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A Parent-Teacher View of Teens Behaviors in Nuclear and Joint Family Systems in Pakistan

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Abstract

This research work tries to unveil the changing teen's behaviors in nuclear and joint family systems in Pakistan. Pakistan enjoys the social values of joint families; and, where grandparents are very important constituent of the family, the family structure is an important component in shaping the teens behaviors. Therefore, this paper focuses the sample of parents and teachers of the teens in the postmodern urban society and tried to better point out the eminent changes in the attitudes and behaviors of teens. This study follows a qualitative approach of research that pursues a phenomenological inquiry describing lived experience of the respondents regarding teen's behavior in Pakistan.

Keywords

Teens, Joint Family, Nuclear Family, Parents

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A Parent-Teacher View of Teens Behaviors in Nuclear and Joint Family Systems in Pakistan

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This research work tries to unveil the changing teen's behaviors in nuclear and joint family systems in Pakistan. Pakistan enjoys the social values of joint families; and, where grandparents are very important constituent of the family, the family structure is an important component in shaping the teens behaviors. Therefore, this paper focuses the sample of parents and teachers of the teens in the postmodern urban society and tried to better point out the eminent changes in the attitudes and behaviors of teens. This study follows a qualitative approach of research that pursues a phenomenological inquiry describing lived experience of the respondents regarding teen's behavior in Pakistan. Keywords: Teens, Joint Family, Nuclear Family, Parents

Introduction

The times have changed as had always been. The changing social trends around world have influenced the living patterns and so the new era of glamour has injected self-confidence and liberty in the fervor of the new generation. Changes can be either way, pleasant or unpleasant. Moreover, the teen lifestyle has changed that they gained attention to be studied. Not only western societies have experienced change but it has also affected the social life patterns in east as well. The social changes more specifically the change trend of social media in the last few decades have given birth to the identity of young kids to be known and recognized as a separate entity to be addressed (Carroll & Kirkpatrick, 2011). According to these authors, teens are more involved in using social media including social networking sites, cell phones, blogging as compared to last decades.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to highlight the teen behaviors in the urban society of Pakistan. This idea hit us after observing and experiencing the divergent and changing behaviors of teens in Pakistan. Drawing from this observational, experiential and theoretical background (Carroll & Kirkpatrick, 2011; Brewster, Billy, & Grady, 1993), this research aims at exploring the experiences of the parents and the teachers of teens in both the nuclear and joint families that lead towards the changing lifestyles of the teens in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Prevailing Teen Behaviors across the World

Byfield (2002), after surveying ten cities of the world qualitatively, argued that unlike the teens of past decades, the teens today are more logically aware and motivated towards the aims of their lives rather than rebelling and claiming to change the world on their own. The young generation of the twenty first century, as reported by Byfield (2002), is more driven towards their identity and urge of acknowledgement. Christensen (2002) conducted a continuous qualitative survey in Europe and found that the forthcoming belt of youngsters

look for the new and more purposive things in life. Hence it is evident that the presiding generation of teens has more understanding of things as compared to the teens back in the century. Teens have developed their new definitions and explanations for living life. Although teens, in different countries, across the world lead different lives, have different social setups but they unanimously share the same attitudes and choices (Barnard, 1961; Byfield, 2002). Teens, now, are not only more demanding but understand and execute their responsibilities as well. This teen culture, fortunately or unfortunately, is so incredibly compelling and energetic (Bucholtz, 2002; Helyar, 2007) that it convincingly constitutes a large part of the target market for different brands around the world (Barnard, 1961; Christensen, 2002).

Rhis (2007) stated that as the human societies grow old so do the values, cultures, norms evolve and even the family structures transform. Such social changes according to Johnson, Hoffman and Gerstein (1996) gave rise to the issue of understanding how important is family structure in well-being of kids and teens. When good personality development and character building are desirable, then harmony and synchronization of inter-family behaviors are equally demanded in joint family system (Christensen, 2002; Miller, 1997; Roberts & Bengston, 1993; Wachs, 1995) however, undoubtedly value system of a family plays an important role in this regard (Anderson, Burton, & Turner, 1993). While a value system, according to Anderson, Burton and Turner (1993), is the generalized acceptance of the practices that relate their present norms to their ancestors, to which a large number of a particular group emotionally relates. Therefore, the values of a family and the norms of a society play a vital role in the character building of kids and teens.

