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Children's and Parents' Perception of Parenting: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The present research was conducted to explore the perception of children and their parents in the Pakistani context and find the discrepancies and consensus in children's and their parents' perception of parenting. **Methods:** It was a multi-informant study, and the data was collected from a sample of 15 intact families ($n=15$ mothers, $n=15$ fathers, and $n=15$ children) belonging from the general population of Bahawalpur using a convenient sampling technique. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed through thematic analysis and a variety of main themes followed by sub-themes emerged.

Results

Parental main themes included: parental knowledge and role identification, appreciations and apprehensions of parents, parenting ideals and practices, expression of parental warmth and affection, factors influencing parenting, parental needs and challenges, intergenerational differences in parenting, parental aspirations for their children, and parenting in the pandemic. As mentioned earlier children's perception of parenting was also explored through interviews. Main themes included: identification of duties, children's duties, perception of parents, Children identifying parenting practices, children's response to parenting practices, perception of a healthy parent-child relationship, and children's perception about parental wrongdoings, perception about parental difficulties, lockdown, and pandemic.

Conclusions

The findings revealed that parenting in Pakistan is a mix combination of identified roles. Such as mothers look after children, do home chores. Fathers support



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financially and take children out. Some mutual roles were also identified as taking care of children and teaching them moral values. Similarly, children also identified the same roles while describing parents.

Keywords: *Parenting, perception of parenting, parenting practices, identified roles*

Introduction

Nothing matches with the feelings or captivates the consideration of grown-ups more than the birth of a child. Parents ensure that the resting, eating, and working patterns of their kid are permanently altered by the time they are born (Bornstein, 2005). Parenthood is both a fantastic and possible testing experience for some couples since it involves numerous adjustments in their lives (Gjerdingen & Center, 2003). The term parenting is all about explaining how parents influence a child's behavior and development. It comprises of the strategies, procedures, and different exercises that are utilized or essential in the raising of youngsters (Bornstein, 2005). Parents have the huge responsibility and ongoing with a job to set them up for the physical, financial, and psycho-social circumstances that are normal for the environment in which they must endure and, it is trusted, thrive. Parents keep training their children as they grow up. Early childhood, specifically, has for some time been believed to be an era in the existence cycle when people are particularly flexible while children are particularly vulnerable to social impacts on qualities, they will carry with them long after they have gone from their group of inception. Things that are more influencing in the first 5-7 years of children's lives incorporate the language they talk, their food inclinations, their strict convictions, and firm suffering character qualities (Maccoby, 2000).

Child parent relationships, parenting styles, and actions affect what children acquire and how they respond in a definite condition (Collins & Laursen, 2009). The parenting styles that based on the ideas of Diana Baumrind are primarily used in the sphere of psychology. Baumrind in 1960 realized that the preschoolers clearly show different types of characteristics and behaviors. The behavior depicted by children was linked to a certain type of parenting. Psychology mainly uses the parenting styles having based on the proposed by Diana Baumrind. Baumrind in 1960 realized that the preschoolers clearly show different types of characteristics and behaviors. The behavior depicted by children was linked to a certain type of parenting (Parents' warmth toward child). The second dimension is the parental demandingness (parents' demands from child). Four parenting styles have been identified Authoritative parenting (high responsiveness also set limitations), Authoritarian Parenting (high demandingness), Permissive Parenting (high responsiveness low demandingness) and uninvolved parenting (low on responsiveness and low on demandingness) (Baumrind, 1989; Maccoby & Martin 1983).

Evidence has been shown in a study by Goraya and Shamama-tus-Sabah (2013) that parenting styles play a great role in children's externalizing problems. Children who experience positive parenting such as warmth, affection, and consistent discipline showed a negative relationship with the externalizing problem. Whereas children who experienced negative parenting (harsh) showed a positive relationship with externalizing problems.



