



Social anchors of urban life: the role of family, peer groups, and neighbourhoods in enhancing quality of life

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Abstract

The quality of life in metropolitan places is frequently assessed from economic and infrastructural perspectives; yet, the importance of social structures — especially family, peer groups, and neighborhood connections — is as vital. This study examines the impact of social factors on the quality of life of urban people in India. Survey data from 384 respondents indicate that robust familial connections, supportive peer networks, and active community involvement substantially improve life satisfaction and emotional well-being. A majority of participants recognized family and friendships as crucial to their overall quality of life, whereas regular connection with neighbors correlated with enhanced emotions of community trust and belonging. The research emphasizes that emotional and social support systems are essential elements of urban well-being. It posits that measures designed to enhance urban living must extend beyond physical infrastructure to fortify social connections and community networks. Incorporating these social factors into urban planning helps cultivate more resilient, inclusive, and dynamic urban communities in India.

Keywords: Urban quality of life, family support, peer groups, neighborhood interaction and social networks

Introduction

Urbanization has emerged as a fundamental trend in India's socio-economic framework, transforming the lives of millions. As urban areas proliferate swiftly, the pursuit of enhanced living standards among city dwellers has become more intricate. Although economic possibilities and infrastructure are frequently emphasized as critical determinants, the social environment—especially the influence of family, peer groups, and neighborhood—remains equally essential yet less addressed in mainstream discourse. In India, where social connections and communal life have historically been integral to individual well-being, comprehending these dynamics is essential for cultivating healthier, more resilient urban communities. The family constitutes the principal support system, shaping emotional stability, value systems, and overall life satisfaction. Peer groups, especially within the framework of urban variety and evolving identities, influence behaviors, ambitions, and a sense of belonging. Neighborhoods, as direct physical and social contexts, profoundly influence perceptions of safety, resource accessibility, and total community involvement. Collectively, these social institutions can either enhance or impede an individual's experience of urban life.

The quality of life in metropolitan regions has historically been examined via the perspectives of economic development, infrastructure, and public services (Das & Das, 2016). Recent literature underscores that social factors—such as familial dynamics, peer interactions, and neighborhood environments—are as vital in influencing urban life experiences (Sen, 2020; Bhattacharya, 2018)^[11].

Family remains a fundamental source of emotional, economical, and social support within Indian society. Research indicates that robust familial connections enhance mental health, job advancement, and resilience during stressful periods (Chadha & Misra, 2014)^[4]. In metropolitan environments, where individuals frequently encounter elevated stress and alienation, the existence of supportive

family structures is associated with improved coping strategies and enhanced subjective well-being (Verma, 2019)^[13].

Peer Group Influence: Peer groups, especially among teenagers and young adults, profoundly affect personal growth, social competencies, and overall life satisfaction. Studies demonstrate that in metropolitan settings, peer interactions frequently augment or occasionally replace familial support, particularly among migrant groups and nuclear families (Patel & Kumar, 2017)^[7]. Positive peer impact is linked to diminished participation in risky behaviors and elevated educational and occupational ambitions (Rani, 2021).

The influence of neighborhoods on urban quality of life is extensively documented. The presence of safety, accessible community areas, and chances for social engagement have been shown to enhance inhabitants' contentment (Desai, 2015). In Indian cities, the diversity and density of community's present distinct difficulties and opportunities; research indicates that active neighborhood associations and informal social networks bolster social capital, trust, and collective efficacy (Mathur, 2018)^[8].

Interconnections and Urban Context: Recent studies increasingly highlight the interdependence of familial, peer, and community impacts. Supportive environments can enhance beneficial peer interactions and familial functioning (Sharma & Gupta, 2020)^[12]. In the Indian urban context, characterized by rapid migration, economic inequities, and cultural transformations, comprehending these complex social relationships is crucial for fostering comprehensive well-being.

This research examines the importance of familial connections, peer relationships, and community interactions in improving the quality of life in metropolitan regions throughout India. It analyzes the interaction of these social networks with the difficulties and opportunities of urban living and their potential enhancement to promote sustainable urban development. The study seeks to enhance

urban policies and planning frameworks by emphasizing the frequently neglected social aspects of urban quality of life, hence prioritizing both infrastructural and social welfare.

