
The Role of Family in Teaching Religious and Moral Values to their Children in Urban areas: A Case Study of Lahore (Pakistan)

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Abstract

In current era of modernization and globalization it is observed that individuals are in the quest for mental peace and spiritual comfort even though they have achieved many scientific advancements. The major reason behind this uncomfortable condition is that they have indulged in exterior world and became careless about the religion and its practices. The most alarming fact regarding faith inculcation is the transformation of wrong, vague and ambiguous concepts to children at early ages which prolongs for whole life. Childhood is the period when concepts of right and wrong are strongly developed and most important agent that contributes to this concept making is parents. Keeping in mind this fact, the present study has highlighted the role of family in providing religious and moral values to their children. The qualitative approach has been used by adopting purposive sampling method. The focus group discussion has been conducted with families having an urban background. Some surprising facts has led the researcher to the conclusion of deterioration in the family as the social institution as a major cause which is resulted

into not only a moral decay in the society but also the reason of socio-economic problems in country.

Introduction

Family, along with other roles is primarily concerned in providing religious and moral education to their children, as it is a universal phenomenon that early childhood education in any aspects leaves long lasting impact on the children personality and provides standardized a path to the formation and building of character and personality of children. A kind of family in which we are born very likely had a lot to do with the way we first define the concept of family. A child who lives with several unmarried adults that share child rearing responsible may have a different concept of family as compared to a child living with one divorced parents. Similarly, a child who has always lived with biological parents and is surrounded with sibling has a different point of view about family. A typical French family may be different from an urban family of Pakistan and many customs which are taken for granted within American society may be unheard or ever unusual of elsewhere. In other cultures, it may be a common practice to have several wives or having children from several women whereas in other societies it may sound strange (Spandel & Hicox, 1988).

But the societies of the world despite of all the differences, have agreed upon one prime thing and that is effect of family on strengthening religious beliefs among children. Though it is difficult to define religious institution, still many have agreed upon on these words that religious institution is a system of those practices and believes influencing human events where man is helpless to explain them. Though there are different types of religions but certainly there is uniformity so for and their functions and existence are concerned and in every society we find religiosity among its members (Chandaly & Mac Donald, 2011).

Family is one of the oldest social institutions on the earth and off course a base of society. It has been defined as "a group of

person united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a simple household, inter communications and interacting with each other in their respective social roles of father and mother, son and daughter, husband and wife, brother and sisters creating a common culture.

After reproduction of human race, the vital important function of family is to socialize its members. Family is for sure, the principal socializing agency of humanity. Family transfers its cultural and religious values to its members by social interaction (Taga, 2012). The sociologist in general have spoken about four categories of interpretation of reality i.e. religious ideas interpret human life as dependent or causative sources that are accessible to outside influences and man's forming a positive relationship with them, depends upon social institutions of family and religion. Particularly, in Pakistani society where 98% of its population is following religion on Islam, there is a great decline morally and ethically among the general behavior of people of Pakistan and family has, to some extent has failed to play its role in teaching religious moral values among people of Pakistan which is eventually producing youth inclined towards extremism, disloyalty and degradation. Human ethics and values, concepts and ideals are the way of revealing the underlying dimensions of genuine life and family determines these moral values and judgments thus gives its member a better understanding. (Doris & stember, 2006). Societies always develop courtesy, fairness, honesty, truth justice through the institution of family among its people and these qualities are the essence of any religion of the world (Birsch, 2002).

In Pakistan as a developing country, number of factors are involved (whether urban or rural societies) which have created obstacles for institution of family to play its significance role specially in teaching morality and some of them may be, the emphasis on the cast and creed, materialism, high standard, regional differences, poverty, bogus religions scholars, incorrect base of religious teachings, parents own less religious belief and

practices, misuse of fast means of communications and family institution degradation (Ahsan, 2008).

The today's Pakistani society has started to unravel the seeds of a grave tendency of the brazen. Intolerance, lack of patience is common which is promoting barbaric attitudes and extreme negative mentality is producing lawlessness and arrogance (Jillani, 2009).

It is a true fact that children and adults are bombarded with such social issues that simply did not exist few generations ago. Parents less vigilant eye on children have pushed immoral concept among their children. The lack of parents discussion about determining measurable outcomes in religious moral education may has led the society to its disastrous edge (Finn, 2009). In spite of the fact, parents always try to control the behavior of children whereas children always strive towards independence that can be one of the reasons of the ideological conflict between the generations (Tyyska, 2001). Studies have proved this fact that this gap has been increased in today's era which is the result of many factors. Probably the advanced technology has widened the generation gap. Family has failed to impose its will on parents whether teaching religion, or inserting moral values among children (Peer et al, 2001). Economic inequalities, weak traditional socio-cultural values are major causes of moral decay in children. Parents and family whether urban, rural or nuclear or joint family systems are mostly considered more responsible for grooming of children and much is expected at their end. (Sattal et al., 2010).

