Global Social Sciences Review (GSSR)
p-ISSN 2520-0348, e-ISSN 2616-793X
Vol. III, No. I (Winter 2018) Page: 130 - 140
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2018(III-I).09
DOI: 10.31703/gssr.2018(III-I).09

The Effect of Nuclear and Joint Family Systems on the Moral Development: A Gender Based Analysis

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Abstract *Although each and every aspect of individual is affected by the family system variables, but the most important one is their moral development. Moral development is the ability to differentiate between the good and the bad behaviors. This study explores the effect of family systems, especially, nuclear and joint families on the moral development of both boys and girls elementary level students. All 222944 elementary level students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan constituted the population of the study. A total of 384 elementary students randomly selected, (226 boys and 158 girls) were taken as the sample of the study. Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview Form A was used for the collection of data. The collected data were analyzed through frequency, percentage and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings of the study depicted that gender had significant influence on the moral values of elementary level students. Furthermore, girls belonging to the joint families were found morally more advanced than boys of joint families.*

Key Words:

Nuclear family, Joint Family, Gender, Moral Development, Elementary students

Introduction

Plato (Cited in O'Sullivan, 2004) stated that "Education in virtue is the only education which deserves the name" (p. 640). Although the all-round development of children is affected by countless factors, but family is considered to be one of the most important factors in this connection. Home is a place where birth of a child takes place, and parents are his/her immediate caretakers. They provide him/her necessities of life and fulfil his/her basic needs. Therefore, family has more influence on the overall development of children as compared to the other factors. The other factors such as other relatives, his/her friends and

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school etc., are secondary factors. The process of socialization takes place inside the family. Gruseck and Hastings (2007) explained that "socialization is the process through which a child acquires his own personality". Children inherit many qualities from their parents. Parents should provide them the best environment which helps them in their healthy growth. Furthermore, positive interaction between parents and children is necessary for the proper growth of children (Ataei, 2012).

Similarly, study conducted by Beferani (2015) suggested that family and education are the two sides of a single coin. Family environment is considered as an important factor which plays an important role in moulding the personality of youth at the early stages of their development. A child living in the disturbed homes with diminished facilities is likely to lack social values. Similarly, "a child living in unpleasant and restless environment and with aggressive people will be emotionally disturbed and he is likely to behave aggressively". Social media and educational institutions should highlight the necessity of the provision of basic facilities required for the overall grooming of children. Campbell and Bond cited in Khanam (2008) opined that most of the important factors affecting moral development include inheritance, experiences at early stages of lives, modeling by important adults and older youth, impact of peers, the influence of both physical and social environment, role of social media, what is taught and learnt in educational institutions and other agencies and specific circumstances and roles that elicit corresponding behaviour. Among other factors, gender also affects the moral values of children.

According to Kindlon and Thompson (2002) the mothers give more attention and time to the moral development process of girls as compared to boys. Therefore, the girls enjoy higher degree of moral intelligence than boys. Rogers and Smith (2003) explored "the impact of age and gender on the moral values of accounting students". The results of the study depicted that no significant difference was found in the moral values of boys and girls. However, the adjustment of girls was better than those of boys. Hoffman (2007) explored "the effect of gender differences on the moral standards of adolescents". The results of the study exhibited that the girls were sympathetic as compared to boys. Similarly, Study conducted by Tierney et al. (2007) explored that "in 2004, in America, three quarters of young people prosecuted in juvenile courts were boys". Javed et al. (2014) investigated the "Effect of School System and Gender on Moral Values and Forgiveness in Pakistani School Children", concluded that gender and type of school affected the moral values and forgiveness. They found that the girls from private schools showed higher moral values and higher tendency to forgive as compared to boys from public sector schools. However, Lan et al. (2005) concluded from their research that boys and girls exhibited similar moral values.