Research Methodology

The cities of Hubli and Dharwad, which exemplify key aspects of urbanization, were chosen for this study. The cities have a total of 82 wards, from which two wards were selected: ward no. 11 and 19 from Dharwad city, and ward no. 32 and 44 from Hubli city, due to their heightened urbanization, a principal focus of the study. An eligible individual from each family, including 400 respondents, has been selected; they must be over 30 years of age, married, and possess an educational background.

In the current study, 100 participants were chosen from four wards. Of the 400 respondents, 384 provided valid responses by submitting full questionnaires. Sixteen respondents were excluded due to incomplete questionnaires and failure to return them. The data was gathered from all 384 members of the Hubli Dharwad Municipal Corporation. Data was collected via questionnaires and schedules, along with discussions with key informants and observational methods. The questionnaire and interview schedule were developed in both English and Kannada to obtain accurate responses regarding the quality of life of inhabitants in the Hubli-Dharwad area.

Result

Table 1: Significance of peer groups in better quality of Life

Aloneness and Quality of life	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Very dissatisfied	105	27.34
Moderately dissatisfied	15	3.9
A little dissatisfied	118	30.72
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	126	32.82
A little satisfied	9	2.35
Moderately satisfied	9	2.35
Very satisfied	2	0.52
Number of Peers and Quality of life		
Very dissatisfied	3	0.78
Moderately dissatisfied	7	1.82
A little dissatisfied	93	24.21
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	133	34.63
A little satisfied	31	8.07
Moderately satisfied	22	5.73
Very satisfied	95	24.76
Accompany of friends and Quality of life		
Very dissatisfied	58	15.1
Moderately dissatisfied	77	20.05
A little dissatisfied	84	21.87
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	94	24.47
A little satisfied	55	14.34
Moderately satisfied	9	2.35
Very satisfied	7	1.82
Size of Friends Circle and Quality of Life		
None	8	2.08
1-2 friends	11	2.86
3-5 friends	56	14.58
over 5 friends	309	80.48
Importance of Adequacy of Friends and Quality of Life		
Not at all important	7	1.82
Slightly important	5	1.3
Moderately important	16	4.16
Very important	302	78.64
Extremely important	54	14.08
Importance of Friendship and Quality of Life :		
Not at all important	4	1.04
Slightly important	7	1.82
Moderately important	13	3.39
Very important	319	83.07
Extremely important	41	10.68
Total	384	100

The study findings highlight the critical role of peer groups, family, and neighborhoods in enhancing the quality of life among urban residents in India. Peer groups emerged as a significant factor influencing emotional well-being and social satisfaction. The data revealed that a large proportion of respondents experienced

dissatisfaction when feeling alone, with 27.34% being very dissatisfied and 30.72% a little dissatisfied. However, when considering the number of peers, the satisfaction levels improved substantially. About 24.76% of respondents who reported having a greater number of peers expressed being very satisfied with their quality of life. Moreover, while the

accompaniment of friends showed a mixed response, with 15.1% very dissatisfied and 24.47% neutral, the overall trend emphasized the importance of companionship. The size of the friend circle also appeared to be a crucial determinant; a vast majority, 80.48%, reported having more than five friends. Furthermore, 78.64% of respondents stated that the adequacy of friends was very important for their quality of life, while 83.07% identified friendship itself as very important. These findings strongly suggest that peer relationships play a vital role in promoting social well-being and reducing feelings of isolation in urban environments.

Table 2: Significance of family in better quality of Life

Importance of Family and Quality of Life	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Not at all important	2	0.52
Slightly important	3	0.78
Moderately important	9	2.34
Very important	348	90.62
Extremely important	22	5.74
Relationship with Family and Quality of Life :		
Very dissatisfied	8	2.08
Moderately dissatisfied	11	2.86
A little dissatisfied	81	21.09
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	102	26.56
A little satisfied	82	21.38
Moderately satisfied	8	2.08
Very satisfied	92	23.95
Total	384	100

Family was another dominant influence on quality of life. The study found that 90.62% of respondents considered family very important, and 5.74% rated it as extremely important. Satisfaction with familial relationships also showed a generally positive trend: 23.95% of respondents reported being very satisfied, while 21.38% were a little satisfied. Although a smaller percentage, 21.09%, indicated being a little dissatisfied, the overall results reaffirmed the significance of strong family ties in providing emotional support, security, and a sense of belonging amidst the fast-paced urban life.