The proper time, friendship, sharing, awareness, communication and most importantly parents own act and practices in religious matters can be very helpful in producing such children for society who have high moral, ethical values and acting upon religion with its true spirit, thus not only shaping their own life but also forming strong base of society.

Objectives

Keeping in mind the context of study, following objectives were defined:

- To observe the role of family as a social institution in strengthening institution of religion in society.
- To analyze the factors that can be helpful in providing religious moral, spiritual values among children and to witness the outcome in the absence of these factors.
- To see the reasons of deterioration in the institution of family in urban side of Lahore city.

Research Methodology

The present study revolves around the role of family in teaching religious moral values to the children in developing countries with special focus on Pakistan. This study was mainly conducted in Lahore city which is biggest city of Punjab province. Lahore is divided into nine administrative towns, and an effort was made to select at least one family representative from each town. This study was qualitative in its nature and employed focus group discussion method to get views of respondents. To get insight into group consensus and dynamics, it was decided to have one focus group discussion (FGD) with urban families by using Purposive sampling method. Two focus group discussions were arranged to get the input and feedback of the representatives of different families to take their views on deteriorating moral values of children and the influential factors leading towards this imbalance. Members of families were contacted personally at their home, informed about the study and its objectives, and asked to participate. Focus group discussions were held in respondent's first language and took the time of 2 hours for each discussion.

Participant's Characteristics

Two focus group discussions were conducted each comprised of 8 persons; 4 men age group 40-45 and 4 women age group 35-40. They were from middle class nuclear families (urban). Average age of the respondent's children was 8-18 years. The respondents were from diverse backgrounds.

Data Analysis

All recorded and audio taped discussions of the respondents were transcribed by following Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in order to explore how participants make sense of their personal experience and social world. By following this approach, researcher tried to have a detailed examination of the participants' lived experiences and perceptions regarding role of family in inculcating religious values in their children. Keeping in mind the basic assumption of IPA, this study tried to capture the social world of respondents in the form of their beliefs and the constructs that are made manifest or suggested by respondent's talk (Smith and Eatough, 2003). In first phase of analysis, audio tapes were transcribed and read number of times. At second stage of the analysis, systematic examination of similarities between the views of the participants was found in order to identify emergent themes. Some of the emergent themes were as influence of family, role of peer group in building values, Influential role of media and its influence on children's' mind. Here the initial notes were transformed into concise phrases which aimed to capture the essential quality of what was found in the text. Furthermore, a connection is made between the themes. Some of the themes cluster together and they worked as subordinate concepts. At fourth stage, the themes were summarized, illustrated and explained and narratives were used to support the concepts.

Focus group discussion findings

Socio-Economic Status of the Urban Families

The average urban Pakistani families have certain characteristics in Pakistan. Having 3, 4 children in one family, an

average monthly income in which majority men are the main contributors in family income are the common characteristics. Nuclear family system is the trend of today's era where keeping grandparents in house is discouraged. This focus group discussion was conducted with three families, each comprised of mother, father, from age group of 25 to 45 years. The families were the resident of Lahore, a big metropolitan city of Pakistan. The average monthly income of each family was 35000 Pakistani rupees whereas most of their children had been admitted to English medium educational institutions. The mothers were housewives. The educational status of the parents was ranged between intermediate to master's degrees. Subsequently the families were depicting the picture of majority of middle class families of Pakistan who set their own particular life standards.

Parents priorities on formal education

On asking daily routines of children, the parents described in prescribed manner about the routine that children follow which includes attending their respective institution, going to tuitions and later getting busy in social networking one of the mother added a comment,

“Traditionally we also provide Quranic education (A religious book of Muslims) at home otherwise we may face criticism in society”.

On asking details they explained that children rigorous tight schedules do not allow them to concentrate separately on this specially boys after the age of 10 or 12 years get offended with this. One of the mother added comment.

“The more they grow they can themselves read the holy book. No need of strict teaching in this”.

Furthermore parents agreed that in urban areas, children have to face a tough competition. So automatically parents have to focus hard on conventional education. One of the fathers added,

“Though we have better facilities of religious schools in urban areas but there are not practical. My son can’t get good job if his stress is on this religious base and spiritual education”.