What is Family?

Ford (1994) defined family as any living arrangement of two or more people who have child also. Now, there could be number of types of families that normally exist i.e. family may include single parent family, two parent family, extended family, step parent family etc. (Anderson, Burton & Turner, 1993; Crowder & Teachman, 2004; Ermisch & Francesconi, 2001; Ford, 1994; Groman & Braverman, 2008; Miller, 1997). With more liberties and choices for teens in life (Christensen, 2002) a family is more desperately in need to have a person who performs the guardian or care taker responsibilities which are necessary to be done to keep the teens tracked (Ford, 1994). However, this study describes nuclear family as a social unit composed of two parents and one or more children. On the other side, joint family system is describe as type of extended family composed of parents, their children, and the children's spouses and offspring in one household.

Teens and family structures

Crowder and Teachman (2004) found that living arrangement not only affects the families socially and economically but it also impacts the personality building of children, efficacy for education, educational success, marriage decisions and childbearing of teens as well. Dufour, Lavergne, Larrivee, and Trocme (2008) mentioned that like everything else each type of family structure has its own pros and cons.

Therefore, it is not necessarily important for a two parent family to be prosperous and single parent family as stressed. However, it is evident that in single parent family, the parent has less time available to spend with kids or the family, to discuss the issues that teens are bearing and even to share their daily experiences and casual talks (Crowder & Teachman, 2004; Ermisch & Francesconi, 2001; Jeynes, 2002; Johnson, Hoffman & Gerstein, 1996; Miller, 1997). It is also obvious from the researches that the teens in the single parent family

have to incur more psychological and emotional liability as compared to the teens of two parent families (Crowder & Teachman, 2004; Ermisch & Francesconi, 2001; Gager, Cooney & Call, 1999; Gorman & Braverman, 2008; Jeynes, 2002; Miller, 1997; Rihs, 2007).

Single parent family structure affects the educational success of teens (Crowder & Teachman, 2004; Ermisch & Francesconi, 2001), their health conditions (Gorman & Braverman, 2008), associated higher risks of economic indolence (Ermisch & Francesconi, 2001), greater chances of teens indulging in the drug use, alcoholism, stress, smoking and even the conflicts in marital relationships under peer influence (Allen, Porter & McFarland, 2006; Ermisch & Francesconi, 2001, Miller, 1997; Weissmann, 1969) and ultimately the less attachment and time spent with their families (Ermisch & Francesconi, 2001; Gager, Cooney & Call, 1999; Miller, 1997). In contrast, Loury (2006) argued that the aunts, uncles and grandparents in joint families, most of the times, become an inspiration for the educational success of teens. Further, Barbe (1917) mentioned that the beauty of life mentioned in the poems of love is the life led by teens. Therefore, the importance of parents and teachers in the lives of teens can never be denied as they are the contractors to build the fabulous architecture of their personality and character. While, Gager, Cooney and Call (1999) elaborated that the kids in larger families and single parent families as compared to two parent families have to spend more time with their household activities in spite the fact that as they grow older in their teens, they tend to spend more time outside their families. Furthermore, Dufour et al. (2008) suggested that the teens in the single parent families that are headed by mothers have to bear more personal and emotional problems as compared to the teens in single parents headed by fathers.

Teens and Friends

Maslow (1908-1970) had pointed the need of human beings to be socially associated with people more than half a century ago (Bovee, Thill, Wood, & Dovel, 1993). Therefore, the teens of the day also understand and address the importance of their friends in their lives without any second thought (Allen, Porter & McFarland, 2006; Christensen, 2002). Hefner (2007) also found that as the time is passing, the priorities of teens are also changing. According to Christensen (2002) teens not only share their problems with each other but they are confident to discuss their issues with motive to find some mutual guidelines for their lives. Wachs (1995) argued that teens in same family may exhibit different behaviors. Moreover, the researchers also supported that these dissimilar behaviors likely to happen due to different environments in which teens move and the social circle they interact with (Rowe 1995; Wachs, 1995) which definitely leaves its marks on the IQ levels of teens and the level of their sociability (Rowe, 1995). In addition, peers and friends of teens have the potential to influence either way i.e. positive or negative. Allen, Porter, and McFarland (2006) reported that teens tend to establish autonomy with families and peers, and those who get influenced by their peers are more expected to experience the unfavorable peer pressures and come up with relatively less competency.

