



Examining the influence of social factors on the formation of behavior in elementary school students

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Abstract

This study identified the social factors which influence on behavior formation of primary school children. It was a small-scale qualitative study the population of which consisted of male and female teachers who were teaching primary school children. It was delimited to the public sector primary schools, and it used cluster sampling technique. A total 14 (7 male and 7 female) public sector primary school teachers participated in the study on volunteer basis. An interview protocol was prepared to elicit the opinion of the respondents –primary school teachers. The researchers interviewed the respondents by getting their consent and took notes of their viewpoint according to their ease. Some of the responses were recorded by permission of the respondents. Based on the narratives of the respondents, the study concluded that parents' related factors particularly parent's level of education, their income and profession, social status and social class has a significant influence on behavior formation of primary school children. Similarly, location and environment of home, family pattern, family values and value system have association with social behavior and behavior formation of primary school children. It was evident that media & technology is not only shaping the life patterns but also affecting the behavior and behavior formation of the children. Ideas and beliefs of education, social values, social norms, and society itself influence behavior formation of primary school children. Besides, the physical needs [food and nutrition, safety, and security] and their fulfillment significantly influences the behavior formation of primary school children. Similarly, Fulfillment of psychological needs by parents creates a sense of love and belongingness; and maintains "soft monitoring and check & balance" on children which leads towards the desired behavior formation in broader context.

Keywords: Social Factors, Social Studies, Social Behavior, Primary School Children, Behavior Formation



Introduction

The present scenario has brought forward the need to study the social factors in behavior formation of students particularly the primary school children. Behavior formation takes place in the society through interaction (Bandura, 1977) of children with their parents, siblings and caregivers, media and technology and alike factors (Masrom, Busalim, Abuhassna & Mahmood, 2021; Arifin, Wahab, Teh, & Otman, 2018). In schools they come across their class fellows who belong to different socio-economic, language and cultural background. Some other factors like teachers' personality and attitude of the teachers in the situation of teaching and learning also appear to influence behavior formation of primary school children (Arifin, Wahab, Teh, & Otman, 2018) Therefore, social factors and meaningful interactions gain a vital place in the lives of primary school children. In school situation a stable, balanced, and close emotional relationship and interaction is the basic tool for communication and interaction to influence the behavior formation (Cohen, 2005). In this regard education, social status and income of the parents, location, and environment of home (Hoffman, Hutchinson & Reiss, 2009), family pattern and family values significantly influence shaping the behavior of primary school children (Baungarder, 1989) particularly in early years. The significance of the prevailing social conditions appears to be the important aspect of the lives of primary school children as such conditions transform the social behavior of the students at early stages and ages.

Peaceful living in the society is one of the basic needs of an individual and it often is reflected from one's behavior, whereas the behaviors of the individuals are seen in their cultural perspective(s). The peaceful and socially accepted behavior of children demonstrates a peaceful culture or in other words it is the product of a peaceful culture (Hurst, Wallace & Nixon, 2013). Similarly, it brings a good name to the parents, society, and the country. Social factors and behavior formation of primary school children seem to be interrelated and occupy a pivotal significance (Pervez, 2008) in their education. Different factors play an important role in shaping the behavior of primary school children and influence them accordingly. The significant social factors include education, social status and income of the parents, location and environment of home, family pattern and family values and media & technology (Zafar, 2008) which now-a-days appears as "*social media*" (Masrom, Busalim, Abuhassna & Mahmood, 2021).



Literature Review

From the parenting perspective, some parental factors including education, social status and income of the parents, location and environment of home, family pattern and family values significantly influence the behavior formation of primary school children (Ansari & Aftab, 2007; Ghani, 2000). Generally, children idealize and follow their parents (Hussain, 2016). They learn from their parents –their daily life actions and routine practice (Shamsi, 2006) and start doing like that of their parents. However, the negative environment promotes problematic behaviors (Aldridge, Mcchesney & Afari, 2017).

Generally, parents expect socially accepted and good behaviors of their children. Therefore, parent's and social expectations and norms of the society have effects on behavior of the children. Primary school students are influenced by what is practiced in home and the society; and the same is developed among them as "*social norms and values of their society*" irrespective of their nature. They learn "*how to behave in different situations –home, school, playground etc. and with different people –their parents, teachers, siblings, friends & fellows, elders and older ones*" by their parents through positive feedback (Coalmine & Goldstein, 2004; Taylor, 2006). Likewise, children learn through interaction with others. They get information and exposure in line with their liking and personality traits. It can shape their behavior positively or otherwise depending upon the nature of their company and social circles or friends (Tintori, Ciancimino, Palomba, Clementi & Cerbara, 2021) as a famous proverb, "*A man is known by the company he keeps*" fits it best. Hence parents need to look after their children carefully and fulfill their socio-psychological needs according to the developmental stages. Socially accepted behaviors play the role of foundation stone/ rock to build their future lives with high aims and aspirations. It not only makes their own lives comfortable but also those of others related to them (Janes & Olson, 2000).