Parents Own Religious Practices

When a researcher asked the respondent about their own religious practices, the mix response was recorded in this regard. Majority denied offering Namaz (a prayer, Muslims have to offer five times a day) and following fasting indeed. Though one couple among three responded positive in this regard. When researcher mentioned that in building sound moral basis to children, these pillars (Namaz, fasting) of religion are very important and parents own act and strict followings can make their children inclined towards this, one father reported,

“I saw my mother being very religious since my childhood but I could not be. Also I don’t agree with the idea of being role model for children in this area”.

Majority agreed on children own willingness as important factor and declined the idea of parents as being role models.

Extents of Willingness on Providing Religious Teaching to Children

It was interesting to note that, in the name of religious practices, that for sure, builds strong moral characters of children, the stress and focus of urban parents was more on enjoying religious festivals other than anything. Majority agreed upon celebrating Eid and other religious festivals at large scale but denied being strict for children in making them habitual of offering Namaz or following fasting. one of the mother said,

"Boys do not follow fasting; you see weather in Pakistan is always at extreme side, usually hot, how they can follow fasting".

When a researched mentioned that fasting teaches purification of soul and body, make us learn patience, forgiveness and discipline in life and every Muslim from age of 12 years has to follow it, one of the father abruptly said,

"Allah (God) will forgive. Children cannot afford 30 days of fasting".

Another father commented,

"Look we cannot beat our kids with sticks on not offering Namaz (prayer) five times a day or following fasting. We are not illiterate people to behave like this".

A mother also made this interesting comment,

"We don't want to make our kids extremist. This rigorous religious practice will give them nothing. The more they will grow up, they will follow it at their own".

Social Networking, Peer Group Influence

Majority of the respondents agreed and declared fast means of communication and social net working as major reason other than anything responsible on moral degradation or not following religious practices. On asking, the parents informed that all the leisure time that children get, is spent on social networking. One of the mothers added a comment,

"If one day internet does not work, my elder son shouts like hell".

One of the fathers said,

"I admit, our children are over exposed to these means and we are helpless".

When asked about whether as parent they keep an eye or check children activities on social net working? A father said in a laughing manner,

"Never, they always hide their pass words."

When asked about peer group influence one of the father replied

"Friends are more important than parents these days."

The majority of the parents also reported about activities of boy like going out late till night. On probing all agreed that children want less interference and one mother said,

"They consider us old fashioned if we involve and mingle much with their friends".

Majority agreed that urban children life style does not give them much room for religious base and majority agreed that they as parents are literary not allowed by children to intervene or interfere much in their lives".

Grandparents Influence

In Asian society, the grand parents have always attained certain place and have been considered as an institution for children strong moral, spiritual religious base. On asking, most parents agreed on the fact of their children being not respectful to their grandparents any more. Majority declared children less interaction with grand parents, children own specific interest and social networking as vital reasons.

Another couple declined the idea of old bed time stories narrated by grand parents can have positive influence on children. On asking most of the children were found meeting with grandparents once or twice in a month. One of the mothers said,

“You see children are so busy and who has time to cope with the problem of generation gap. In fact children of today’s era are not interested in their old time stories”.

One father added a comment,

“You see all information is on T.V and internet. Children have easy access to so called moral ethical stories and probably they don’t need to listen it from grandparent”.