Apart from face-to-face interactions with friends, technology importantly the internet, has also played an important role in interconnecting teens with others in the dynamic and vibrant atmosphere of globalization (Byfield, 2002; Christensen, 2002). In addition, the importance of internet usage by teens cannot be denied for sharing information regarding the educational purposes and social interactions (Hasim & Salman, 2010; Wang, Bianchi & Raley, 2005).

As the time has stepped in the twentieth century, different social events have witnessed the obvious divergence in teen's behaviors, from the values particular to the eastern societies. Therefore, this study expect to find the evidences from the experiences of

the parents and teachers of teens about any change in the behaviors and attitude of teens with respect to their family patterns.

I appreciate that at the beginning of the lit review you referenced research pertaining experiences of teens in different parts of the world. Along that same focus, I was curious if the geographical or cultural context of the families and/or teenagers in the research that you cited in the following sections....I am considering that the readership of this journal is international so that distinction may be relevant. Plus, your study pertains to families in Pakistan, so it would be terrific to read about studies within that culture as a support to your research question....It is just a thought. What do you think?

Also, after reading your lit review, I am still curious about the reason why you are interviewing parents and teachers of teens to study the changing life styles of teens...I am aware that you address this below under your Sample section (read my comments below).

Data Collection

Personal interview method was selected to collect data from the respondents about teen's behaviors. Since, the present research work utilized the phenomenological inquiry (Inquiry that describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon) to determine the teen's behaviors therefore, personal interview with the teen's parents and respective teachers were more appropriate. The help of colleagues were taken to assist during interview in order to ensure the validity of the data. Since the present study design suggested personal interview as more appropriate data collection method however in addition to this, the further selection of personal interview method was based on two reasons;

- 1) To get detailed information about the teens behaviors.
- 2) Respondents are easy to access for personal interviews.

Sample Selection

We decided to question parents and the teachers of teens because they seemed to be more appropriate and feasible to approach and have deeper knowledge of teen's behaviors due to their direct relation and interaction with the teens in daily life (feasibility). Hence, they fell among the range of people around teens who could better provide relevant and rich information about them (generation of relevant & rich information).

Enriched information was a fruit enjoyed by the way life stories were articulated and aligned with the aims of the research i.e. handwritten notes and audio taping. In conjunction with the relevancy of information, sample was consisted of multiple parents interviewed at different places at different times because the research was not restricted to any particular family based on caste system, financial status etc. Therefore, it included a combination of parents, teachers of the urban society located in Lahore, Pakistan (analytical generalizability). The experiences of the subjects were tried to be articulated, to some extent not entirely, in a believable, reliable and balanced pattern (believability of explanations).

In addition, as an attempt to target a wider range of respondents, it became an ongoing process that proportionally included the parents and the teachers of teens. The parents of teens were accessed at their houses while the teachers were approached at schools because the teachers at schools and colleges were mostly those who had a direct interaction with students in their teens. Therefore, it was good choice to ask about their experiences with teens about their behaviors and attitudes in their respective institutions. Since, we were interviewing the parents of teens to learn about their stories what they were experiencing with

their children who were in their teens. For meeting with the parents and teachers we had ethical approval on their behalf to ensure the confidentiality and generation of believable information. We asked them the general questions while the specific questions were subjected to their experiences. Data were collected with two/three interviewers, as a number of teachers and parents were visited a number of times to ensure the validity and rigor in data collection.

Data Analysis

When the parents, teachers and grandparents were approached, there had been few general questions regarding the teens in their families. These questions led to the categories that evolved during the interviews and they were coded accordingly. For further understanding, the coding was assisted by memoing (i.e., the reflective notes). For example, do they have kids in their teens? How do teens spend their time? What factors are obvious for their changing behaviors? Moreover, the reflective notes are mentioned in the footnotes for the interviewees and table 1 significantly elaborates the categories evolved during the interviews.

