



SIVARAJAVEL IAS ACADEMY
AN IDEAL INSTITUTE FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAMS

THE **SOCIAL FACT**

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A MONTHLY SOCIOLOGY BULLETIN



**VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY
IN SOCIOLOGY**



Sivarajavel IAS Academy 's
THE SOCIAL FACT

is a monthly bulletin for sociology current affairs which tries to give aspirants a new dimensions in their sociology preparations. The Magazine has been designed in such away that the reading experience is enriching and insightful for the readers.

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INSIDE THIS SOCIOLOGICAL BULLETIN

Connecting the dots :

Sociology is a process in making. Everyday newspapers and weekly have many important news, which have sociological angle in subtle form. This chapter helps you to connect those dots and give a clear picture of the reality.

Beyond Basics :

Going beyond basics in studies for examinations is crucial to foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter, enabling more comprehensive and critical thinking. It allows students to tackle complex questions with confidence and adapt to evolving exam formats.

Perspectives :

Beauty of Sociology, as a social science, is its capacity to offer different perspectives of a same topic. This chapter analyses a current topic with an unique social perspectives.



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CONNECTING THE DOTS

- *In recent years, far-right parties have gained significant power across several countries. Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy led a coalition government after winning the 2022 elections, signaling a shift in Italian politics. Similarly, Sweden's far-right Sweden Democrats, with roots in neo-Nazism, became the second-largest party in 2022 and joined the ruling coalition : Sorokin posited that societies oscillate between "ideational" (focused on spiritual and religious values) and "sensate" (focused on material and empirical values) cultural systems, with an "idealistic" phase as a balance between the two. The recent surge in far-right movements can be understood as part of a broader reaction to the perceived excesses of a sensate culture, which emphasizes materialism, individualism, and globalism.*
- *Categorically refuting allegations that he was indulging in 'casteism', Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil said the objective of his agitation was to secure reservation for his community and not create rifts between members of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Marathas: The above allegation explains the substantialization of caste. It is a term used by French theorist Louis Dumont to describe the process by which caste groups become moral individuals that confront other caste groups. Dumont proposed this idea after being presented with evidence that caste structures were changing in modern times.*

- Imane Khelif, an Algerian boxer, is now at the centre of a gender row at the Paris Olympics 2024. Many accuse the Algerian boxer of being male or transgender, calling it unfair to women's sports. J.K. Rowling and Elon Musk also joined the debate, questioning the decision made by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Simultaneously, several childhood pictures of Algerian boxer Imane Khelif surfaced on social media, aiming to prove that she is female: Sociologists like Judith Butler argue that gender is socially constructed rather than a fixed biological reality. The controversy reflects the tension between the traditional binary understanding of gender and more fluid, inclusive perspectives. Butler's concept of "performative gender" suggests that gender is an ongoing performance shaped by societal expectations, which may not align with one's personal identity.*
- Leader of Minorities, OBCs, Dalits group warns of State-wide stir if Siddaramaiah is replaced as CM. AHINDA (Kannada acronym for Minorities, OBCs, and Dalits) warning of a State-wide agitation if Mr. Siddaramaiah was replaced. This warning came in the backdrop that a Vokkaliga seer had recently said that Siddaramaiah should make way for D.K. Shivakumar: Identity politics involves organizing and mobilizing around shared social identities to achieve political objectives. AHINDA's threat of agitation if Siddaramaiah is replaced exemplifies how marginalized groups leverage their collective identity to exert political pressure. This strategy is aimed at safeguarding their socio-economic interests and ensuring representation in governance.*
- Supreme Court judge Justice Pankaj Mithal delved into the revered Hindu scripture Bhagavad Gita – which encapsulates teachings on philosophy, ethics, and spirituality – to say that there was no caste system in primitive India, instead varna system (categorisation) existed. He said according to the varna system no one is to be considered as lower or higher, rather it is preached that everyone is an equal fragment and a part and parcel of him, the almighty: This explains the contrasting views on the caste system in India. First school of thought led by Gandhi was critical of untouchability and discrimination, but saw the varna system as a natural categorization meant to promote social harmony and individual duty. He advocated for reform within this framework to uplift marginalized communities. In contrast, Ambedkar vehemently opposed the caste system altogether, viewing it as a mechanism of social oppression that required complete abolition for true equality.*

