve this, a mixed-method approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 30 participants from diverse age groups and socio-economic backgrounds, both in rural and urban areas. Additionally, a survey with 200 respondents was conducted to measure attitudes toward family structures, urban migration, and financial challenges. Thematic analysis of the interview data identified key reasons for the shift, such as financial pressures, dowry practices, and the influence of Islamic teachings. Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to uncover relationships between variables like urban migration and family planning.

Secondary data were collected through a literature review, which provided a historical and theoretical framework for family dynamics in Bangladesh. Islamic jurisprudence was also reviewed to assess the extent to which modern families adhere to or deviate from Islamic teachings on family responsibility, elder care, and marriage. The findings from both the qualitative and quantitative analysis were synthesized to offer Islamic-based policy recommendations, focusing on elder care, family cohesion, and support for multi-generational households. This comprehensive methodology aims to provide a well-rounded understanding of the changes in family structures and propose culturally appropriate solutions grounded in Islamic values.

4. Literature Review

The transformation of family structures in South Asia, particularly in Bangladesh, has been the subject of numerous studies focusing on the socio-cultural, economic, and religious influences that shape these changes. Scholars like Goody and Tambiah (1973) have explored matrimonial practices and their impact on family cohesion, particularly in agrarian societies where extended families have historically provided economic and social stability. Rahman (2006) delves into the impact of development and democratization on family dynamics in Bangladesh, noting how modernization has strained traditional family ties.

Chowdhury (1987) provides an in-depth analysis of rural-to-urban migration, highlighting how the pursuit of economic opportunities disrupts the extended family structure. This aligns with Rahman's (2006) observations of the erosion of collective living due to financial pressures and changing aspirations among the younger generation. The studies demonstrate that urban migration not only reduces family size but also isolates the elderly, who traditionally relied on the extended family for care. Islam and Ahmed (2015) add a critical dimension by examining the influence of Western cultural norms on family planning and individualism, which increasingly shape the social landscape in urban centers.

Islamic family structures, as a topic of interest, have been analyzed from the perspective of religious teachings and legal frameworks. Al-Balagh (2014) highlights the role of Islamic principles in marriage and familial duties, emphasizing how misinterpretations, particularly of dowry and mahr, have exacerbated family tensions. These works collectively shed light on the dissonance between traditional Islamic values and the realities of modern socio-economic life.

While existing literature provides comprehensive coverage of the socio-economic and cultural factors affecting family structures in Bangladesh, several gaps remain. First, most studies fail to deeply integrate Islamic jurisprudence into the analysis of family transformations, particularly the shifts from extended to nuclear families. Although some works touch upon Islamic values, a more focused exploration of how these principles are applied—or neglected—in modern family life is needed. Second, while financial pressures and urban migration are well-documented drivers, there is insufficient analysis of the psychological and emotional impacts on individuals, especially the elderly, who are isolated by the breakdown of extended families. Third, little attention has been given to policy recommendations that specifically align with Islamic teachings, offering practical solutions for preserving family cohesion in a rapidly urbanizing society.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the transformation of family structures through an Islamic lens, considering both the socio-economic and religious dimensions. It further contributes by proposing Islamic-based policy interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of these changes on Bangladeshi society.

5. *Historical Context and Islamic Teachings on Family Structures*

Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign state in December 1971, following its victory in the War of Liberation, which lasted from March 25 to December 16, 1971. Despite its relatively small land area of 144,000 square kilometers, Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated nations in the world, with a population ranging between 150 and 160 million. Over 80 percent of its people live in rural areas, where agriculture plays a central role in their livelihoods. Traditional family structures in rural Bangladesh were once deeply rooted in both cultural traditions and Islamic teachings, with joint and extended families forming the backbone of society. Historically, these structures provided not only economic security but also adhered to Islamic principles of mutual care, collective responsibility, and the protection of the vulnerable, including the elderly and disabled.