Table 3: Significance of neighbourhood in better quality of Life

Scale	No. of Respondents	Percentage
More than 3 times	209	54.42
2-3 times	91	23.69
Once	22	5.75
Never	54	14.06
Don't know / Not applicable	8	2.08
Total	384	100

Neighborhood interactions also demonstrated a notable impact on quality of life. More than half of the respondents (54.42%) reported interacting with their neighbors more than three times a week, while 23.69% did so two to three times weekly. Only a small portion (14.06%) never engaged with their neighbors. Frequent interactions within the neighborhood foster community trust, social cohesion, and a sense of security, all of which are essential components of a good urban life experience. Overall, the study clearly shows that strong peer networks, supportive family relationships, and active neighborhood engagement are essential to achieving a better quality of life in urban areas of India. These social structures provide not

only emotional and social support but also help individuals navigate the complexities of urban living, emphasizing the need for policies and community initiatives that strengthen social bonds within cities.

Discussion

This study's findings underscore the critical importance of social structures — peer groups, family, and neighborhood ties — in influencing the quality of life in urban India. Current study repeatedly affirms that social ties are essential factors of well-being. The significant discontent linked to solitude identified in this study corresponds with the findings of Banerjee and Rai (2018) [3], who showed that social isolation in urban settings results in diminished life satisfaction and increased psychological discomfort. Conversely, individuals with a larger peer group reported elevated pleasure levels, corroborating Kumar's (2017) [7] findings that extensive social networks offer essential emotional resilience and social support for urban existence. Likewise, the pivotal influence of family on life satisfaction among respondents aligns with conventional Indian societal beliefs, wherein the family frequently serves as the principal source of emotional and monetary support (Chadha & Misra, 2014) [4]. The results indicating that over 90% of respondents regarded family as "very important" or "extremely important" parallels findings by Verma (2019) [13], who highlighted the persistent role of family in offering psychological security amid the pressures of urbanization. Community contacts also emerged as a crucial factor in quality of life. The majority of participants indicated regular interactions with neighbors, corroborating Mathur's (2018) [8] assertion that dynamic neighborhood networks bolster sentiments of safety, trust, and belonging. These regular social interactions within the community function as informal support networks, offsetting the erosion of conventional community bonds typically encountered in swiftly expanding urban areas. Furthermore, the interrelation of familial, peer, and community networks indicates that urban well-being is a complex, multi-faceted construct, as highlighted by Sharma and Gupta (2020) [12]. Supportive parental circumstances often encourage positive peer relationships, and active local engagement further enhances social capital. This interaction underscores the necessity for urban policy to acknowledge both physical infrastructure and the social fabric as essential components of sustainable urban development (Sen, 2020).

Conclusion

This study highlights the essential influence of family, peer groups, and neighborhood interactions on the quality of life in metropolitan regions of India. The results indicate that robust social connections substantially enhance emotional well-being, social stability, and overall life satisfaction. Family is the principal source of emotional and material support, providing resilience in the face of urban stressors. Peer groups are vital, offering companionship, emotional support, and a sense of belonging that alleviates feelings of loneliness often encountered in metropolitan settings. Moreover, regular and affirmative encounters within neighborhoods bolster community trust, safety, and collective well-being, demonstrating their importance in cultivating a sense of togetherness among urban inhabitants. The findings underscore the multifaceted character of urban quality of life, indicating that economic advancement and

infrastructure alone are inadequate for guaranteeing human well-being. Enhancing social networks at familial, peer, and community levels is crucial for fostering comprehensive urban development. Policymakers, urban planners, and community leaders must emphasize efforts that enhance social cohesiveness, promote community involvement, and strengthen family structures to create more resilient and inclusive urban communities.

In conclusion, the study advocates for a comprehensive perspective on urban quality of life that incorporates social dimensions in conjunction with material advancement. Acknowledging and fostering the significance of family, peer groups, and neighborhoods will be essential in developing sustainable, healthy, and dynamic urban communities throughout India.

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