- *Two days after issuing termination notices to over 100 staff members owing to a funding shortfall from the Tata Education Trust (TET), Manoj Kumar Tiwari, Acting Vice-Chancellor, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), assured the staff that they would be retained and withdrew the notices, this development came after the TET promised to release funds for the salaries of project and programme faculty and non-teaching staff: **This situation underscores how economic power and control over resources can dictate organizational decisions and affect workers' security. The funding shortfall and the potential job losses highlight the vulnerability of workers within capitalist structures, where decisions made by those in control of resources (such as the TET) directly impact the livelihoods of employees.***
- *The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued notice to the Government of Tamil Nadu calling for a detailed report on allegations that Foxconn, a major manufacturer of Apple devices, "systematically excluded" married women from jobs at its iPhone assembly plant. It was also stated that the company did not hire married women because of cultural issues and societal pressure: **Feminist scholars argue that these practices are part of a systemic effort to control women's economic independence and reinforce traditional gender hierarchies. By excluding married women from the workforce, companies like Foxconn perpetuate the notion that women's primary role is in the home, thus maintaining the economic and social subordination of women.***
- *Three principal organisations of the Zeliangrong community in ethnic strife-torn Manipur have asked Chief Minister N. Biren Singh to constitute a District Reorganisation Commission to keep Naga villages out of Churachandpur and Kongpokpi, two districts dominated by the Kuki-Zo people : **This is a classic example of territoriality, where control over a particular territory is seen as essential to preserving ethnic identity, autonomy, and cultural heritage. The demand for reorganization indicates a perceived need for greater administrative control over areas that are culturally and ethnically significant to the Zeliangrong people. This situation also underscores the importance of ethnic identity in defining territorial boundaries and social organization.***

- *Union Cabinet rejected the Supreme Court's recommendation to exclude the creamy layer from Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe reservation. The Centre reaffirmed that such a provision does not exist in the Constitution as per B.R. Ambedkar's framework: **This situation on face value highlights the equality vs. equity debate in affirmative action policies. The exclusion of the creamy layer would represent a move towards equity, aiming to distribute resources more efficiently among the most needy. But the decision also touches on issues of group solidarity and identity politics. By rejecting the exclusion of the creamy layer, the Cabinet avoids creating internal divisions within SC and ST communities. Maintaining a unified approach to reservations helps preserve the collective identity and solidarity of these groups.***
- *In an effort to curb net migration, the Swedish government is planning to introduce a peculiar initiative in which they would pay "foreign-born" Swedish passport holders to emigrate. According to a report by The National News, foreigners who became Swedish nationals could be offered money to leave the country: **From the perspective of assimilation theory, this move could be seen as an effort to reduce the presence of individuals who may not fully assimilate into the dominant culture. Conversely, it might undermine multicultural policies that advocate for diversity and inclusion.***



BEYOND BASICS

VALIDITY

“Why should we go beyond the basics?”

Validity is essential in sociological research as it ensures that a study accurately measures what it intends to, thereby providing trustworthy and credible findings. From an exam point of view, understanding validity is crucial because it is a frequently tested concept in sociology paper 1. However, many students often lack comprehensive content on the different types of validity. Emphasizing the importance of validity not only reinforces the integrity of sociological inquiry but also equips students with the necessary tools to tackle exam questions related to research methodology confidently.

Validity of the findings, data collected, the instrument used in data collection and the research design is of important concern in social research. In quantitative research validity refers to the ability of the instrument to measure what it is supposed to measure, whereas in qualitative research the issue of validity goes beyond data extending to the research design adopted, the techniques (for example, observation, ethnography, interviews and narratives) used in data collection and the findings discussed in the research study.

Validity in Quantitative Research

Numerical data obtained using instruments is the subject of scrutiny in quantitative research. This is because of the fact that the instrument used to measure a particular concept or construct must measure what it is devised for. If not, data obtained using such instrument becomes irrelevant or inappropriate. In other words, the instrument used to measure the property should enable the researcher to measure it. For example, the instrument used to measure empowerment, if measures development, then it may be considered as not valid, because empowerment and development are two different concepts.