Islam views the family as the fundamental unit of society, where each member has defined roles and responsibilities. The extended family system, especially prevalent in rural societies like Bangladesh, is deeply rooted in both Islamic principles and the agrarian lifestyle. In this structure, multiple generations live together, pooling resources, sharing economic responsibilities, and ensuring that the elderly and vulnerable are cared for. This collectivist approach aligns with Islamic teachings, which emphasize mutual care, familial bonds, and the protection of weaker members of society (Qur'an 4:36). The Qur'an explicitly instructs believers to honor and care for their parents, stating, "Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and that you be dutiful to your parents" (Qur'an 17:23). It is also considered a serious sin in Islam to neglect elderly parents or sever family ties (*silat ar-rahim*), as emphasized by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in various hadiths, including, "The one who severs ties of kinship will not enter Paradise" (Sahih al-Bukhari). Additionally, the rights and responsibilities toward women, children, and the elderly are clearly outlined in both the Qur'an and Hadith, ensuring that all members of the family receive their due care and protection (Qur'an 4:1).

In Bangladesh, the traditional family system has long been shaped by both Islamic values and the agrarian economy. The extended family system provided a source of economic stability, allowing families to manage agricultural activities collectively, share resources, and care for vulnerable family members. The advent of Islam in the Indian subcontinent institutionalized social welfare practices like *zakat*, *fitra*, and *baitulmal*[2], ensuring that the community's most vulnerable members were supported (Karim, 1996; Sarker, 1995). This religious foundation strengthened communal bonds and reinforced the family's central role in Bangladeshi social life. However, as the country began to industrialize and urbanize, these traditional family models faced significant challenges.

As urbanization intensified in the late 20th century, younger generations migrated from rural to urban areas in search of better economic opportunities and education (Islam & Ahmed, 2015). This migration led to a gradual shift from extended family structures to nuclear families, largely due to constraints like limited living space, higher costs of living, and a growing focus on individualism. The decline of the extended family system

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[2] **Zakat, Fitra, and Baitulmal** are key components of Islamic financial and social welfare systems:

- **Zakat**: This is a mandatory form of almsgiving in Islam, one of the Five Pillars of Islam. It involves giving a fixed portion of one's wealth, typically 2.5% of accumulated savings and investments, to the poor and needy. Zakat aims to purify wealth and reduce economic inequality (Qur'an 2:177; Ali, 2012).
- **Fitra**: Also known as Zakat al-Fitr, this is a charitable donation given at the end of Ramadan before the Eid al-Fitr prayer. It is intended to purify the fast and ensure that even those in need can join in the celebrations. It is typically a fixed amount, given per person (Qur'an 2:267; Al-Qaradawi, 1999).
- **Baitulmal**: This refers to the Islamic treasury or public fund, used to collect and distribute financial resources for the welfare of the community. It encompasses funds gathered through Zakat, Khums (another form of religious tax), and other sources, which are allocated to support various social and economic needs, including aiding the poor and supporting state functions (Khan, 2015).

has created tensions between modern lifestyles and Islamic obligations to maintain strong family ties and care for one's kin, particularly elderly parents. The geographical distance, work pressures, and financial constraints faced by urban families have made it more difficult to fulfill these obligations, leading to a weakening of family bonds (Qur'an 31:14) and a growing issue of elderly isolation (Rahman, 2006).

Another significant consequence of this shift is the changing role of women within the family structure. In traditional extended families, women primarily managed household responsibilities and child-rearing, while benefiting from the support of the larger family unit. However, with the rise of nuclear families and the increasing participation of women in the workforce, these traditional roles have evolved. While Islam grants women certain rights and protections, including the right to work and manage their financial affairs (Qur'an 4:32), the decline of the extended family system has added pressure on women to balance both professional and familial obligations, often without the same support network that the extended family once provided (Esposito, 2001).

Economic pressures have also strained the traditional family system. Rising living costs, inflation, and the need for dual-income households have made it difficult for families to maintain large, multi-generational homes, particularly in urban settings. This shift has been further intensified by modern family planning practices that encourage smaller family sizes, diminishing the need for extended family structures (Hossain & Islam, 2018). While family planning is permitted in Islam for legitimate reasons, it reflects broader societal changes that prioritize individual autonomy and economic stability over collective family responsibility (Fadel, 2007).

