

Indian Journal of Psychological Science

Internationally

Indexed, Refereed and Peer Reviewed

Editor

Dr. Roshan Lal

Professor of Psychology
University of Delhi-110007

UGC –CARE LIST:

UGC Approved: Emerging Sources Citation Index: WoS

<https://mjl.clarivate.com/search-results?issn=0976-9218>

I J P S



The official organ of:

National Association of Psychological Science (Regd.)

www.napsindia.org Email: managingeditorijps@gmail.com, Phone: 9417882789

Verbal Commentary on Physical Appearance by Siblings in Nuclear and Joint Family

Deepika Motla¹, Dr. Subhash Meena²

Abstract

The Study aims to find differences in the Frequency of Sibling Verbal Commentary on Physical Appearance in Joint and Nuclear Families. The result analyzed a total of 212 (n= 212) participants (112 females and 100 males) who had one or more siblings and belonged to the age group (18-25). For data collection, the tool used was the Verbal Commentary on Physical Appearance Scale (VCOPAS) developed by Herbozo & Thompson, 2009. The Quantitative analysis was done using the T-test. The research postulated that there was a significant difference found between the Nuclear and Joint families in the frequency of Verbal Commentary on physical Appearance in the Joint and Nuclear Families. Further research has also considered the nature of comments and differences in frequency between Joint and Nuclear families.

Keywords: *Verbal Comments on Physical Appearance, Siblings, Joint Family, Nuclear Family, Positive Comments, Negative Comments*

About the authors

¹Student

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Paper Received: 18-12-2024

Paper Accepted: 29-06-2025

Paper Published: 30-07-2025

Introduction

Relationships are developed based on cultural values. Different cultures have different patterns of family and relationship structure. Siblings can be defined as partners, we share our blood, same environment, parents, the same first association and habits. Siblings are the individuals we spend most of our time with. From childhood to the later stages, we share our bond more with siblings than parents. Siblings' relationships are lifelong relationships in individual lives. (Larson & Richard, 1994). Siblings become our companions, partners, and role models

from childhood to adolescence (Dunn, 2007) and act as a social support system throughout life (Campbell, 1995).

As Indian Culture Siblings are considered crucial people who contribute in life experiences. Sibling relationships are very complicated in nature and play a significant role in family dynamics that have a lasting impact on people's experiences and viewpoints from a young age.

Family is a group of people bound Biologically, Physically and Socially to each other, living together, handling problems at critical phases of life. On the basis of

structure, families can be divided into Nuclear and Joint families. Joint family can be understood as individuals from different generations sharing resources together. Individuals living in Joint Families are less compliant to siblings than to their parents. A family structure which is a combination of Parents living with their children is called a nuclear Family. Kantar data indicated that there are 50% nuclear families in 2022 in India.

Siblings in Nuclear and Joint Family

In the development of child and Family dynamics, relationships with siblings play an important role in life. Nuclear and Joint families significantly influence sibling relationships. In 2004, Putnam found that Joint families influence the social skills in siblings due to the larger circle of interaction. The interaction also provides Support and guidance, also Elderly act as role Models for the siblings living in Joint family (Therborn, 2004). Studies done on social relationships and their impact on overall wellbeing showed that there is an impact of social relationship on overall wellbeing across individual life (Umberson & Montez, 2010). Family not only act as social partner but also provide emotional support as it also provides sources that contribute to greater sense of meaning and purpose in one's life (Hartwell & Benson, 2007).

Ricciardelli et al., (2000) conducted a study to investigate the impact of parents, siblings, friends and media on the body image and the body change in adolescent boys. Interview course conducted with 20 boys in 7th grade (12-13) and 20 boys in 9th grade (aged 14-15). The interview covered 6 main topics: body satisfaction, body change techniques, the influence of family members and friends

on body image and body change methods, social comparisons, the media, and the importance of each family member, friend, and media. From the status was found boys received most of the positive comments about their body size and shape, comments such as "you have got a good body", "you got pretty big muscles" it was also found that praises were women's mother (25%) and female friends (20%).

Another study which shows the same result was done by Nerini, Matera, and Stefanile (2016) studied the connection between sibling commentary and appearance, body satisfaction and the risk eating behavior in young women. The study revealed that there was direct link of negative comments with body dissatisfaction, no mediating role of social comparison was found in this study. The study focused more on the influence of siblings on the development of body image, and it also recommended various implementations of intervention programs for the siblings.