Following is some of the tests developed to check the validity of instruments used in quantitative research.

Face Validity

The most commonly used validity test is face validity test. The instrument (for example, questionnaire or a scale) is accepted as valid if it appears valid for the researcher. Here researcher, as a professional, makes a judgement about the validity of the instrument. It is a casual review of the questions or items incorporated in the instrument. Sometimes, face validity is conducted by individuals who may not have any professional training or formal knowledge. It is the simplest and easiest method of checking the validity of a scale or a questionnaire.

Content Validity

Instruments such as scales are developed to make predictions. For example, the entrance test conducted to select candidates for admission into IITs is an instrument used to make predictions about the academic ability of the candidates. The items (questions) incorporated in the instrument must reflect the larger goal of the instrument. Hence, in content validity, the items are subjected to review by those who are formally trained and have expertise in the subject under study. Usually individuals with considerable domain knowledge are asked to review whether the items used, measure the intended property or not. Consensus opinion is considered in finalizing the instrument. This type of validity test is mostly used by the researchers.

Criterion Validity

It is conducted to measure the validity of the instrument against the criteria set in the study. Two types of tests are considered in criterion validity test. They are concurrent validity test and predictive validity test. Concurrent validity test is conducted to measure the extent to which the items of the instrument correlate with the 'gold standard' available. Generally, standardized, established instruments are used as references to check the validity of the instrument being tested. The predictive validity test measures the extent to which the instrument predicts the expected future observation. For example, instrument developed to measure IQ must help in making the predictions of IQ levels of the respondents.

Construct validity

'Construct validity involves relating one's measuring instrument to the overall theoretical structure in order to determine whether the instrument is logically tied to the concepts and theoretical assumptions that are employed' Thus, this test refers to the theoretical assumptions and the way concepts are operationalized in the research process. The items (questions) placed in the scale or questionnaire reflects the definition adopted for a concept and the theoretical standpoint of the research study. For example, the concept of family may be defined differently by a functionalist scholar and a feminist scholar. It may be said that construct validity is closely linked to the theoretical assumptions of the study. Thus, we find that construct validity is conducted to test the concepts and their relationships with the empirical reality. This is done at different levels. At one level the causal relationship between the concept and the questions used to measure the concept is tested. At another level, the causal relationship between the theoretical definition of the concept and its operational definition are tested.

Validity In Qualitative Research

Issues of validity in qualitative research are complex and varied. Thus, the concept of validity is understood differently by different scholars. A wide range of terms are used to define validity in qualitative studies. Validity is not a single, fixed or universal concept in qualitative research. Rather it is a contingent

construct influenced by the research methodology, theoretical assumptions, and the research design of the particular study. Validity in qualitative research is affected by the factors related to the researcher. It is observed that validity of the study is contingent upon how observations are described, how they are interpreted, and how the researcher attempts to manipulate (knowingly or unknowingly) data to fit theory. The most important factor that can influence validity is researcher's inherent bias. The other most important issue of validity in qualitative research is the presence of the researcher. As the researcher's presence can affect the nature of interaction among members of the group being studied validity of qualitative study becomes critical. Challenges to validity in qualitative research are multi-fold. Following are some of the potential sources of threats to validity:

Descriptive Validity

It concerns with the recording of observations by the researcher. It is often noted that researchers don't provide detail description of the observation setting. Accurate description of the site of observation, process of interaction in appropriate words is of great importance in enhancing the validity of the research.

Interpretation Validity

This occurs when the researcher tries to interpret the actions or event from her/his own perspective without paying much attention to how actors perceive it. To overcome the problem of wrong or invalid interpretations, researcher must collect elaborate information.

Theory Validity

Researcher enters the field site with a theoretical framework. In most cases it is found that researchers attempt at fitting the data into the theory adopted for the study. Or in some cases researchers ignore data that doesn't fit the theory or that goes against the theoretical convictions of the researchers. Researchers are suggested to record and collect data without discarding it from theoretical point of view

Researcher Bias

This is the biggest threat in qualitative research. As mentioned earlier, in qualitative research when the researcher becomes the instrument of data collection, the potential for bias in recording the observation is enormous. Researcher's personal factors (religious, economic, cultural, gender, etc.), theoretical assumptions, political affiliations, etc. influence the collection of data and interpretation of data.