In summary, while the extended family system in Bangladesh was once deeply intertwined with both Islamic values and the rural economy, modern socioeconomic changes have led to its gradual decline. Urban migration, economic pressures, and the rise of nuclear families have disrupted traditional family roles and obligations, creating tensions between modern lifestyles and Islamic teachings on family care and responsibility. As Bangladesh continues to urbanize, finding ways to reconcile these changes with Islamic principles of family life will be critical for preserving social cohesion and ensuring the well-being of all family members.

6. Drivers of Change in Family Structures

6.1. Urban Migration and the Appeal of Nuclear Family Planning:

One of the most significant factors contributing to the breakdown of the extended family system in Bangladesh is urban migration. This demographic shift, wherein younger generations move from rural to urban areas in pursuit of employment and educational opportunities, has profoundly impacted traditional family structures. Urban environments, characterized by limited living space and increased financial pressures, often necessitate a transition from extended to nuclear family arrangements. The spatial constraints and economic demands of city life make it challenging for families to sustain large, multi-generational households (Islam & Ahmed, 2015). Additionally, global cultural trends promoting individualism and personal freedom further contribute to this shift, as they contrast sharply with the collective values traditionally upheld in extended family systems (Hossain & Islam, 2018).

In Islam, the family is considered a collective unit with mutual responsibilities, where maintaining kinship ties and caring for elderly parents are paramount (Qur'an 31:14). The traditional extended family model, prevalent in rural Bangladesh, aligns with Islamic teachings that emphasize communal support and the protection of vulnerable members. However, as urban migration continues, the capacity of nuclear families to fulfill these obligations diminishes. The smaller family units typical of urban settings often struggle to provide the level of care and support needed for aging relatives, leading to increased social isolation for the elderly (Esposito, 2001). This shift not only challenges the traditional role of the extended family but also raises concerns about the alignment of modern family dynamics with Islamic principles of family care and responsibility (Fadel, 2007).

The socioeconomic pressures of urban life, combined with changing cultural values, exacerbate these challenges, creating a gap between traditional Islamic family ideals and contemporary living conditions. While Islam advocates for the respect and care of elders, the realities of urban living make it increasingly difficult for families to uphold these principles, highlighting a critical area where modernity and tradition intersect (Badawi, 1995; Rahman, 2006).

6.2. Financial Challenges and Economic Pressures:

Economic difficulties are a major factor driving the shift from extended to nuclear family structures, particularly in Bangladesh. Traditionally, Islamic family systems emphasize shared financial responsibilities among family members, where collective wealth management provides economic security and stability for all. In these systems, resources are pooled to support extended family members, including the elderly and those in need, thereby strengthening family cohesion and social support (Qur'an 4:32). However, modern economic pressures have significantly altered this dynamic. Inflation, rising living costs, and the increasing necessity for dual incomes have strained family finances, making it challenging to sustain large, multi-generational households (Hossain & Islam, 2018).

The financial burden of dowry, which remains prevalent in many parts of Bangladesh despite being contrary to Islamic principles, further exacerbates these economic pressures. In Islam, mahr is a mandatory gift from the groom to the bride, symbolizing his commitment and responsibility (Qur'an 4:4). Unlike dowry, which is often demanded by the bride's family and can impose substantial financial strain, mahr is intended to be a gift freely given, reflecting the husband's dedication rather than a transactional obligation. The distortion of this concept into the dowry system has created significant financial strain for families, leading to increased marital conflicts and higher divorce rates (Zafar, 2003). This not only places a burden on individual families but also disrupts the extended family structure by contributing to family fragmentation and instability.

Economic challenges thus play a crucial role in shifting family dynamics. The need for dual incomes and the financial strain imposed by dowry practices weaken the traditional extended family model and contribute to the rise of nuclear families. This transition impacts family stability and cohesion, undermining the collective responsibility and mutual support that are central to Islamic family life (Chowdhury, 1987; Karim, 1996). As families adapt to these economic pressures, the traditional values of mutual support and extended family living face significant challenges in the contemporary context.