Theoretical Basis of the Study

This study is based on Kohlberg's theory of moral development which is the extended version of Piaget's theory of moral judgment. He opined that children act like moral philosophers. He collected data by using imaginary stories. The data collected this way, were used to find out their moral reasoning level (Zanden, 1997). One of these stories became "classical ethical dilemma". Kohlberg cited in Habermas (2007) elaborated the classical ethical dilemma in the following manner:

> *In Europe, a woman was near death from a very bad disease, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium for which the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should the husband have done that? Why? (p. 39-40).*

Kohlberg's theory of moral development comprised of three levels and each level has two stages. The first level is "pre-conventional morality". At this level, children lack the idea of values' internalization. The external factors like reward and punishment control their moral reasoning. This level is further divided into two stages. The first stage is punishment-obedience orientation. Here, children follow their elders for avoiding the bad consequences of disobedience. Whereas, the second stage of first level is instrumental-relativist. Here, the children follow a general trend of "do good and have good", i.e. children show good behavior and expect the same from their counterparts (Santrock, 2005). The second level of "Kohlberg's theory of moral development" is conventional reasoning. Here, social and moral values, and norms form the morality i.e., punishment and obedience is not taken into account.

The expectations of the family and the society are high at this level. Conventional reasoning is further divided into two stages. First stage is "good-boy and nice-girl orientation". Children at this stage wish to act according to society's expectations. Whereas, the second stage of the aforementioned level is "law and order orientation". The understanding of social order, law and justice is the main theme of this stage. Rules and laws are of prime importance and must be followed in true spirit. Post-conventional is the third level in "Kohlberg's theory of moral development". Here the moral reasoning is internalized, and not affected by the extrinsic factors. The stage-I of this level is "social-contract orientation". That is "the nature of goodness is determined on the basis of socially agreed upon standards of person's rights" (Woolfolk, 2004). The stage-II

of this level is "universal ethical-principle orientation". Moral values at this stage are based on "universal human rights". If there is found a clash between law and conscience, the latter is likely to be preferred. When the law contradicts an individual's right, he/she will disobey it (Rathus, 2007). Rehman and Singh (2015) conducted a study on "Family type and adjustment level of adolescents" concluded from their study that there is strong impact of family structure and gender on the adjustment level of individuals in emotional, social and educational fields. The girls were found to have better adjustment skills than boys. Furthermore, they found that the role of grandfather in the development of adjustment skills is very important. They recommended that proper guidance and counseling should be provided to the individuals of nuclear families. The increasing role of joint families should be highlighted. The grandfathers in joint families act as pillars in problematic situations.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The major independent variable of the study is gender of elementary students of nuclear and joint family systems, whereas, the dependent variable of the study is their moral development. "Moral development is concerned with the development of those attitudes and behaviours towards other people in the society", which is according to the social and cultural norms, rules and laws. The elementary students for this study are the students of 6th, 7th and 8th classes in public sector schools working under the provincial directorate of elementary and secondary education, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan (EMIS, 2012-13). The age of the participants ranged from 12 to 15 years. The elementary level students were selected because they are more prone to the variables of the family systems.

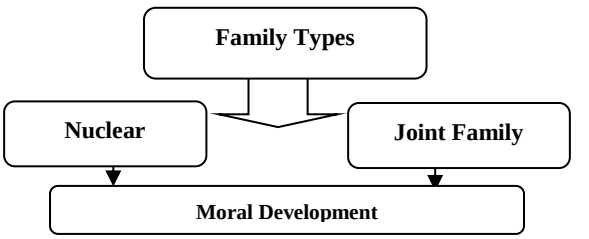

Figure 1: Showing the Conceptual Framework of the Study

Purpose of the Study

Both nuclear and joint families are predominantly found in all societies. However, the nuclear family is mostly popular in Europe, whereas, the joint family in Asia. Therefore, the objective of the study was to investigate the influence of gender on the moral competency of students at elementary level of nuclear and joint family systems of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Hypothesis of the Study

To achieve the objective of this study, the following null hypothesis was tested.
H_0 1: "There is no significant effect of gender on the moral development of elementary students of nuclear and joint family systems".