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Parenting styles usually ponders the expressive environment that the parent introduces to his child and parenting practices is something that the parents do to actually accomplish the objectives of socialization (Darling & Steinberg, 2017). However, neither infant grows up in isolation or adults do parenting in isolation rather do this in various circumstances, and culture is a noteworthy setting of child development and parenting (Bornstein, 2005). Each culture can be different Raising kids in various societies can be as different as the nations from which they come (Grille, 2014). In non-Western cultures, some elements of parenting that may have a strong salience in the West may be less important. By utilizing only Western buildings and items, researchers risk imposing a framework that may skip the key relationships in non-Western cultures (Stewart et al., 1999).

Research on parenting in Pakistan is relatively sparse as very few studies have been conducted on this topic in Pakistan. The parent-child relationships as a complex, vigorous system. This relationship grows and changes through daily interactions (Harach & Kuczynski, 2005) another study gives evidence that communication between children and parents in conflicted situations proves to be an effective tool for good parenting practices. When parents were asked about how personality traits of children are affected by parenting practices, the majority of interviewees stated that social or environmental factors play important role in building children's traits rather than parents' inherited practices (Zaman et al., 2014). Parenting changes due to one another and have a strong influence on the overall child's growth. Instead of this reciprocal interaction, very little is known about children's perception of parenting in aspects of negative and positive behaviors. Till the time the research about parenting styles and its effect on children's psychological adjustment is based on only parents or reports by observers on parenting. As evidence shows that children's perception of parenting has been linked with their psychological adjustment. For instance, when children perceive that their parents show more positive support the children show positive outcomes. And when children perceive rejection from their parents it brings out the negative outcomes in children (Gaylord et al., 2003). Till now there is much knowledge about how parenting affects children but only recently the interest has started to consider children's views about parenting. It allows us to understand how children feel and recognize their needs (Madge, & Willmott, 2007). Evidence of such a difference between parents' and children's perception of parenting has been found out in a study by Huang et al (2019). in the period of the last few months' parents had to make many new adjustments which they never thought of. Amid Lockdown due to COVID 19, Pakistan has introduced difficulties for families whose everyday lives were changed for all intents and purposes for the time being. Numerous individuals needed to quickly change under the novel normal, with the closure of schools, parents working from home, and backing from outside the house is not available anymore. For many guardians (or those in a child-rearing job), this included thinking about their kids, including self-teaching them, while proceeding to work.

Objectives of the Study

To explore the perception of children's parenting in Pakistan.

To explore the perception of parents about parenting in Pakistan

To find the discrepancies and consensus in children's and their parents' perceptions of parenting.



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Research Questions

What is parenting in the Pakistani context?

What are the perceptions of children about parenting in Pakistan?

What are the perceptions of parents about parenting in Pakistan?

What are children's experiences and perceptions regarding parenting?

What are the discrepancies and consensus in children's and their parents' perceptions of parenting?

Method

Research Design

The qualitative research design was used to explore children's and their parents' perceptions of Pakistani parenting.

Sample

A sample of 15 intact families ($n=15$ mothers, $n=15$ fathers, and $n=15$ children) belonging to middle socioeconomic status was drawn from the general population using a convenient sampling technique.

Inclusion

Both working and non-working parents belonging to intact families of middle socioeconomic status having children with an age range from 6-10 years were included. Parents with minimum intermediate education were included.

Exclusion Criteria

Single parents or parents with an only child or having any physical or psychological illness were excluded from the study.

Instruments

A self-made but supervisory approved questionnaire was used and was administered through interview technique. Instrument specifically consist of some sort of questions intended to explore the perception of both parents and children about the parenting.