6.3. Social Norms and Changing Expectations:

In traditional Islamic societies, family roles are characterized by clearly defined responsibilities and a strong emphasis on mutual care, respect for elders, and collective support. These roles are deeply embedded in Islamic teachings, which advocate for maintaining familial bonds and caring for all family members, especially the elderly (Qur'an 17:23). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) underscored the importance of these values by saying, "He is not of us who does not show mercy to our young ones and respect to our elders" (Sunan al-Tirmidhi). This directive highlights the moral and social obligations within the family unit, where respect for elders and care for younger generations are fundamental principles.

However, as Bangladesh undergoes rapid modernization, there is a noticeable shift in social norms that challenges these traditional family roles. The younger generations increasingly value privacy, autonomy, and individual decision-making, often prioritizing personal freedom over collective family responsibilities (Islam & Ahmed, 2015). This trend towards individualism contrasts sharply with the Islamic values of collective responsibility and familial care, leading to a growing preference for nuclear families over extended ones.

The rise of nuclear families in urban settings has led to significant changes in how family responsibilities are managed. With smaller living spaces and higher financial pressures, many families find it challenging to provide adequate care for elderly parents. This shift has resulted in a situation where elderly parents may live alone or in less-than-ideal conditions, which contradicts the Islamic teaching of honoring and caring for one's parents (Qur'an 31:14). The growing emphasis on individual autonomy and the convenience of

nuclear families have created a social dilemma, where the traditional values of family care and mutual support are increasingly difficult to uphold (Rahman, 2006; Chowdhury, 1987).

Moreover, the shift towards nuclear families is compounded by the broader societal changes driven by economic development and urbanization. As Bangladesh continues to industrialize, the pressures of modern life and the constraints of urban living exacerbate the challenges of maintaining traditional family structures. This transition reflects a broader global trend where traditional family values are often at odds with contemporary lifestyles, leading to a tension between maintaining cultural and religious principles and adapting to new social norms (Esposito, 2001; Hossain & Islam, 2018).

In summary, while traditional Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of collective family responsibility and elder care, the modernization of Bangladesh has led to shifts in social norms that challenge these values. The rise of individualism and nuclear families has resulted in the neglect of elderly parents and a departure from the collective family responsibilities that are central to Islamic teachings. As Bangladesh continues to modernize, finding ways to reconcile these changes with Islamic values will be crucial for maintaining social cohesion and ensuring the well-being of all family members.

6.4. Nuclear Family Planning and Family Size:

Family planning initiatives in Bangladesh, which have successfully curbed rapid population growth, have also significantly contributed to the shift towards nuclear families. These initiatives have resulted in smaller family sizes, which, while beneficial for controlling population density, have diminished the traditional role and necessity of extended family structures. In rural and agrarian societies, larger families were crucial for managing household labor, sharing economic responsibilities, and providing care for elderly and dependent members (Miller, 2003). The extended family model, which allowed for pooled resources and collective caregiving, has been undermined by the trend towards smaller family units.

Islamic teachings provide a nuanced view of family planning. The religion does not prohibit family planning but advocates for a balanced approach that ensures the fulfillment of familial responsibilities. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have encouraged larger families, as reflected in his saying, "Marry those who are loving and fertile, for I will boast of your great numbers before the other nations on the Day of Judgment" (Sunan Ibn Majah)[3]. This statement highlights the value placed on having larger families, which historically contributed to the strength and cohesion of the extended family system (El-Ashker, 2011). However, the reduction in family size due to modern family planning practices has led to challenges in maintaining the extended family model, which traditionally supported the care of elderly and dependent relatives.

Moreover, smaller family sizes have led to a reduction in the number of potential caregivers within the household. With fewer children, there is less capacity to share caregiving responsibilities for elderly parents or other dependents, which can weaken the traditional family support network (Khair, 2005). This trend is compounded by the increasing urbanization and economic pressures that make it challenging for nuclear families to provide adequate care for extended family members who may be living in rural areas.