Reactivity

As suggested, researcher's presence in the field site sometimes affects the situation. Researchers, as outsiders, knowingly or unknowingly influence the site of observation. To overcome this problem, the researchers must be conscious of the influence of their presence.

How To Enhance Validity?

To enhance the validity, researchers must use certain checklists. 'A validity checklist assists the researcher in establishing techniques that will be used to strengthen validity issues'

Some of the validity checks are discussed below.

Triangulation:

The most important technique adopted by researchers in qualitative and quantitative research is triangulation. It involves collection of data from multiple sources. Interviews with key informants and members of the groups observed must be supplemented by data from other sources like non-group members and other informants. Secondary sources like reports, government documents, and earlier research studies may be used to supplement the information gathered first hand. This effort strengthens the validity of the research observations and findings. Similarly, data collected through interview schedule or questionnaire, may be supplemented by focused group discussion/observation/case study

Negative Cases, Discrepant Data, Or Disconfirming Evidence

One technique recommended to strengthen validity is to focus on negative cases, discrepant data or disconfirming evidence. It is often observed that researchers tend to collect data that proves their theory or hypothesis. In the process they avoid negative cases, or sources of data which are felt inconvenient to the researcher.

Bias Or Researcher Reflexivity

It is the most obvious threat to validity in qualitative research. Hence, researcher must state the assumptions, beliefs, values, etc. in the study outcome. Researcher also must state how s/he had identified these threats and methods employed to overcome such threats.

Member Checking

It refers to the process of involving those who were the sources of data. The recordings of observations, interpretations, conclusions by the researcher are to be tested by sharing it with the people who were observed. The members of the group or community are shown these for their opinions, reactions, and suggestions. This exercise provides the researcher an opportunity to correct errors, misinterpretations, lacunae, etc. This also establishes credibility of the research and strengthens its validity

Prolonged Engagement In The Field

One of the means to overcome bias or personal factors influencing the research process is to stay put up in the field site for a long time. Prolonged stay enhances researcher's ability to observe the setting as it unfolds naturally. The researcher learns the norms, language, and habits of those being studied and can better predict and interpret the meaning of events. The researcher also can build trust that can lead to identifying different sources for information and who has access to certain information, both of which would enhance the research and the triangulation of data (Lewis 2009: 12).

Thick, Rich Description

Unlike quantitative researcher who confines to reporting facts, a qualitative researcher has the responsibility of providing the description of research setting, the participants, etc. in detail. While providing the description the researcher must take efforts to transcend the reader to the research situation. The researcher should not just confine to providing the description of the setting and people involved but also describe their emotions, feelings, and experiences. It may be said that validity of qualitative research is challenging, but not impossible. The techniques described so far can enhance the validity of the research. Using a combination of the just discussed techniques, researcher can definitely enhance the validity of the research.



RELIABILITY

“Why should we go beyond the basics?”

Similar to reliability, the issue of validity transcends methodological boundaries. This consistency is crucial for establishing the credibility of research, as unreliable findings can lead to misleading conclusions and undermine the validity of the study. From an exam point of view, understanding reliability is essential because it often features in questions about research methodology. Emphasizing the importance of reliability equips students with the knowledge to assess the robustness of sociological studies, allowing them to confidently address related exam questions and contribute to a deeper understanding of methodological rigor in sociology.

When an instrument of data collection used by the researcher yields a particular set of data, another researcher should be able to derive similar data using the same instrument. Or, the same researcher should be able to derive similar data using the same instrument at another point of time. This refers to the notion called repeatability and consistency which is closely associated with reliability. Such repeatability and consistency may be possible with the instruments to a greatest extent in natural sciences. But, in social science research, there are inherent limitations and it is difficult to talk about reliability in the same sense we talk about it in natural sciences. However, over a period, there has been a steady advancement of tests which qualify the reliability of certain instruments like questionnaire or interview schedule used social research.

