

Socialization, It's Impact on Parenting and Parenting Style

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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the impact of socialization on parenting and parenting style. In this study, eighty students from different religious backgrounds were taken. Cross-cultural variation and grades were taken as independent variables and school-related outcomes and style of parenting were employed as dependent variables.

Keywords

Socialization, Parenting, Parenting Style.

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Introduction

Socialization and Parenting

Socialization is the process by which we learn our social norms, acceptable behaviors, attitudes and social values. At the time of birth, a newborn child knows nothing about what we call a family, neighborhood, friends, relatives, and social behavior. As it grows, under the care of the family members gradually it learns the group-defined manners of behavior. Many researchers focused on the mother-child dyad (Orlansky, 1949; Sewell, 1952) and later on characterizing the impact of parental influence on children's social and personality outcomes (Bandura & Walters, 1963; Sears, Maccoby & Levin, 1957; Smith, 1970; Steinmetz, 1979). Studies revealed the associations between parenting and socialization (Bell & Harper, 1977; Hill, 1981). Hence, the term socialization is conceptualized as a bidirectional process in which the flow of influence is both ways-from parents to the child and from child to parent. A family is the most immediate social context whose structural characteristics i.e. sibling size, birth order and gender are seen as particularly important for developmental outcomes (Bowerman, 1975). Human being develops their psychological functions in the context of environments organized by significant others. The developing child internalizes many aspects of his or her social experiences and at the same time expresses them in the course of socially shared interactions. The internalization and externalization process leads to the construction of a personal culture – a unique system of signs, values, habits and preferences- that is guided, but not determined, by the collective culture of the society. The collective culture is not static by undergoing development of its own, which can be influenced by the personal cultures of individuals. Cultural transmission the transfer of the collective culture from one generation to the next-is a bidirectional process in which every new generation discovers new solutions to the problems of organizing social life.

The contemporary understanding of socialization has adopted a systematic perspective. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework is one such attempt. He proposes a hierarchical system consisting of four levels. At the lowest level of ecology is the microsystem, which is "a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features and contain other persons which distinctive characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 8). Encompassing the microsystem is the ecosystem and exosystem at the highest level is an ecosystem, which is defined as consisting of "an overarching pattern of the micro, meso and ecosystems characterizing a given culture, subculture or other broader social context, with particular reference to the developmentally instigated is life systems, resources,

hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.9). A macro system is equivalent to culture.

Sinha (1982) has extended the above framework to the Indian social setting. According to him “the enduring environment of the child or his ecology may be conceived in terms of two concentric layers. The ‘upper’ and the more visible layer contains the home, school, peer groups and so on, each providing three dimensions, namely, physical space and material, social roles and relationships of the child vis-a-vis other people, and the activities of the child. The ‘supporting’ or the ‘surrounding’ layer embedding the former is provided by the geographic and physical environment and the institutional setting of the child in terms of his social class, caste and the general services and amenities available to him” (Sinha, 1982 p.27). The home and its conditions i.e. space available to each member of the family, toys, pictorial and cultural material in the home, and technological devices used for general living constitute the most important and visible ‘upper layer’ influencing the child.

In the home as well as in the school, the nature of interpersonal relationships and activities that are encouraged or inhibited would constitute another kind of influence emanating from the family and the school. Another aspect constituting the order visible layer is the nature of interactions and activities prevalent in the peer groups right from childhood onward. The visible and the surrounding layer factors often combine and interact with one another and shape not only the economic pursuits and way of life but also the socialization processes and interpersonal relationships and the general cognitive and perceptual functioning of the individual. Any difference in one or combination with others influences the competence of a child as well as affects his/her motivation, style of coping and general personality development.

Several theoretical accounts of socialization are available in the field of human development. In particular, social learning theory (Bandura, 1976) emerged as a strong alternative to the Freudian legacy. The social learning theorists believed that based on direct experience, instruction and observational learning, people develop expectancies about environmental contingencies. Bandura (1976) emphasized continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral and environmental factors. He recognized the prominent role played by vicarious symbolic and self-regulatory processes in psychological functioning. Earlier Rotter (1966) had proposed that a person’s actions are predicted based on values, expectations and the situations in which he finds himself. His theory places equal

emphasis upon value, the expectancy of reinforcement and situational specificity. We also notice two major categories of parenting theories i.e., child focused and parent-focused.