Teens and Changing Trends

As per general conclusion, parents and the teachers had a mutual consent that the teens today are 180 degrees apart from their own teen lives. Teens today, as their parents and teachers experience and don't hesitate to admit, are more active, confident, choosy, social, creative, outspoken, aggressive and most importantly intelligent. Earlier young people did not have this much exposure and facilities to enjoy their lives as teens have now. They also argued that teens have more opportunities and room of moving beyond the scene.

They have a long range of choices for their bits and pieces and also a number of tracks to walk on regarding their educational gateways. The gender wise trends of the teens obtained are listed in table 2. In past, the major fields to be chosen as career were engineering, medicine and humanities to be more liberal but now, the boys and the girls also, sanely choose music and arts as their professional careers. Parents admit that due to the changing trends of our society, it doesn't feel bad among the social circle stating that their kid has his own underground music band. Regarding the career selection, a teacher also mentioned that now-a-days music is taught as a subject and we can see that it's a reputed profession. He claimed that, the biggest realization for the teens in the running era is that they have a head on their shoulders, which although bestowed them with vanguard but it definitely snatched their innocence as well.

It is also determined from the parents and teachers interviews that earlier teens had a regard for their parents, an understanding of their issues, a soft corner for their love and a sacrifice for their parents. However, now the teens have been causing a change in the value system due to not being able to hold the knots of values tight but their preferences have also changed regarding their outfits, their accessories, their career selection etc.

Your results seem to report about teens, but teens were not interviewed themselves. If I am getting it right, what you are reporting are the understandings you gathered by interviewing parents and teachers on their perceptions of teenagers...this would be really important to clarify

‘This generation isn’t very obedient. One has to think a number of times before talking to them.’¹

²*Grandmother of 12-year-old-school-student, Lahore.*

Teens and Family

Another father told that now a day’s kids don’t feel like having a close relationship with their father as they are busy with their studies and parents are also busy earning money. Generation gap that had been a complaint two decades before has been overcome now. Parents and kids have a better understanding, they spend friendly family time but this is also a fact that the time spent together by the kids and the parents has shrunk.

‘When I’m at home, kids are busy with their home works but yes we have dinner together’³

⁴*Father of 16-year-old-pre-medical-student, Lahore.*

Teens although have become more decisive and studious towards their career but they also know their responsibilities towards their families. They have become, unlike the tradition of Pakistan, more involved in their family lives. They consider helping their mothers in household when they are single child or all siblings are male.

‘My son takes very good care of me. He is very social but the good thing is he doesn’t forget me.’⁵

⁶*Mother of the only 19-year-old-child, Lahore.*

Life has changed a lot. The living styles have changed so do the trends for accessorizing it. Now those who can afford are more interested in branded goods. Teens irrespective of being girl or boy they are now more interested in Hollywood movies. They seem more inclined towards the western cultures as the schooling choices of most of the teens, whose parents were interviewed, are on western lines. Since they are going to well reputed schools, they have good communication skills, better groomed personalities, improved interpersonal qualities, refined English accents and obviously the enhanced vocabularies.

Usually, this thought is prevailing in our society that if you admit your child in a well reputed western schooling system, kids get disconnected with their religion but this not an

¹ “Kids are not very obedient these days. This is the time when we fear interrogating and making suggestions to them.”

²The grandmother had joined us a moment later and she seemed very happy for what I was actually up to. When I asked her about her grand kids, she neither seemed very happy nor angry with them. But when I asked about the obedience she promptly answered what is quoted above. Later in the conversation, when I was about to leave, she after telling the truth tried to coat them. ☺

³ “When I get back home, my kids are busy with their homework’s; but yes we have dinner together.”

⁴ It was a weekday when we approached him. He did not seem tired. His youngest daughter and the eldest son, who were 10 and 19 respectively, were accompanying their parents. His daughter was in pre-med and son was doing ACCA. He seemed more than happy with his children’s academic achievements. His son looking very much involved in the family decisions as he was very concerned about what we were inquiring. The son did not forget to give me looks for every question I headed. Interestingly, the son, as I conceived, wasn’t please as if I was defying his parents.