Objectives

1. To study the difference between joint and nuclear family in terms of frequency of verbal commentary on physical appearance received by siblings
1. To study difference in frequency of Negative Appearance related comments between Nuclear and Joint Family
2. To Study difference in frequency of Positive Body Related comments between Nuclear and Joint Family
3. To Study difference in frequency of General Positive Appearance Related Comments between Nuclear and Joint Family

4. To Study difference in frequency of Exercise and Weight Related Comments between Nuclear and Joint Family

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference between joint family and nuclear family in terms of frequency of Verbal commentary on Physical appearance received by siblings
2. There will be no significant difference between joint family and nuclear family in terms of frequency of Negative Appearance related comments by siblings
3. There will be no significant difference between joint family and nuclear family in terms of frequency of Positive Body related comments by siblings
4. There will be no significant difference between joint family and nuclear family in terms of frequency of General positive Appearance related comments by siblings
5. There will be no significant difference between joint family and nuclear family in terms of frequency of Exercise and Weight related comments by siblings

Methodology

Sample

In the study, Data was collected from a sample of 212 participants of the age range 18-25 ($M = 22.16$, $SD = 1.91$). Out of all participants, 112 participants were female (52.8%) and 100 participants were males (47.2%). 108 participants were graduate students whereas 104 participants were Postgraduates. The participants were also asked about their type of family, Nuclear or Joint family. 92 participants were from joint families and 120 participants were from

nuclear families. After explaining the study objectives, the participants verbally consented to participate and voluntarily filled out the questionnaires. The participants were requested to select one of their siblings as their reference in the study.

The inclusion criteria included: Age between 18-25 of the Participant and atleast one Biological Sibling.

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of Sample (N= 212)*

		N	Percentage
Age	18-25	212	
Gender	Male	100	47.2%
	Female	112	52.8%
Qualification	Graduate	108	50.9%
	Postgraduate	104	49.05%
Type of Family	Joint Family	92	43.39%
	Nuclear Family	120	56.60%

Design of the study

The present study is a quantitative cross-sectional study based on descriptive correlation design which utilized a self-administered questionnaire to understand the relationship between Verbal commentary on physical appearance by siblings. Random and convenient techniques were used to collect the sample. In the T-test, VCOPAS was Dependent variable and Family Structure (Joint and Nuclear Family) was Independent Variable.

Variable of the study

Table 2- *Represent the Independent and Dependent Variable*

S. No.	Name of the Variable	Types of Variables	Grade of variable	Name of Levels
1.	Sibling Verbal Commentary on Physical Appearance	Dependent Variable	1	Sibling Verbal Commentary on Physical Appearance
2.	Family Structure	Independent Variable	2	Nuclear Joint

Tool used in the Research

Given the quantitative nature of the research. The study used various tools to collect data from the sample. These tools include Demographic Questionnaire, Verbal commentary on physical Appearance Scale.

Verbal Commentary on Physical Appearance Scale (VCOPAS).

The Verbal Commentary on Appearance Scale developed by Herbozo & Thompson, (2009). This is a 28-item measure that assesses the frequency and effect of physical appearance-related commentary over the past 2 years for the purpose of this study. The participants were asked to indicate how often they were the recipient of each listed comment using a 5-point scale never to always. Unless participants respond never to a comment, they also are asked to indicate how positively or negatively they experienced each comment using a 5-point scale from very positive to very negative. Higher scores on the frequency ratings reflect higher occurrence of receiving those types of comments. In contrast, higher scores on the effect ratings reflect more negative responses to those comments. The subscales have shown adequate internal consistency (Cronbach's alphas ranging from .72 to .89) and re-test reliability (Cronbach's alphas ranging from .78 to .91; Herbozo & Thompson, 2006b; Herbozo, Menzel, & Thompson, 2013). The subscales also demonstrated adequate to high reliability in the current study, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .78 to .89.

For the research purpose, we have taken items which measure the frequency of the physical appearance related commentary in the context of siblings. The effects of these comments have not been studied in this study.

Scoring of VCOPAS. Items are scored on a 1–5-point scale, with Never=1, rarely=2, sometimes=3, Almost=4, and Always =5. Item no. 3,12 and 13 were not included in any subscale scoring but were included in total scoring.

Data analysis

A questionnaire was prepared with the help of scales and was given to the participants. After the data was collected it was arranged into an Excel sheet in a particular way which was then entered into SPSS, statistical software. T-test was used to Analyzed the difference in nuclear and Joint Family in frequency of verbal Commentary on physical Appearance.