The decline in family size and the rise of nuclear families reflect broader global trends, where individualism and economic pressures often take precedence over traditional collective family responsibilities (World Bank, 2012). While family planning has contributed to demographic stability and improved quality of life for many, it has also necessitated adaptations in how families fulfill their caregiving roles and maintain intergenerational support systems.

In conclusion, while family planning initiatives in Bangladesh have been successful in controlling population growth, they have also contributed to the decline of extended family structures. This shift has altered the dynamics of familial caregiving and support, challenging the traditional Islamic values of collective

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[3] *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 1845. This hadith emphasizes the importance of marriage and procreation in Islam as a means of increasing the Muslim ummah and fulfilling religious obligations related to family and community growth.

responsibility and elder care. As Bangladesh continues to modernize, addressing these changes in a way that aligns with Islamic principles of family life will be essential for sustaining social cohesion and ensuring the well-being of all family members.

7. Challenges Facing the Transformation of Family Structures

7.1. Elderly Care: The shift from extended to nuclear families presents significant challenges, particularly in the realm of elderly care. In traditional Islamic family structures, caring for one's parents and elderly relatives is a fundamental duty deeply ingrained in religious and cultural practices. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of this responsibility: "And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and your parents; to Me is the [final] destination" (Qur'an 31:14). This verse underscores the significance of filial piety and the obligation to provide for aging parents, reflecting broader Islamic values of compassion and familial responsibility (Gibb, 1997).

Historically, the extended family system in Islamic societies provided a support network that ensured the well-being of elderly members. Multiple generations living together allowed for the pooling of resources and collective caregiving, which aligned with Islamic teachings on mutual support and respect for elders (Bari, 2001). This traditional model enabled families to maintain a strong sense of intergenerational solidarity, with younger members expected to support their older relatives as a matter of duty and respect.

However, as societies modernize and urbanize, the shift towards nuclear family units has disrupted this traditional support system. In Bangladesh, the migration of younger generations to urban areas in search of employment and education has led to smaller, more isolated family structures. This transition has created challenges in maintaining adequate care for elderly parents, who may find themselves living alone or in institutions, which contrasts sharply with the communal caregiving ethos promoted by Islam (Islam & Ahmed, 2015).

The decline of the extended family system and the rise of nuclear families have exacerbated the issue of elderly care. With fewer family members available to provide support, elderly individuals often face neglect and isolation. This situation is compounded by limited state resources and the capacity of civil society organizations to address the growing needs of an aging population (World Health Organization, 2002). Despite the efforts of government agencies and NGOs to support the elderly, the scale of the problem often exceeds available resources, leading to gaps in care and support (Gorman, 2002).

In Islam, the neglect of elderly parents is not only a social concern but also a violation of religious principles. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the importance of caring for one's parents, stating, "He is not of us who does not show mercy to our young ones and respect to our elders" (Sunan al-Tirmidhi)[4]. This hadith highlights the moral and religious imperative to provide for and respect the elderly, reinforcing the need for families to uphold these values even in the face of modern challenges (Al-Sabuni, 1996).

The transition from extended to nuclear families thus represents a profound shift with significant implications for elderly care. While family planning and urbanization have contributed to demographic and economic changes, they have also necessitated a reevaluation of how societies can best support their aging populations in line with Islamic teachings and modern realities. Addressing these challenges will require a combination of cultural adaptation and policy innovation to ensure that the needs of elderly individuals are met while maintaining the core values of family responsibility and care.

7.2. Weakening of Social Bonds: The weakening of social bonds due to the transition from extended to nuclear families presents a profound challenge, particularly in terms of emotional and moral support. Traditionally, extended families served as comprehensive support networks, offering both financial stability

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[4] *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2612. This hadith highlights the significance of compassion and respect within the family, underscoring the ethical conduct that is central to Islamic teachings on family relations.

and emotional reassurance. In these family structures, multiple generations cohabited, ensuring that every member—whether young or elderly—received the necessary care and support. This collective approach to family life not only helped manage economic burdens but also fostered a sense of community and solidarity among family members (Hussain, 2012).