⁵ “My son takes very good care of me. He has many friends but never forgets me.”

⁶ She seemed very happy with her son. It was obvious from the brightness of her eyes that his son was paying back the love of his parents with his warm and caring attitude towards his parents.

always case because I also met the parents of few kids who have memorized the Holy Quran and studying in the Pakistan's best engineering university that is recognized abroad as well. It is evident from what a mother reported

*"My son is a NUSTIAN. He qualified the scholarship. And has memorized Quran as well."*⁷

⁸*Mother of 18-year-old- -student, Lahore.*

Teens and Liberty

Although teens, now a days, are more independent and confident also their information and intelligence is worth their analysis and decision making. Teachers also agreed that the teens are maturing faster as compared to the past teens. They feel this is due to their exposure to the media that include TV, internet, and cell phones particularly. Although parents and teachers pointed these technological liberties out but they admitted that their kids too are enjoying these without any objection. It seems as if the parents and teachers of teens realize that these factors are influencing their generation badly still they don't feel themselves authoritative to block their usage. In addition, teens of the 21st century in our country have become more powerful in their decisions for which most of the parents held extensive exposure to the brutal realities responsible. Apart from it, they also credit teens for their confidence in the decisions they take. Since, this liberty of stepping in the global village has been advantageous in a number of ways but it also rooted the unyielding obstinate attitude in their bloods.

"We object students for their mobile phones but some of them bring it with them."

⁹*Teacher of Secondary School, Lahore.*

Once they have decided something to go for, it's very difficult for parents to keep them detained. In fact, parents feel scared of the rebellious germs that they try their best to keep them immunized with fulfilling their desires.

"My daughter doesn't know that architecture is offered in NCA Lahore also, otherwise it would be hell difficult for me to take care of her."

¹⁰*Mother of 18-year-old-girl, Lahore.*

⁷ "My son got admission in NUST. He qualified scholarship and he has memorized Quran (The Muslim's holy book) as well."

⁸ She was looking very proud of her son that he had not only achieved the worldly education but he had not let her down before Allah as well. She seemed very thankful towards Allah. She tried to look humble but I felt an element of pride behind.

⁹ She seemed very disappointed with the attitude of teens in the school. Although she also tried to maintain the repute of her school but she personally wasn't happy with them.

¹⁰ Here the fear of the mother was obvious in case her daughter becomes rebellious.

Table 1*Categories Evolved during interviews*

Do you have kids/grandkids in their teens?	Sons	45%
	Daughters	55%
How do teens spend their leisure time?	Stay at home	70%
	Hang out with friends	30%
Have you felt any change in the behavior of teens today and the teens of decade ago?	They have changed a lot	100%
	• Intelligent	
	• Confident	
	• Active	
	• Aggressive	
	• Outspoken	
What factors do you think has caused change in teen's behavior?	Technology i.e. cell phones, internet, TV	64%
	Peer Influence i.e. competition, more involvement in friends	36%

Teens, Peer Influence and Technology

Every teenage kid of the families I met has cell phone and internet access. This indicates they are more informant and up to date with the changing societies than their ancestors. Few parents admitted that they don't detain their kids from using internet and mobile phones because they don't want them to stay out of home as they don't feel the surrounding environment favorable for the growing kids in their teens.

*"When they have mobile and internet accessible at homes, they don't need to go out."*¹¹

¹²Mother of a 15-year-old-girl, Lahore.

Table 2*Gender wise living trends of teens obtained*

Teen girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook • Landline phone calls • Cell phones • Social get together • Shopping (emphasis on brands under peer influence)
Teen boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheesha • Facebook • Hanging out with friends • Staying late at friend's places • Cell phones • Playing music instruments

¹¹ "When they have mobile and internet then there is no need to go out."

¹² She was also afraid of the so called liberty that she proudly mentioned in earlier interview.