Reliability in general sense refers to consistency or repeatability. Consistency or repeatability of results is concerned with the instrument used in data collection, methodology adopted in the study and research design.

Reliability is the degree to which a variable or test yields the same results when administered to the same people, under the same circumstances.

- The research instrument is considered to be reliable when the results obtained using the same instrument is consistent over time and space.
- A research study may be said to be reliable if the results can be reproduced using the same methodology.

Within the field of social science research two broad streams of research exist. One that deals with numerical data and concerned with quantification of data, and the other that deals with the constructivist approach which primarily engages with textual data in the form of narratives, observations, etc. The issue of reliability and validity is equally important in both the streams of knowledge. However, the approaches to examine reliability and validity in the two streams are markedly different.

In Quantitative Research,

reliability of the instrument used in data collection is the most important concern. It is not just that the instrument should measure what it is supposed to measure but it should measure similarly across space and time. Thus, stability of the instrument for its repeatability and consistency becomes central. The degree to which the instrument, when repeated, produces similar results over a period of time reflects the extent of reliability of the instrument.

Reliability of an instrument used in measuring the properties of objects can be tested. However, we can only estimate the reliability of an instrument but cannot calculate. There are different types of reliability tests developed to estimate the extent of reliability of the instrument used in data collection (please note that the most commonly used instruments in data collection in quantitative research are questionnaire or interview schedule or sometimes attitudinal scales. So, in our discussion, the term instrument refers to questionnaire or interview schedule.) Reliability can be estimated by the correlation between the two sets of scores.

Test-Retest Method

In the test-retest method, the instrument is administered twice, at two different points of time. Important points to remember are: a) the instrument (questionnaire or interview schedule, or a scale) remains same in two occasions, and b) the instrument is administered to the same set of respondents. If the correlation values show consistency between the two tests, then the instrument is said to be reliable. However, what becomes critical in this method is the time interval between the two tests. If the gap between the two tests is short, there is a problem of cueing, i.e. the respondents may remember the earlier test and answer in the same manner leading to higher correlation. If the gap is too large, then there is the problem of maturation, which means that respondents may change their opinion or understanding of a question in the questionnaire or interview schedule as time progresses.

Parallel Forms Method

As the name suggests, in this method two sets of instruments are prepared. The two sets contain questions which provide same meaning. The researcher has to generate multiple questions aimed at measuring the same variable. So, in parallel forms reliability test, instead of generating questions for one set of questionnaires, sufficient number of questions are generated so that they can be divided into two sets of questionnaires. Multiple questions which address same construct are randomly divided into two sets. These two sets of questionnaires are administered to the same set of respondents. The correlation between these two sets is estimated. The two sets of questionnaires are equivalent measures. Hence, this test is called parallel forms method. This method is advantageous when compared to test-retest method as there is less cueing effect. However, this method is demanding as the researcher has to evolve multiple questions which are equivalent.

The Split-Halves Method

In this method, the instrument is administered once to the respondents. However, the responses are tested for consistency by splitting the instrument (questionnaire) into two halves. Each half consists of questions which are similar to the other half. Then, the correlation between the two halves is calculated. This method is dissimilar to the earlier methods as only one questionnaire is administered at one point of time. It overcomes the problems of cueing and generating multiple questions. Moreover, it is administered only once. The difficult aspect of this method is splitting the questions into two equal halves without compromising the validity of the questions.

Internal Consistency Method

In this method, reliability is estimated by grouping questions in the questionnaire that measure the same concept. Instead of generating one question to measure the concept, researcher has to evolve two groups of questions, each group consisting of three or more questions that measure the concept. The questions in the two groups aim at measuring the same concept. The instrument is administered only once. The responses to the questions under two groups are correlated. This method enables the researcher to measure the reliability of the instrument by checking the consistency between two groups of questions. Point to be noted is that, it is not just two groups of questions, but the researcher can generate as many questions as possible and group them so that correlation between them is calculated. It is also possible to measure correlation between different questions by calculating interitem correlation method. Internal consistency is also assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. This statistic measures the consistency between the items (questions) used in the questionnaire.