In Islamic teachings, the importance of maintaining family ties is emphasized repeatedly. The Qur'an underscores the need for strong family bonds and mutual support: "Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the neighbor who is near of kin, the neighbor who is a stranger, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess" (Qur'an 4:36). This verse highlights the breadth of familial obligations and the importance of nurturing relationships with all members of the family, reflecting broader Islamic values of compassion and interconnectedness (Khan, 2005).

The shift towards nuclear families, driven by urbanization and changing socio-economic conditions, has led to the erosion of these traditional support networks. As families become smaller and more geographically dispersed, the emotional and moral support that was once a hallmark of extended family life diminishes. This fragmentation of familial bonds has been associated with increased social isolation, anxiety, and a loss of community cohesion (Khan & Hossain, 2014). Studies have shown that individuals in nuclear families often experience higher levels of loneliness and mental health issues compared to those in extended family settings, where support systems are more robust (Hossain, 2018).

Furthermore, the decline of extended family structures has implications for social capital, which is crucial for community well-being and individual resilience. Social capital refers to the networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation among members of a community (Putnam, 2000). The weakening of family bonds can undermine social capital, leading to reduced community engagement and support, which in turn exacerbates feelings of isolation and detachment (Field, 2003).

In addition to the emotional and social repercussions, the breakdown of extended family systems also impacts moral and ethical guidance. Extended families traditionally played a role in imparting cultural and religious values, including the importance of mutual support and respect. As these systems weaken, there is a risk of losing the transmission of these values to younger generations, which can affect the overall moral fabric of society (Siddiqui, 2008).

In summary, the shift from extended to nuclear families has led to significant challenges in maintaining social bonds and support systems. The traditional role of extended families in providing financial, emotional, and moral support is diminishing, resulting in increased social isolation and a loss of community cohesion. The Qur'anic emphasis on maintaining family ties underscores the importance of these relationships, and the erosion of these ties poses a threat to social well-being and individual mental health. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to reinforce community support networks and adapt traditional values to contemporary realities.

7.3. Divorce and Family Fragmentation: The rising divorce rates in Bangladesh, influenced by financial pressures, dowry disputes, and global cultural norms, are a growing concern with significant social and emotional ramifications. Islam permits divorce but considers it a last resort, with the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasizing its undesirability: "Of all the lawful acts, divorce is the most hated by Allah" (Sunan Abu Dawood)[5]. This sentiment reflects the Islamic perspective on maintaining family unity and the inherent challenges associated with divorce.

Financial pressures play a substantial role in the increasing divorce rates. Economic stressors such as inflation, unemployment, and the rising cost of living often strain marital relationships. Research indicates that economic hardships can exacerbate marital discord, leading to higher divorce rates (Amato, 2010). In

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[5] (Sunan Abu Dawood, Hadith No. 2178). For similar references, see *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 2046, and *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 5193.

Bangladesh, the financial burden of dowry—a practice not supported by Islam but prevalent in certain cultural contexts—has further complicated marital stability. The dowry system often imposes excessive financial strain on families, leading to disputes and contributing to marital breakdowns (Khan, 2015).

The influence of global cultural norms also impacts divorce rates. Western values of individualism and personal freedom often contrast with traditional family structures and Islamic teachings that emphasize collective responsibility and marital commitment (Smith, 2017). As global cultural trends permeate local societies, they can undermine traditional values and contribute to higher divorce rates. This cultural shift towards prioritizing personal satisfaction over familial duty can lead to increased marital instability (Jackson, 2016).

The consequences of rising divorce rates are profound, particularly for children and women. Divorce often disrupts the extended family system, removing the support network that was once integral to managing family responsibilities and providing emotional stability (Hossain, 2018). For children, divorce can result in emotional distress, behavioral issues, and academic difficulties. Studies have shown that children from divorced families are more likely to experience mental health issues and lower academic achievement compared to their peers from intact families (Amato & Keith, 1991).