However, few parents admitted that they let their teenage sons hang out with their friends so that they won't get rebellious with over restrictions but they assured that they keep an eye on their outdoor activities. Parents also mentioned that the major focus of teens and also the young boys and girls is "sheesha" that probably is due to the mutual propensity of all the friends.

*"No, this is common interest to kids these days. None can say that their son takes 'sheesha' because of his friends."*¹³

Mother of 19-year-old-boy, Lahore.

When I asked them about the peer influence in the lives of their kids, few of the parents replied that they provide their kids in their teens with everything before they ask under any peer influence while most of them reported that it becomes difficult, sometimes, to handle their kids.

"My daughter says why you don't buy me a latest cell phone while everybody in my class already has one. They would say, she claims to be US return but look at her out dated cell."

¹⁴Mother of 18-year-old-girl, Lahore.

Although the parents denied any peer influence on their kids but it definitely exists. The parents who claimed that they provide their teens with what they want before they ask is also a way of blocking the potential rebel under peer influences.

Apart from peer influence, Facebook is also a major activity in the lives of teens. They spend their time willingly and knowingly on such social networking sites. They not only tend to spend their time on such sites but also they value their friends more than their families.

It indicates that although the teens feel themselves confident champs yet there is a concern in every parent for their kids like it had been since ages. No matter how much value system has changed still parents are protective towards their kids. Since this technological liberty has injected subtleness in their gestures but it has also definitely snatched their innocence.

When I was interviewing a family, we were sitting in the lawn in the evening. There was a guest as well and he was very keen about what I'm up to after this research. He asked for permission and then added about his experience of teens:

"They are going more practical and personal. They are smarter but more mean but they are not mixing up with their elders and they are practical and straight in their views more clear."

¹⁵A 33-years-old guest

¹³ "They would say that she claims that she's returned from USA but look at her cheap cell phone."

¹⁴She was the mother of only daughters. Although she returned from America but she seemed very much concerned about their brought up, holding the moral values and tying ethics to the daily life. She did not buy her daughter the cell phone, daughter being in A-Levels, but she had to buy her daughter the cell phone because her friends already had.

¹⁵ The guest took much interest in the purpose of our research. He had been very keen throughout the conversation, although I (Noor-ul-Ain) was a little hesitant may be because he was visiting all the way from India. He then voluntarily added, when I was done with my interview. He seemed okay with what is prevailing in the society regarding teens attitude as if it is the cost of their intelligence & smartness.

Table 3 precisely elaborates the eminent comparison of the teens in the joint and nuclear families of Pakistan.

Table 3

Comparison of Teen Behaviors in Nuclear and Joint Families

Joint Families (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teens spend time out with families and extended family yet they have more social circle outside family • Don't have aptitude for hanging out with friends • Facebook, Sheesha • More interaction between the family members • Negligible involvement in household • Less peer influence • More courteous and civilized towards attending the guests 	30%
Nuclear Families (17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers don't allow their kids hanging around with friends much • More likely to find opportunities to hang out with friends • More involved in facebook, sheesha, TV watching • Less interaction of kids and parents yet more understanding (liberty of action) • Comparatively involved in household • More influenced by peers • Less interested in attending & socializing with extended family 	70%
Total (20)		100%

Conclusion

Based on present research, it is concluded that the lives of teens either in joint families or the nuclear families are somewhat dissimilar. In joint families, it doesn't make much difference to their lifestyle how much they interact with their grandparents but they definitely keep a deep regard for their grandparents. Where the teens have an interaction with their extended families from their childhood, they enjoy the same activities more with their cousins unlike the friends of teens in nuclear families. In nuclear families, the teens tend to have more so called understanding with their parents that in true sense is the liberty assigned by the parents to their kids.

Our interviews with the parents and teachers made us reveal that teens value their friends more in nuclear families and somewhat take their families as for granted.

It seemed to me that the parents either in nuclear families or the joint families, they all are okay with the changing lifestyles and behaviors of their kids. They, apart from very few grandparents, have thought that it is very obvious, or this is the demand of stepping in the twenty first century. They have prioritized the educational and career accomplishments before the refined culture and moral values. If it bothers parents, in very few cases, then they don't feel their kids accountable because they are paying back with their achievements.

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