Culture and cultural values have a significant impact on behavior and behavior formation of primary school children. Influenced by these, children exhibit their beliefs and practices individually or in groups (Story, 2010). They learn what is believed and practiced in their homes; families, peers, and society (Nieto, 2002; Dunn, 1998). In the same way children learn from their teachers who **identify** their potential and abilities **and teach** them gradually to shape their desired behavior (Smith, Ewing, Corn & Thomson, 2003).



Rationale of the Study

A “man is social animal” who lives in the society. Behavior is learnt through interaction with different individuals, media and technology and artifacts. This learning starts in home from one’s birth. Initially children learn from parents, siblings, and caregivers, then from society and school. During the childhood and even afterwards, different factors play role in behavior formation of children. These factors need to be identified to shape the desired behavior among children particularly those of the primary school children. That’s’ why the present study was conducted.

Objectives of the Study

This qualitative study was conducted to.

- a. identify different factors which influence on behavior formation of primary school children.
- b. examine the influence of social factors in shaping the behavior formation of primary school children.
- c. give recommendations for behavior formation of primary school children.

Methodology

The study entitled “Examining the influence of Social Factors in Behavior Formation of Primary School Children” was conducted in Bahawalpur District. It was delimited to the public sector primary schools in Bahawalpur Tehsil. It was a small-scale qualitative study, and a survey was conducted for data collection. The population of the study consisted of the primary school teachers (both males and females) who were teaching the subject of social studies to the primary school children. The study used cluster sampling technique. A total 14 (7 male and 7 female) public sector primary school teachers participated in the study on volunteer basis. An interview protocol was prepared to elicit the opinion of the respondents –primary school teachers. The interview protocol elicited the opinion of the respondents specifically on the social factors including education, social status and income of the parents, location and environment of home, family pattern and family values of the parents of primary school children. The researchers personally approached/ contacted the respondents and did get their consent to participate in the study. After getting their consent, the researchers personally interviewed the respondents. The respondents comfortably expressed their views in Urdu language and the researchers took notes of their narratives according to their ease. Four of the respondents permitted to record the interview and the researchers did. After conducting all the interviews, the researchers transcribed the recorded interviews. The thematic analysis of the narratives according to the predefined



constructs of the interview protocols was done. The researchers translated the narratives from Urdu to English. According to the themes, unified and cumulative common narratives were derived. Similarly, innovative, or unique narratives were also identified and highlighted to bring on to the surface. After doing this, conclusion(s) based on the narratives of the respondents was/were drawn. In the light of the conclusion(s) recommendation were suggested as given in the respective section.

Data Analysis

The researchers conducted the interview of each of the respondents individually with mutual understanding. The respondents comfortably expressed their views in Urdu language. The researchers took notes of the narratives/ viewpoints of the respondents. After completion of all the interviews, the researchers transcribed and translated the notes into English language and derived the narratives according to the themes given in the below section.

Level of Education Profession of Parents

Almost all the respondents were of the view that level of education and profession of parents significantly influences in shaping the behavior of their children. Generally, it is observed that, *“The children whose parents have a higher level of education often exhibit a socially accepted behavior. The respectfully greet the elders and have social etiquettes”* all the respondents said. Similarly, children of illiterate parents, *“Are less equipped with social etiquettes”* a female respondent said. Likewise, profession of the parents has an impact on the behavior of their children. The children whose parents –both mother and father are working, and they spend more time with caregivers, *“Often tend to develop shyness and passive behavior(s)”* in the class; was pointed out by the respondents. However, it was endorsed by all the respondents that those primary school children whose parents work in social sector like health, education and other service providing professions or sectors; appear to be more pro-social, well-etiquette and polite.

Social Status and Income of Parents

Every individual of the society needs to be recognized and acknowledged by and/ or in the society. Same is the case with primary school [aged] children and it influences their behavior formation. Social status of parents plays a significant role in formation and promotion of pro-social behavior of their children. All the respondents affirmed it by saying, *“Children of those parents, who have earned fame, are prominent in society and are considered enjoying a good/ privileged social status in the society due to their services to the society; are more considerate,*



confident and well conversant". They have more opportunities of interaction with different people from different segments of the society and that's why they are confident and have pro-social behavior. Furthermore, it was asserted by the respondents that income of the parents also contributes towards behavior formation and personality development of the children as *"Parents with reasonable income fulfill daily-pocket-money-needs of their children properly"* and it develops confidence among them.