Materials and Methods

Gay (2005) declared that "research is the systematic application of scientific method to the study of problems whereas; educational research is the application of scientific method to the study of educational problems" (p. 6). Orodho (2005) stated that population is a group of individuals, things or items from which sample is taken for the purpose of measurement, whereas, target population is the number of respondents for a particular study. All the 222944 elementary level students, 134246 boys and 88698 girls studying in 1341 Government Middle, High and Higher Secondary Schools both for boys and girls from five districts i.e. Dir Lower, Malakand, Mardan, Haripur and D. I. Khan working under the Provincial Directorate of Education of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, comprised the population of the study (EMIS, 2012-13).

Sample of the Study

A total of 384 elementary level students randomly selected from 300 schools were taken as sample of the study (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). A total of 186 elementary students randomly selected were taken from nuclear family system, whereas, 198 elementary students randomly selected from joint family system were taken as the sample of the study.

Research Instrument

A standardized research tool i.e. "Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview Form A" was used as research instrument of the study. Colby and Kohlberg (1987) declared that written interviews are the convenient instruments for collecting data involving large sample size. It consisted of two sections; the demographic questionnaire and three moral dilemmas with challenging issues. The demographic questionnaire consisted of questions like gender of the elementary students, age, class in which he/she is studying, family, whether, joint or nuclear and family size of the elementary students. The second portion of interview form consisted of three moral dilemmas with probing questions which the subjects had to answer. Each moral dilemma presents such a situation that demands high skills on the part of the respondents to answer the question in a more sophisticated way.

Data Collection

Data were collected through modified form of standardized instrument i.e. "Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview Form A". The researcher personally visited the sample schools of five districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa i.e. Dir Lower, Malakand, Mardan D. I. Khan and Haripur and collected data from male elementary students, whereas, due to cultural restrictions, data from female elementary students were collected by a female research assistant selected for the purpose. Before filling the interview form, the elementary students were briefed to have a better understanding of the situation under study. Each elementary student took ten to fifteen minutes to answer the interview form. The collection of data was a laborious task which took four months to complete.

Analysis of Data

Burns and Groves (2003) declared that "data analysis gives meaning to the data collected during research process" (p.479). The global stage scores and Weighted Average Scores (WAS) of the elementary students were determined on the basis of their responses to the moral dilemmas of "Moral Judgment Interview Form A", by using Standard Issue Scoring Manual (SISM). "Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20 version" was used for the statistical treatment of data. The collected data were analyzed through SPSS 20 version. The obtained data were analyzed through frequency, percentage and analysis of variance (ANOVA). On the basis of analysis of data, the moral reasoning stages of the elementary students were determined. These were used to explore the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable, i.e. the effect of gender on the moral development of elementary students of nuclear and joint family systems.

Findings

The objective of the research was to explore the effect of gender on the moral development of elementary students of nuclear and joint family systems of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Data were collected through modified version of standardized instrument i.e. "Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview Form A". The collected data were organized, tabulated and analyzed. Statistical software i.e. SPSS version 20 was used for the analysis of the collected data. The detailed description of data analysis is given as under:

Table 1. Family-Wise and Gender-Wise Distribution of Sample

Family Type	Family Size	Frequency	Percentage
Nuclear (198)	Boys	120	31.25
	Girls	78	20.31

Joint (186)	Boys	106	27.60
	Girls	80	20.83
Total (384)		384	100

Table 1 exhibits that 198 elementary students were taken from nuclear family whereas, 186 of these were taken from joint family system. Furthermore, 120 (31.25%) of the respondents belonging to the nuclear family were boys, whereas, 78 (20.31%) belonging to the nuclear families were girls. Similarly, 106 i.e. (27.60%) of the respondents of the joint families were boys, whereas, 80 (20.83%) belonging to the joint families were girls. It is, hence, concluded that majority of the respondents taken from nuclear families were boys.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Elementary Students with Respect to Family Structure and Gender