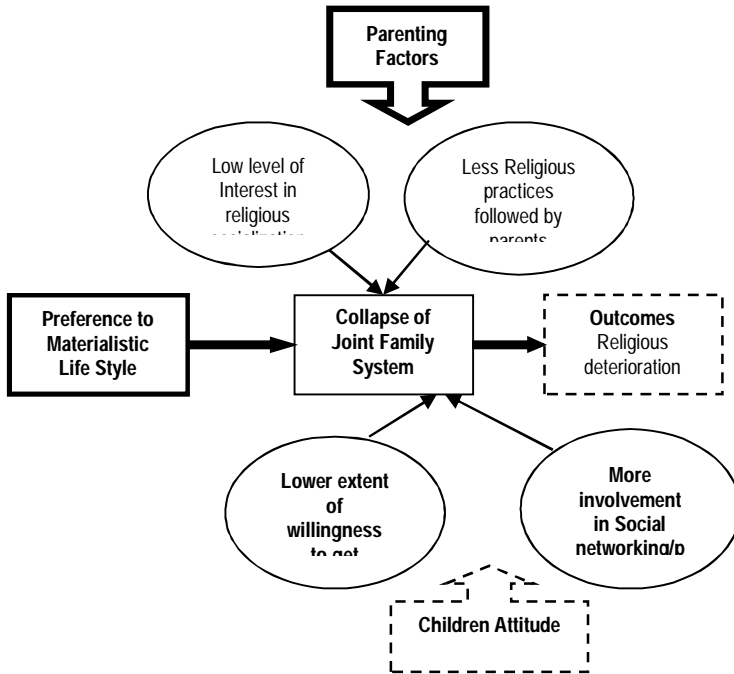
A General Approach in Urban Life Style

The parents agreed that in the name of modernism and development, the urban children have to live a different life style and less influence of religion is obvious. They admitted that it is difficult for parents to force children on strict religious education and also admitted that this is leading us towards the morality decay. One of them said,

“Children find typical religious education learning pretty tough, religion is only stick to their academic books”.

The urban families, though literate and being knowledgeable, were found giving less preference to religion. The comparison was noticed by the researcher between worldly and religious education and stress was on materialism which was producing generation free from moral values and ethics.

Figure 1
Drawn Factors of religious deterioration from study findings



Deterioration of religious and moral values is linked with family socialization. The most important factors are related to the parents. It is observed that parents themselves observe less religious practice in their daily lives and further, their interest toward providing religious education to their children is also negligible. One of the identified factors is the materialism and preference to modern way of life. Limited focus towards religious inclination of children and to some extent collapse of joint family system ignites the situation. In the absence of guidance from grandparents, there are more chances of moral decay. All these factors along with strong social media indulgence of children develop ignoring attitude of children towards religious education. As an outcome, religious deterioration is found among the urban children.

Discussion and Conclusion

Islam is the religion of peace followed by 98% of the Pakistani people. Every prayer in the religion which has been declared compulsory for every Muslim has its own significance and message. If Namaz (a prayer which Muslim offer five times a day) helps in learning discipline in life, purifies souls and body, similarly fasting makes us learn patience, forgivingness in life where a Zakat (an amount compulsory for every Muslims to give to needy if they possess gold, cash and property) gives the message that serving humanity, help the needy is the probably the main aim of human life. Jihad (fight against evil) tells us to say no to evil and raise voices against ills in life.

Any religion of the world with some difference teaches humanity and parents as the first teacher and guide of children have to play a significance role in their life. The early learning eventually builds character of children and formation of personality depends upon this. Urban families were found playing inactive and inefficient role in teaching and providing religions moral education to their children.

The researcher draw a conclusion that urban background families had been neglecting the primary social institution of religion because of having certain fear in mind that their children may become religious fanatics and specially it was found that a typically life style that had been provided by the parents to children of urban areas did allow religion much to play its specific role in their lives. In the name of freedom the element of stubbornness was found in the behavior of urban children and parents had been placed in a position by children where much interference had been discouraged to great extent in the lives of children, by their parents gender discrimination was another element identified by researcher as in a male dominating Pakistani society, girls were supposed to learn religions teaching, more than man, and more restriction were found to be imposed on this gender so far religion was concerned. Furthermore parents own less interest in religion and restricting religion only to celebrate religions festivals and neglecting all those religious rituals and

prayers which make the children strong morally and ethically had been found neglected.

Parents had been keeping their children away from grandparent intentionally, despite of the fact that grandparent have always been valued, placed and respected traditionally in Pakistani society and they have been found playing vital role in building children character of the children in past years but the latest nuclear family system trend has proved to be quite disastrous for children and they have been deprived from the affection, warmth, good moral teachings from grandparents in their own specific way. In urban areas, misuse of fast means of communication specifically the excessive use of social networking was also found a very important factor behind the religious mortality among children.

Recommendation

- Strengthening family institution can help to great extent. The institution of religion cannot be strengthen, if parents own deeds and action are on the right direction less and they themselves set examples for children.
- The importance of joint family system particularly in developing societies like Pakistan shall have to be accepted and its revival can play a very significant role for children grooming and growth so far religious base, mortality and ethics are concerned.
- The role of educational institution and peer group influence on children does have deep impact on religious moral up gradation in the behavior of children. Parent's vigilant eye on both these institutions may help in long run.
- A certain check and balance policy among children on the use of social media networking can produce positive results too.

- The religious teachings with true spirits shall have to be provided. The strict legislation against so called religious scholars, who are spreading negative things about religion, should be discouraged.

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