Results and Discussion

Table 3.1 - Descriptive statistics mean and Standard deviation on Verbal commentary on Physical Appearance (n=212)

	Mean	Standard Deviation
VCOPAS	65.24	18.89

Table 3.1 represents the Mean and standard deviation of participants was VCOPAS. The Mean and standard deviation on VCOPAS is 65.24 and 18.89 respectively.

Table 3.2 - Represent the T-values, Mean and level of significance of Joint family and Nuclear Family (df=210)

Variable	Joint Mean (N= 152)	Nuclear Mean (N= 60)	T value	Sig.
VCOPAS	70.33	63.23	2.49	.013*
Negative appearance	24.35	23.46	.631	.991
Positive Body	14.11	11.78	3.58	.035*
Positive general Appearance	24.43	21.30	2.82	.004*
Exercise and weight loss Item	7.43	6.68	1.24	.045*

Significant at 0.05* Significant at 0.01**

Hypothesis 1. There will be no significant difference between joint family and nuclear

family in terms of frequency of verbal commentary on physical appearance received by siblings is rejected.

On the Verbal commentary on physical appearance, Joint family (N=92) mean was found to be 70.33 and Nuclear Family (N=112) mean was found to be 63.23. The t -value = 2.49 which is higher than the t -critical (1.97) indicating a difference between the two groups with $p(.013) < 0.05$ which indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between Joint and Nuclear Family on VCOPS. The result also indicates the frequency of verbal comments on physical appearance by siblings is higher in joint families than nuclear families. There could be various reasons such as close bond which is shared by the joint family members. As in the joint family people interact frequently and there is a cross proximity between the members of the family which strengthens the bond and communication channels between them. Also, it can lead to open communication between the members and discussion on topics such as physical appearance are common among the members. In India, uncle and aunt are also treated equally as parents if they are living in a joint family which made the comment received by the other member normal. The supportive environment facilitates open dialogues on the physical health of an individual.

Hypothesis 2. There will be no significant difference between joint family and nuclear family in terms of frequency of Negative Appearance related comments by siblings is accepted as mean of joint family was found to be 24.35 and mean of nuclear Family 23.46 with t -value .631 which is less than t -critical Value of 1.97 and p -value of .991 > 0.05 which means there is no Statistically

Significant difference between in Joint and Nuclear Family in frequency of Negative appearance related comments. A similar study supported our hypothesis. Gupta and Kumar (2019) found no statistically significant difference in the frequency of negative appearance comments between nuclear and Joint families. The research also found that there are the same psychological impacts of these comments irrespective of Family Structure.

Hypothesis 3. There will be no significant difference between joint family and nuclear family in terms of frequency of Positive Appearance related comments by siblings is Rejected as the mean of Joint family is higher than the mean of nuclear family. The mean of joint family is 14.11 and nuclear family mean is 11.78. The t -value is 3.58 which is higher than t -critical Value of 1.97 and p -value is 0.35 which is less than 0.05 indicating a significant difference in Positive appearance comments in nuclear and joint family. The higher positive appearance related comments in joint family could be due to the larger number of people in the family. Various relatives also contribute to reinforcing positive body image. Family members such as Grandparents, aunts and uncles which collectively contribute to Increase in positive appearance related Verbal Commentary (Gupta and Shah, 2020)

Hypothesis 4. There will be no significant difference in joint family and nuclear family in terms of frequency of General positive Appearance related comments by siblings is rejected as the mean of Joint family is higher than the mean of nuclear family. The mean of joint family is 24.43 and nuclear family mean is 21.30. The t -value is 2.82 which is higher than t -critical Value of 1.97 and p -value is 0.004 which is less than 0.05

indicating a significant difference in General Positive appearance comments in nuclear and joint family. The Higher General Positive Appearance Related Comments in Joint families could be due to adoption of a communal approach for the rearing of children which involves delivering values related to appearance to children's, this also allows broader perspective on appearance from various family members affecting and changing viewpoint of the individual around cultural identity (Smith & Jones, 2020).

Hypothesis 5. There will be no significant difference in joint family and nuclear family in terms of frequency of Exercise and weight related comments by siblings is rejected as the mean of Joint family is higher than the mean of nuclear family. The mean of joint family is 7.43 and nuclear family mean is 6.68. The t-value is 1.24 which is lower than t-critical Value of 1.97 and p-value is 0.045 which is less than 0.05 indicating a no significant difference in exercise and weight related comments by siblings in nuclear and joint family. Researches have shown difference in frequency of appearance related positive and negative comments though few researches have focused on exercise and weight related comment. Social support within family do impact one's health behavior. In Both the family, a close bond is shared by the individual which could justify the similar frequency of exercise and weight related comments in both the family's structure. (Umberson et al, 2010)

Conclusion

The finding reveals a significant different in the frequency of verbal commentary between Joint and Nuclear family. It was found that frequency of verbal commentary is high in joint family than nuclear family.