Location and Environment of Home

Similarly, location and environment of the home plays a pivotal role in behavior formation and personality development of the children of primary school age group. It directly influences their behavior. Almost all the respondents said, *"The students who are from urban set up/ location demonstrate more pro-social behavior and they appear to be more confident than their counterparts who are from rural or slum areas"*. Same is the case with home environment of children. The children who *"parents are friendly, caring and soft"* are more confident and more social than their counterparts; whereas *"the children whose parents are always strict, and they are quelling with each other [mother and father]; tend to develop otherwise behaviors"*. It puts a great responsibility on parents to be polite and kind in domestic affairs to inculcate the same among their children.

Family Pattern and Values

When we talk about the home environment, family pattern is an important factor. The respondents were of the view, *"Children, who are brought up in joint family system, are well behaved, well-mannered and have-etiquettes than those with nuclear families"*. In joint family system, children spend more time with elders and older ones and, *"It develops a sense of respect, belongingness, affection and security among them"*. On the other hand, in nuclear families' children have less opportunities to spend time with parents or elders but with the caregivers which makes them, *"Learn unidirectional behaviors by stereotyping the same and it promotes such behaviors"* among them.

Furthermore, the respondents were of the view that the children learn values and value system in the company of the elders and older ones of the family –their parents, siblings, and close relatives. The children who live in joint family system and, *"Spend more time with their parents, they learn the values of their respective families which often are reflected from their behaviors like exchanging greetings and smiles, extending hospitality, caring for others and helping others"*



and respecting others”. It is training for life to live it peacefully and purposefully, they further added.

Media and Technology

Media & technology, now-a-days have been infused in the lives of the people and children are extensively exposed to it as they spend more time on “*social media*”. In the current scenario, media & technology [social media] is not only shaping the life patterns of the people, but also affecting the behavior and behavior formation of the children. The respondents said, “*Children are learning more from media & technology particularly, the social media than anything else, even their parents and siblings. Parents give them technology [smart phone, laptop] instead of time; and their children learn from it rather their parents*”. It results in the behavior of children which we often come across now-a-days; “*Sometimes aggressive, sometimes violent and sometimes submissive and passive; and sometimes ideate*”. It is because parents spend less time with their children and children spend more time with media & technology –using social media; and what they read, view, and listen through/ by the media and technology [internet and all its tools like YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp etc.] it shapes their behaviors “*Sometimes pro-social and sometimes otherwise*”.

Physical Needs

Physical needs [food and nutrition, safety, and security] and their fulfillment plays an important role and influence in behavior formation of primary school children. Almost all the respondents said, “*The children who have adequate food and nutrition and sense of safety and security at home and school, are more comfortable, more confident and more conversant with desired social behavior at primary level*” of schooling. It is generally said that deprivation and hunger lead towards ill-actions and ill-manners. Hence physical needs of the children must be fulfilled to make them responsible, productive, and useful citizen of the country.

Psychological Needs

Every individual needs to be recognized, accepted, admired, and appreciated. Same is the case with children with greater significance. Therefore, it is one of the main responsibilities of the parents to give proper attention and care to their children at home; and develop a sense of love and belongingness among them. They should give proper time to their children. All the respondents affirmed it by saying, “*Children expect time from their parent. They want to be with parents. They need love and affection of their parents. They want to enjoy the company of the*



parents. They want to be acknowledged, admired, and recognized by their parents”. It creates a sense of love and belongingness; and maintains “*soft monitoring and check & balance*” on children which leads towards the desired behavior formation in broader context.

Conclusion

Based on the above narratives of the respondents, the study concludes that parents’ related factors particularly parent’s level of education, their income and profession, social status and social class significantly influences the behavior formation of primary school children. Similarly, location and environment of home, family pattern and family values and value system have association with social behavior and behavior formation of primary school children. Even so, media & technology –the social media, now-a-days has/have been infused in the lives of the people and children are exposed to it extensively. In the current scenario, media & technology [social media] is not only shaping the life patterns of the people, but also affecting the behavior and behavior formation of the children. Ideas and beliefs of education, social values, social norms, and society itself influence behavior formation of primary school children. Besides, the physical needs [food and nutrition, safety, and security] and their fulfillment plays an important role in behavior formation of primary school children. Similarly, Fulfillment of psychological needs by the parents creates a sense of love and belongingness; and maintains “*soft monitoring and check & balance*” on children which leads towards the desired behavior formation in broader context.

Recommendations

Parents should spend more time with their children to make them learn values and value system of the family. They should interact with children in friendly way. The physical needs of the children must be fulfilled to make them responsible and useful citizen of the country. It is one of the main responsibilities of the parents to give proper attention and care to their children at home; and develop a sense of love and belongingness among them. They should give them proper time to their children. Parents should motivate their children towards pro-social behavior. Parents should be open-minded and friendly in early years of child’s learning. Also, the Government should take steps to improve socio-economic status of people. As it was a small-scale qualitative study; its results may be generalized carefully rather an extensive quantitative study would be conducted before generalizing the results.



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