Procedure

Initially, the permission was sought out from the parents. After getting informed consent for interview and recording it, demographic sheet was filled, and interviews were held which lasted approximately 30–45 min. For recording interviews, audio recordings were conducted with the permission of participants.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis was used for this purpose; Thematic analysis is a qualitative research technique that seeks to identify, evaluate and describe patterns (themes) in data, often textual data such as interview transcripts or open-ended survey answers. It includes a thorough investigation of the data to determine the repetition of ideas, topics, and meanings in order to know the patterns and lessons in the data. (Braun & Clarke, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

All the procedures carried out in the present study with human participants was in line with the ethical principles of the institutional and/or national research



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committee and the 1964 Helsinki declaration and subsequent amendments or similar ethical principles; of informed consent, of voluntary participation and of protection of their privacy and integrity. The subject was informed that he/she has a right to abandon the study at any time at no consequence whatsoever. Once the subject confirmed that he/she understood the information; the researchers then acquired the freely-given informed consent of the subjects; ideally in written form. In case the consent was not taken in written form; non-written consent was also signed and witnessed. (Trochim, 2006).

Results

The result of the study showed nine major themes for parents' perception of parenting and ten major themes for children's perception of parenting, which are following.

Table 1

Major Themes and Sub-themes relevant to Parents' Perception of Parenting

Major themes	Sub-themes
Parental knowledge and identification	Physical growth Mental growth Protecting children Own role identification Spousal role identification Spousal role conflict
Appreciations and apprehensions of mothers	Appreciations Apprehensions Source of strength and recognition
Parenting ideals and practices	Verbal guideline Contextual Using technology Act play Keeping equilibrium Placating children Positive practices Negative practices Process of learning parenting through multiple sources Pragmatic view of Parenting practices
Expression of maternal warmth and affection	Philia
Factors influencing parenting	Interactive Activities Transactional family dynamics Gendered parenting Parenting according to age Positive Family factors Negative family factors Community factor Social, economic and cultural factor Religious factor
Parental need and challenges	Burn out



		Well-being
		Social support
		Media exposure
		Insecure environment
		Economic problems
		Health issues
		Job pressure
Intergenerational	differences	in Behavioral pattern
parenting		
		Educational aspect
		Lifestyle
		Technological aspect
Maternal aspirations for their children		Good character and designation
Parenting in time of pandemic		Positive aspect
		Negative aspect



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Table

Major Themes and Sub-themes relevant to Children's Perception of Parenting

Major themes	Sub-themes
Identification of duties	Maternal responsibilities Paternal responsibilities Shared responsibilities
Children duties	Religious duties Moral duties
Perception about parents	Parents worth Ideal parents Least wanted parents
Children identifying parenting practices	Verbal guideline Technological use Positive practices Negative practices And reasons of punishment
Children's response to parenting practices	Affectivity and behavioral response
Voicing needs	Expressing needs to father Expressing needs to mother
Perception of healthy parent-child relationship	Affectionate time period Interactive activities
Children's perception about parental wrongdoings	Behavioral wrongdoings Sibling favoritism
Perception about parental difficulties	Maternal difficulties Paternal difficulties
Lockdown and pandemic	Positive aspect Negative aspect

Discussion

The objective of the present study was to investigate the children's and parents' perceptions of parenting in Pakistan. To explore experiences of parenting qualitative approach was used. It was a multi-informant study and the data were collected from mothers, fathers, and children to gain detailed information about parenting. The theme of parental knowledge and role identification basically includes a parental understanding of being a parent as a mother or father and their responsibilities. Parents consider children's upbringing in three major ways. One fulfilling their needs of food second is giving them better education with training and the third is protecting them from all the harm. Both parents believe that fulfilling a child's requirements, providing better education and making them a good human, and protecting him is known as parenting. Father's role in parenting was stated to be very important in child's birth. Mothers reported that children listen to their father more and it helps mothers in upbringing. These responsibilities were reported by fathers and mothers who oppose the typical image of father's role that he is only financially supporter and decision-maker such as in the study of Chintalapudi, & Hamela, (2017). The discovered paternal roles in the present study are supported by another study conducted by Jeong *et al.*, (2018) in Pakistan which explored father's role more than only supporting



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financially and uncovered salient paternal roles such as taking children out, playing with them, helping them in education and engaging in cognitive stimulation. These aligned findings show how the shift of the paternal role has started in favour of the mother in a child's upbringing.