In Qualitative Research

the findings of the study are based on direct or indirect observation of social phenomena that occur naturally and do not rely on statistical procedures or other means of quantification in drawing inferences. The emphasis in qualitative research is on understanding phenomena in an intense manner. Golafshani observes that ‘the terms reliability and validity are essential criterion for quality in quantitative paradigms, in qualitative paradigms the terms credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability are the essential criteria for quality’. Quantitative research is guided by the objectives of verifying causal relationships, prediction and generalization. Thus, the instruments used for data collection differ greatly. Quantitative researchers use instruments such as questionnaire or scales in order to measure the property and quantify. However, qualitative researchers use techniques such as observation (participant or non-participant), ethnography, interview, etc. In fact, it is said that the researcher himself/herself is the instrument of data collection. While the credibility in quantitative research depends on instrument construction, in qualitative research, “the researcher is the instrument”. Some argue that reliability issue concerns with quantitative research as it is overwhelmingly dependent on instruments to measure the properties of objects. Since qualitative research doesn’t lay emphasis on measurement, the issue of reliability is of no relevance. However, the issue of reliability in qualitative research is never ignored. In fact, reliability in qualitative research stands for consistency. Qualitative research is considered reliable if the research findings can be replicated by another researcher. Thus, the qualitative researchers face the challenge of reliability of greater magnitude when compared to quantitative researchers. Sjoberg and Nett observe that ‘reliability is a function of the scientist’s theoretical system, the social order being studied, and the use to which the instrument is to be put’. Other notion, ‘trustworthiness’ of a research report is also talked about in the same sense of reliability in quantitative research. The researcher is expected to provide accurate observation notes or records. At the same time, the notes or

records should not be oversimplified or misinterpreted. If multiple observers are engaged in research, they must be trained to record the same observations in the similar manner.

Some important considerations to enhance reliability in qualitative research are: If more than one researcher is working on the project, it is imperative that all are trained to observe events, record, and conduct interviews in an identical manner. Lewis, discussing the issues concerning reliability of observations, suggests that researcher must keep changing the time and place of observations. This technique of changing place and time of observations is similar to that of test-retest method used in quantitative research. The researcher can also seek information again from the same respondent on the previously gathered information at different points of time. This can establish the accuracy of information provided by the respondent. Researcher can also increase reliability of the research process by seeking information from respondents on the same question but posed in different ways. If the response is similar then the information may be considered as reliable.

To overcome the problems of information gathering in participant observation, M N Srinivas suggests that the researcher must focus on rapport building with the members of the community or group before embarking on data collection. Quoting Evans Prichard, he observes that 'data collected in the first few weeks, that is, before the establishment of rapport, should be discarded as it is usually not very reliable. The fieldworker must make himself (/herself) liked and trusted by the people, for only when will they part with true information.' Srinivas also urges the researchers to know the people and their practices better.

Regarding the question on generalizability of fieldworkers' observations Srinivas maintains that the obsession with generalizability is political or bureaucratic. Intensive studies on villages (referring to the Indian context) are good enough to describe the pan-Indian pattern. Although the issue of unity as a pan-Indian feature is debatable, Srinivas's argument in favor of intensive village studies using qualitative methods is supportive of the idea of reliability

of such studies. Qualitative research marked by intensive fieldwork faces the problems of ensuring reliability to the findings. Emerson quoting Becker suggests two considerations for assessing the reliability of field data. First, the presence of observer should not constrain the actions of the observed. Second, the observations must be about interactions between members of the group rather than between the researcher and the researched. He also favours the argument that multiple observers enhance reliability of field data. Replication or repeatability, the hallmark of reliability in quantitative research, is possible in qualitative research only in a loose way. He suggests that two researchers' observations on the same setting may differ because of the theoretical and conceptual understanding of the phenomena or actions. He recommends for 'identifying explicitly the procedures, analytic assumptions, and interpretive devices used to collect, make sense of, and communicate field reports' to make repeatability possible to some extent in field work-based research.





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PERSPECTIVES

POCKETS & PREJUDICE

Tina Das, the author of this article, is of the view that lack of pockets in women's clothing is actually political, and its time to bring them back as soon as possible.