Further nature of the comments revealed that in Joint family there are higher frequency of receiving: Negative appearance related comments, Positive Body related comments, General Positive Appearance related comments from the siblings. It was also found that the frequency of exercise and weight related comments were almost similar in Nuclear and Joint Family.

The study is highly significant in Indian culture as very few studies have considered the Indian population and Siblings relationship. In addition to this, the study Practical implications Lies in formulating psychological therapies aimed to promote positive body image and well-being by informing strategies for family counseling or educational programs targeting siblings. The study has relevance for the field of developmental psychology as sibling relationships are important parts of developmental periods. Also, various studies have highlighted body image dissatisfaction and its relationship with eating disorders. This study can also provide how siblings are acting as a stressor or factor resulting in distorted body image.

The limitation of the current study is the sample size. In the study we have focused on the nuclear and joint family structure. There are various types of families which exist in Indian society like single parent, extended family Further. The study relies on the self-reported data by the participant which may be subjected to social desirability bias. Further studies could address limitations by employing different designs, such as longitudinal designs, and use of other Methods of data collection, such as Interviews and Focus Group Discussions.

References

1. Amato, P. R. (2005). The impact of family formation change on the cognitive, social, and emotional well-being of the next generation. *The Future of Children*, 15(2), 75-96.
2. Connidis I.A., Campbell, L.D. (1995). Closeness, confiding, and contact among siblings in middle and late adulthood. *Journal of Family Issues*, 16:722–745.
3. Dunn, J., Deater-Deckard, K., Pickering, K., & Golding, J. (1999). Siblings, parents, and partners: Family relationships within a longitudinal community study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 40(7), 1025–1037.
4. Gupta, A., & Kumar, S. (2019). The impact of negative appearance comments on adolescents: A comparative study of nuclear and joint families. *Journal of Adolescence*, 74, 15-24.
doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2019.05.005
5. Gupta, R., & Shah, P. (2020). Family dynamics and self-esteem: A comparative study of adolescents in nuclear and joint families. *Indian Journal of Social Psychology*, 35(3), 155-165.
doi:10.1177/0253717620901896
6. Hartwell S. W., & Benson P. R. (2007). Social integration: A conceptual overview and two case studies. In Avison W. R., McLeod J. D., & Pescosolido B. (Eds.), *Mental health, social mirror* (pp. 329–353). New York: Springer.
7. Herbozo, S., & Thompson, J. K. (2006a). Appearance-related commentary, body image, and self-esteem: Does the distress associated with the commentary matter? *Body Image*, 3, 255-262.
8. Herbozo, S., & Thompson, J. K. (2006b). Development and validation of the verbal commentary on physical appearance scale: Considering both positive and negative commentary. *Body Image*, 3, 335-344.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2006.10.001>
9. Larson, R. W., & Richards, M. H. (1994). Family emotions: Do young adolescents and their parents experience the same states? *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 4(4), 567–583.
https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327795jra0404_8
10. McCabe, M. P., Ricciardelli, L. A., & Ridge, D. (2006). “Who thinks I need a perfect body?” Perceptions and internal dialogue among adolescents about their bodies. *Sex Roles*, 55(5–6), 409–419.
11. Nerini, A., Matera, C., & Stefanile, C. (2016). Siblings’ appearance-related commentary, body dissatisfaction, and risky eating behaviors in young women. *European Review of Applied Psychology*, 66(6), 269-276.
12. Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.
13. Sethi, B. (1989). Family as a potent therapeutic force. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 31(1), 22-30.
14. Sharma, R. (2013). The family and family structure classification redefined for the current times. *Journal of family medicine and primary care*, 2(4), 306-310.

15. Smith, L., & Johnson, M. (2019). The impact of family structure on adolescent self-esteem: A study of nuclear and joint families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 33(2), 200-210. doi:10.1037/fam0000504
16. Umberson D., & Montez J. K (2010). Social relationships and health: A flashpoint for health policy. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 51, S54–S66. doi:10.1177/0022146510383501
17. Umberson D., Crosnoe R., & Reczek C (2010). Social relationships and health behavior across the life course. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol 36, 36, 139–157.