Family Size	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Nuclear Boys	2.99	120	.761
Nuclear Girls	3.18	78	.879
Joint Boys	3.42	106	.730
Joint Girls	3.56	80	.633
Total	3.27	384	.784

It is evident from table 2 that the mean score of boys' elementary students from nuclear families were 2.99, whereas, that for nuclear girls were 3.18. Similarly, the mean score of boys' elementary students from joint family system were 3.42, whereas, that for girls were 3.56. Therefore, it is concluded that the mean score of elementary students of girls from joint families was higher than their boys' counterparts. Similarly, the mean score of girls of nuclear families is greater than their boys' counterparts. Therefore, it is concluded that girls of both nuclear and joint families were found morally more advanced than their counterparts from joint families.

H_0 1: "There is no significant effect of gender on the moral development of elementary students of nuclear and joint family systems".

Table 3: Showing Difference between Mean Scores of Boys and Girls Elementary Students Belonging to Joint and Nuclear Family Systems

Family	Gender	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F
Joint	Male	3	19.310	6.437	11.320
	Female				

Nuclear	Male	380	216.063	0.569	
	Female				
Total		383	235.372	7.006	

**Significant* *F at 0.05 level = 2.60*

Table 3 exhibits that the obtained F-value was found greater than tabulated value at a 0.05 significance level. The null hypothesis is rejected and it is, therefore, concluded that there was a significant effect of gender on the moral development of elementary students belonging to joint and nuclear family systems. Furthermore, mean square for elementary students of joint family system was found greater than mean square for elementary students from nuclear social setup. Therefore, it is concluded that elementary students belonging to joint families were at higher stage of their moral standards than those of nuclear families.

Discussion

The study was designed to explore the effect of gender on the moral development of elementary level students of nuclear and joint families of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The study was descriptive in nature. Data were collected through modified form of standardized tool i.e., "Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview Form A". It comprised of demographic questionnaire and a second portion of three moral stories. Data from male respondents were personally collected by the researcher, whereas, that from the female subjects were collected by a female research assistant. The collected data were interpreted category wise. The data were analyzed through frequency, percentage and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Findings of the study indicated a significant effect of gender on the moral development of elementary students of nuclear and joint families. This result contradicts the findings of the research conducted by Rogers and Smith (2003) who explored that boys and girls exhibited similar moral values irrespective of their gender. Furthermore, the girls elementary students were found morally more advanced than boys. This result is in line with the findings of the study conducted by Hoffman (2007). Similarly, the girls of joint family were at a higher stage of their moral reasoning level as compared boys of joint families. Similarly, girls of nuclear families were found morally more competent than their boys' counterparts.

Conclusions

The study investigated the effect of gender on the moral development of elementary students of nuclear and joint family system. The girls of joint families were found morally better than their boy's counterparts. Similarly, girls of

nuclear families were found morally more competent than their boys' counterparts.

Recommendations

1. The elementary students from joint family system were found morally more advanced than those of nuclear family system. Therefore, all stakeholders i.e. family, school and community should work in collaboration to enhance the moral development of nuclear family students and bring them at par with the students of joint family system.
2. Gender had significant influences on the moral values of students. Females were found morally more competent than their male counterparts; therefore, family, school and community should properly address the moral issues of male students to enhance their moral standards.
3. Study found that elementary students from joint were morally more advanced than those of nuclear families. So, media should highlight the positive role of joint family in order to stop the disintegration of joint family system.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. This research was conducted in only five districts out of twenty five districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa i.e., Dir Lower, Malakand, Mardan, Dera Ismail Khan and Haripur which is a limitation of the research. This research was delimited to the students of elementary level only. Further, this research was limited to public sector schools only. Furthermore, the study was delimited to only two types of families i.e. nuclear and joint family.

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