The child-focused theories of parenting highlight the mechanisms by which a child internalizes the schemes or ‘working models’ of parent-child relationships. Object relations theorists (Klein, 1932; Winnicott, 1987) and attachment theorists (Ainsworth & Whiting, 1969; Bowlby, 1980) share the premise that the most important effect of early experience is what infants and young children learn about intimate relationships from their experiences with primary caretakers.

Parent-focused social theories of parenting attend to the quality of the parent-child relationship rather than to the parents’ behavior (Baumrid,et. al. 1991). Studies analyze whether the relationship between parent and child is warm or cold, structured or chaotic, hierarchical or egalitarian (Steinglass, 1979).

Mother-infant studies in the recent past strived to focus on the idea of a mutual regulation system (Stern, 1985). The relationship between a parent and child is governed not only by the characteristics of each individual but also by the pattern of behavior and communication between them. It recognized the fact that it is impossible to make sense of and predict the quality of a relationship between two family members without examining the forces that contribute to and emerge from their transactions. In this context, Parke et.al. (1994) have proposed a tripartite model of parental socialization; this scheme points out that parents can influence their children through a second pathway, namely, in their role as a direct instructor, and educator, or consultant. In this way, parents can explicitly set out to educate their children concerning appropriate norms, rules and values of the culture. This second pathway may take many forms. Parents may play the role of a coach, teacher, and supervisor as they give their advice, support, guidance and directions about the strategies for managing new social situations or facing social challenges. In the third pathway, parents function as managers of their children’s social lives and serve as regulators of opportunities for social contacts and cognitive experiences.

More recently the theories and theorists have begun to recognize the “managerial” function of parents and to appreciate the impact of variation, that how it influences child development (Hartup, 1979). Parents and their parenting styles influence their children not only by what they do but also by the role they play in structuring the physical and social environment (Hart, Ladd, and Burlison, 1990). In their role as arrangers of child care activities, parents function as “gatekeepers” who restrict or encourage children’s access to the world outside the family.

There is some evidence to suggest that when parents expose young children to a wider array of experiences, the children show higher levels of social adaptation (e.g.) Bryant, 1985). The managerial role refers to the ways parents organize and arrange the children's home environment and set limits on the range of the home setting to which the child has access and the opportunities for social contact with playmates and socializing agents outside the family.

Darling and Steinberg (1993) make a distinction between parental style and parental practices. Parenting style is "a constellation of attitudes towards the child that are communicated to the child and create an emotional climate in which parent's behaviors are expressed" (p.493). In contrast, parenting practices are behaviors defined by specific context and socialization goals. Thus attending school functions and spanking are examples of parenting practices. Style is assumed to be independent of both the context of parenting behavior and the specific socialization contents. Critical to their model is the assumption that parenting style has its impact on child outcomes indirectly. The style of parenting transforms the nature of parent-child interaction and thereby moderates the impact of specific practices. It can also modify the child's openness to parental influence, which in turn moderates the association between parenting practices and child outcomes.

Parenting Style

Parenting or child rearing prepares a child for self-reliance and independence. It is a process of actively providing a safe environment for children. It is the process of helping the physical, emotional, social and intellectual well-being of children from infancy to adulthood. Possessing the qualities and knowledge to help children grow to become responsible adults is Skillful Parenting.

Parenting style is a psychological construct, it can be defined as a set or a system of behaviors that describe the parent and child interactions over a wide range of situations and creates an effective relationship. Parenting style is a determining and effective factor that plays an important role in children's growth and development. Children grow up in different environments. A family, home, school, and community are the agencies for social and intellectual experiences from which they acquire and develop the emotions, skills, attitudes and attachments which characterize them as individuals and shape their choice and performance of adult roles. Extensive research shows that parents are more influential in their children's lives than anyone else in shaping their thoughts, feelings and behavior. Yet parents are neither the only influences nor the only ones with responsibility. Peers, other adults, and various other sources also play important roles. Ideally, all these influences can work together with parents to promote young people's healthy development.

Culture & Parenting Styles

A clear knowledge of the cultural context in which parents socialize their children is very much helpful to recognize the differences in parenting styles that are commonly practiced in that cultural context. It is noted that there are fundamental differences in the behaviors of parents in parenting their children and children's developmental outcomes across different cultures. Since a major goal of parenting is to socialize the child to adapt to the society in which he/she lives, that is, to support the child in successfully adapting to the conditions of its society and culture, for the child to become a functioning member of the society.

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