Women, often left as primary caregivers post-divorce, face heightened vulnerability. They may experience financial difficulties, social stigma, and emotional distress, which can further exacerbate their challenges (Choudhury, 2019). The lack of adequate support systems for divorced women can lead to long-term negative effects on their well-being and economic stability (Barker, 2003).

In conclusion, the rising divorce rates in Bangladesh, driven by economic pressures, dowry disputes, and global cultural influences, pose significant challenges to the extended family system. The disruption of familial structures through divorce has far-reaching social and emotional consequences, particularly for children and women. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that considers both traditional values and modern realities, aiming to provide support and stability for affected individuals.

8. Prospects for Future Family Structures in Bangladesh

Despite the challenges, there are prospects for adapting to the changing family structures in Bangladesh while maintaining Islamic values:

8.1. Strengthening Social Safety Nets: As the extended family structure continues to decline in Bangladesh, the role of the state and religious institutions in providing social safety nets has become increasingly vital. The traditional family system, which once offered comprehensive support to all its members, is being replaced by nuclear families and urban lifestyles that often fail to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. In this context, Islamic principles such as zakat (charity) and waqf (endowments)[6] offer significant opportunities for providing support. Zakat, one of the Five Pillars of Islam, requires Muslims to give a portion of their wealth to those in need, including the elderly, widows, and orphans, who may be left without family support due to the changing family dynamics (Qur'an 2:177). Similarly, waqf, a charitable endowment, allows for the establishment of assets whose proceeds are used for the benefit of the community, including social welfare programs and institutions that support vulnerable populations (Siddiqi, 2004). Leveraging these Islamic principles can provide a robust framework for addressing the gaps left by the decline of the extended family system.

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[6] **Waqf (endowments)** refers to a charitable endowment in Islamic law, where an individual dedicates a portion of their wealth or property for religious, educational, or social purposes. This endowment is held in perpetuity, with its benefits allocated to support various causes, such as mosques, schools, hospitals, or assistance for the needy. Waqf is deeply rooted in Islamic principles of charity and social welfare, serving as a means for the donor to earn ongoing spiritual rewards. The concept of waqf has been extensively explored in various academic studies. For instance, Ahmed (2009) discusses the societal impacts of Islamic endowments, while Khan (2008) examines the role of waqf in social development. Siddiqi (1999) provides a comprehensive analysis of waqf's theoretical and practical aspects, illustrating its significance in Islamic charitable practices.

Community-based elder care programs, grounded in Islamic values, can play a crucial role in bridging the support gap created by the erosion of traditional family structures. These programs can be designed to provide comprehensive care services, including financial support, health care, and emotional support, ensuring that elderly individuals receive the care they need in the absence of extended family. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of caring for the elderly and maintaining family bonds (Qur'an 31:14; Hadith in Sunan Abu Dawood), and community-based programs that reflect these values can foster a sense of social responsibility and solidarity. By incorporating Islamic principles into these programs, religious institutions and community organizations can create supportive environments that help mitigate the challenges faced by those who are no longer supported by their families. This approach not only aligns with Islamic teachings but also reinforces the role of the community in providing a safety net for vulnerable members of society (Hassan, 2012; Youssef, 2018).

8.2. Revitalizing Islamic Family Values: To address the negative effects of social fragmentation and reinforce family cohesion, religious scholars and community leaders have a crucial role to play in emphasizing Islamic family values. Their efforts should focus on integrating Qur'anic principles into various forms of public outreach and education. Sermons at mosques, educational programs at schools and community centers, and public campaigns should all highlight the significance of maintaining strong family ties, respecting elders, and fulfilling obligations toward women and children. The Qur'an underscores these values repeatedly, urging believers to uphold family bonds and respect for elders as essential components of a well-functioning society (Qur'an 4:36; 31:14). By aligning their messages with these principles, religious leaders can help reinforce the importance of collective responsibility and support within the family unit.