In the dizzying world of women's fashion, high-street and haute couture, pockets are irrelevant. Well, here's a news flash. Women need pockets in their outfits—ASAP.

And not pockets that can barely hold a few coins or bulge if more than three Rs 10 coins are stuffed into them. We need pockets that accommodate our hands, cellphones, and other mundane items that we need on hand. They can actually prevent phones from being snatched away by thieves on the road. It would also not necessitate holding a bag.

But pockets and patriarchy seem to go hand-in-hand, with fashion doing little to bridge the divide. The freedom to walk without a bag has been sacrificed at the altar of fashion.

Most women cannot leave their homes without a handbag to store keys, a phone, some tissue paper. Men, on the contrary, can stuff the pockets of their shirts and pants with all sorts of odds and ends without judgement.

Even if I do not want to carry a big tote bag to cram stuff, often I have to. And now, even handbags are getting tinier and more expensive. It appears as if it's the reverse of evolution when it comes to women's fashion. From tall heels that give backache to tiny bags that barely hold anything to lack of pockets, the utility factor is constantly being overpowered by some morbid idea of fashion that is incomprehensible.

What is even worse is fake pockets. They're there in jeans and dresses—illusions to appeal to the silhouette without the practicality of it. That can really increase the rage situation to a hundred

Adding insult to injury is the increased price when there are pockets in a dress. Even if big designers add pockets to their cargoes or evening dresses, it hardly solves the problem. How many people can afford these outfits? More importantly, how many times will a woman wear the same outfit, simply for the sake of pockets? It is not supposed to be a bespoke fashion moment but an everyday pragmatic one.

In fact, it prompted author Hannah Carlson to write an entire book titled *Pockets: An Intimate History of How We Keep Things Close*.

A Brief History Of Pockets

Pockets are deeply rooted in patriarchy. It's political. It was only by the late 17th century that pockets were increasingly incorporated into men's clothing. They were added to suits, coats, waistcoats and trousers. But they were always absent in women's apparel.

The reasons are steeped in misogyny. Women need to look 'delicate,' which means no unseemly 'bulges' on their bodies. What would women even keep in their pockets, considering their husbands are the breadwinners? They can use their hands to carry a reticule instead. Some were sewn under petticoats and panniers where women would secrete essentials like keys, spectacles, combs, and money.

Women wearing clothes with pockets—especially hidden ones—were viewed with suspicion. During the turbulent years of the French Revolution, internal and external pockets were banned from women's clothing. The idea was to prevent them from carrying revolutionary material.

The lack of pockets also means that one really doesn't know what to do with one's hands while posing for photos. Men get that one standard hand-in-pocket pose. Why should women not get that option?

Coco Chanel attempted to change this by incorporating pockets in her clothes. She popularised the slouch among women—they could put their hands in their pockets the way men had been doing all these years.

During World War I, practical clothing became the norm and the suffrage movement saw pockets become a symbol of women's freedom. There were manuals on how to sew proper pockets. But the movement was short-lived. As women's clothes got tighter, pockets started getting smaller and smaller—until they disappeared again.

Today, entrepreneurs and designers have not just spoken out but also tried to start the change with their own labels.

India's Jayalakshmi Ranjith has started a clothing brand that actively includes pockets in her clothing line. Other brands, which are homegrown, like Okhai or Why So Blue, also include pockets in their women's clothing items.

An Indian entrepreneur based in Seattle said in an interview that pockets are the 'superpower' of their clothing collection.

“Only 5 per cent of women's pockets can fit a smartphone, compared to 85 per cent of men's pockets. On average, women's pockets are 48 per cent shorter and 6.5 per cent narrower than men's pockets,” said Aditi Sinha, the co-founder of Seattle-based women's workwear label Point of View, told Seattle Refined.



GREY DIVORCE

Grey Divorce is a term that describes divorces that happen later in life, generally after the 50s, after the couples have spent years together. People who separate after spending such a long time together are called Silver splitters and divorcing later in life can cause financial difficulties, among many other complications.

Grey divorces are increasing rapidly. According to Pew Research Center, 40 per cent of all divorce cases in the United States in the past two decades involved individuals aged 50 or older. The rate of grey divorces doubled since 1990 and this number tripled for those over the age of 65.

Why Are People Separating After Decades Of Marriage?

Shivani Misri Sathoo, a psychologist and marriage counsellor, recently shared her insights with Zee News Digital regarding the causes and possible implications of grey divorces:

Empty Nest Syndrome: When children leave home, couples realise they no longer share any common goals or interests leading to a reevaluation of their marriage.

Increased Life Expectancy: The life expectancy rate is higher and people are living longer, hence couples find themselves growing apart over time and seek personal fulfilment in new ways.

Financial Independence: Women are more independent today as they have their own careers and all the financial resources, which provide them the means to leave an unsatisfactory marriage.

Changing Social Attitudes: Society is now accepting the concept of divorce, which is making it easier for older adults to consider this option.

The future of grey divorce is likely to see continued growth, with significant implications for families as social institutions. As the trend of older adults divorcing continues, several key impacts on the family structure and society are expected:

Continued Increase in Grey Divorce Rates:

- ***Demographic Shifts:*** As the population ages and lifespans increase, more couples may reassess their relationships in later life, leading to higher rates of grey divorce. This trend is expected to persist, especially as the baby boomer generation continues to age.
- ***Changing Social Attitudes:*** With growing acceptance of divorce across all age groups, older adults may feel less societal pressure to remain in unfulfilling marriages, contributing to the rise in grey divorces.

Impact on Family Structure and Relationships:

- ***Redefining Family Roles:*** Grey divorce can lead to a reconfiguration of family roles and responsibilities. Adult children may find themselves supporting divorced parents emotionally or financially, potentially reversing traditional parent-child roles.
- ***Strained Intergenerational Relationships:*** Divorce in later life can create tensions within families, particularly between parents and adult children. These tensions may arise from concerns over inheritance, loyalty conflicts, or the emotional burden of supporting a parent through a late-life transition.
- ***Impact on Grandchildren:*** Grandchildren may also be affected by their grandparents' divorce, particularly if it disrupts family traditions or leads to changes in living arrangements and family dynamics.

Economic Implications for Families:

- **Financial Strain:** Divorcing later in life can lead to financial difficulties, as older individuals may have less time to recover from the economic impact of splitting assets. This strain can ripple through the family, potentially affecting adult children who may need to provide financial support.
- **Impact on Retirement Plans:** Grey divorce can significantly alter retirement plans, potentially delaying retirement or requiring additional work to maintain financial stability. This can affect not only the divorced individuals but also their families, who may need to adjust their expectations for support or inheritance.

Changing Nature of Social Support Systems:

- **Social Isolation:** Older adults who divorce may experience increased social isolation, particularly if they lose mutual friends or struggle to rebuild their social networks. This can lead to a greater reliance on family for emotional and social support.
- **Role of Extended Family:** As the nuclear family structure changes due to grey divorce, the role of extended family members may become more important. Siblings, cousins, and other relatives may play a greater role in providing support and maintaining family connections.

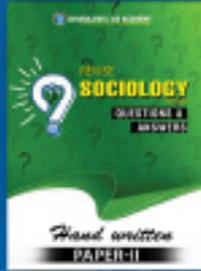
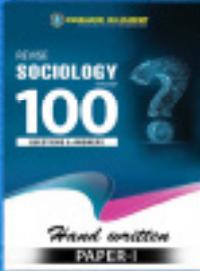
Evolving Social Institutions:

- **Redefinition of Marriage:** The increasing prevalence of grey divorce may lead to a redefinition of marriage as a lifelong commitment, particularly in later life. Society may become more accepting of the idea that marriage can evolve or end based on individual fulfillment rather than traditional norms.
- **Policy and Legal Considerations:** As grey divorce becomes more common, there may be changes in policies related to divorce, retirement, and healthcare to better address the unique needs of older adults going through this transition.

The future of grey divorce suggests a shift in how society views marriage and aging, with significant implications for the family as a social institution. Families may need to adapt to new dynamics and challenges, including financial strain, changing roles, and the redefinition of intergenerational relationships. As this trend continues, it will likely prompt broader societal changes in how we understand and support family life in later years.



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