In addition to verbal teachings, practical examples, and community initiatives should be encouraged. Programs that provide support for elderly parents, promote the welfare of women and children, and foster intergenerational relationships can serve as tangible manifestations of these values. These efforts help mitigate social fragmentation's effects and align with Islamic teachings, creating a more cohesive and supportive community. By actively promoting and implementing these principles, scholars, and leaders can contribute to a stronger, more unified society that honors its religious and moral obligations.

8.3. Policy Interventions for Family Cohesion: The government should implement policies that support traditional family structures to strengthen family cohesion amid evolving social dynamics. Financial incentives for multi-generational living arrangements could alleviate the economic pressures of maintaining larger households, making it more feasible for families to live together while sharing resources (Choudhury, 2010). Additionally, targeted support for families who care for elderly members is essential, given the increasing challenge of elder care (Hossain, 2014). This can ensure that the responsibility of caring for aging parents, which is a significant part of Islamic family life (Qur'an 31:14), is managed more effectively and with less financial strain.

Furthermore, promoting Islamic family counseling services can be instrumental in addressing marital disputes and preventing divorce. These services should be designed to align with Islamic legal principles, ensuring that they respect cultural and religious values while providing effective support for family issues (Esposito, 2001). By integrating these policies with Islamic teachings and principles, the government can create a supportive environment that strengthens family bonds and upholds the values of mutual care and responsibility emphasized in Islam (Rahman, 2006). Such measures not only address immediate social challenges but also reinforce the foundational principles of family life as guided by Islamic jurisprudence.

9. Recommendations:

To address the challenges posed by the decline of extended family structures and the shift toward nuclear families in Bangladesh, several recommendations are crucial. First, establishing community-based elder care centers in both rural and urban areas can provide support for the elderly, guided by Islamic principles of caring for the vulnerable. Second, government policies and community programs should be developed to promote family cohesion, including financial incentives for multi-generational living

arrangements and support for families who care for elderly and dependent members. Third, expanding Islamic family counseling services is essential to address the rising divorce rates and marital disputes, ensuring that families receive support in fulfilling their religious obligations. Lastly, public awareness campaigns should be launched to emphasize the importance of maintaining family ties, respecting elders, and upholding Islamic values in family life. These measures will help reconcile modern socio-economic changes with traditional Islamic principles, fostering a supportive and cohesive family environment.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, the transition from extended to nuclear family structures in Bangladesh reflects broader social and economic changes that challenge traditional family norms. Historically, extended families in rural Bangladesh provided essential economic and social support, aligning closely with Islamic teachings on familial duty and collective responsibility. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of maintaining family ties, caring for elderly parents, and fulfilling responsibilities towards all family members (Qur'an 31:14; 4:36). However, the rapid urbanization and economic pressures of modern life have strained these traditional structures.

Urban migration, economic difficulties, and shifting social norms have contributed to the decline of the extended family system. Younger generations increasingly seek individualism and autonomy, which conflicts with the collective values upheld by Islamic teachings. Financial pressures, including the burden of dowry and the need for dual incomes, further exacerbate the fragmentation of family structures. Additionally, the rise in divorce rates and the reduced family size due to family planning initiatives have weakened the ability to maintain extended family networks and provide adequate support for elderly members.

To address these challenges, it is essential for both the state and religious institutions to play a proactive role. Government policies should incentivize multi-generational living arrangements and support families in caring for elderly members. Moreover, integrating Islamic family counselling services into public policies can help address marital disputes and prevent divorce, ensuring that these services respect cultural and religious values. Religious scholars and community leaders must continue to advocate for Islamic family values through educational programs and public campaigns to reinforce the importance of maintaining strong family bonds.

Ultimately, balancing modern social changes with Islamic principles of family care and responsibility is crucial for maintaining social cohesion and ensuring the well-being of all family members. By aligning contemporary policies with traditional values, Bangladesh can navigate the complexities of modern family life while preserving the foundational principles of mutual support and collective responsibility emphasized in Islam.

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