Parenting is not an easy task. Being a parent is not only about happy all the time. It includes some fears as well. The discovered emotions are supported with another study by Nelson et al., (2014) which states that parents experience negative emotions when they meet challenges and feel the pressure. But when parents experience greater meaning in life, a satisfaction of their basic needs, greater positive emotions, and enhanced social roles they are filled with happiness and joy. Parenting is not just a set of patterns which can be followed. According to the exploration of parenting practices, it was revealed that parents use different techniques for parenting. Parents believe that best parenting is when parents keep a balance because along with love, strictness is necessary for managing and controlling children. This explored practice is being supported that it works better for a child's upbringing. It has found in Steinberg, (2004) that balance parenting (authoritative parenting) works best where a child feels being loved and also knows clear boundaries. When a child knows he is loved, his personality becomes more positive. Everyone shows love differently. For some parents showing love was being affectionate with them and for some parents it was by buying their favorite stuff.

While we talk about parenting it is known that it is not done in a single room. Many things are included, which effect it. Parents reported that parenting is much influenced how your spouse plays his/her role. Another factor that effects parenting is gender and age of children. Not all parents but few reported gendered parenting. It was reported by few parents so cannot generalize it on all; we may say that gendered parenting is minimizing in Pakistan. Two mothers also reported that parenting much relies on age of children. In present study most of the children were growing up in an extended family. Parents explained that extended family has positive effects as well as negative. Help from them is positive This finding is supported by Jeong *et al.*, (2018) where they stated how other family members help parents in a child's upbringing. But criticizing parents on everything from grandparents is reported as negative factor. The problem that bothers parents is limited resources; lack of freedom to do what you want. Another factor that influences parenting is environment. Parents explained that children do what they see and they can not control or change it.

Parents also explained that parenting is highly influenced by religion. Parents prefer to follow what religion teaches them for a child's upbringing. Religion plays a positive role for parents in upbringing. The findings of importance of religion are linked with other studies such as studies where religion is linked with higher parenting satisfaction. Parents face many challenges which need parents' needs for their well-being (Henderson et al., 2016). It includes burn out, well-being, social recognition, media exposure, insecure environment, economic problems, health issues and job pressure. These mentioned challenges are supported with result of another study conducted by Sidebotham (2001), in the study they explored several key areas in which stress was imposed on parents. Main key areas of stress were job pressure, economic pressure and time pressure. Parenting keeps changing. In current study intergenerational differences in parenting, explores parents' perception about how the parenting has changed. Parents reported previously parenting was strict, child-parent relation was distant but now it is



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more casual. Parents try to build friendly relationship. Technology has made life easy for guiding children but at the same time it has negative effects as well. Previous studies were not found on such area. Parents attempt has always been to provide best and see their children at a good post and as a good human being. Such aspirations were found out in this study.

Parenting has never been easy and Covid put more struggle into it. Current study explored both positive and negative aspects. Positive aspects were family had more time with each other and built strong relationship and negative aspects included where they burned out and children's studies wasted. The positive aspect in study is aligned with other study by Dawes et al., 2021. In this they have also found out how COVID 19 despite of all challenges had some benefits. It included the benefits of developing a strong relationship with children.

When we talk about parenting it includes both parents and children. There are rare studies which explored children's perception about parenting. In current study children's perception about parenting was explored. The theme identification of duties explored children's knowledge about parental duties. Sub-themes include maternal duties, paternal duties, and shared duties. On asking children they explained mother does house chores Children also explained that their mother is miserable as works all day and rests for all day and rests less. They explained that the father is the one who brings home stuff, takes children to hospital and outside. Some mutual roles were also identified that included loving and taking care of children.

The theme of children's duties explores what they must do at home. The sub-themes include religious duties and moral duties. They reported they have to behave well and respect elders. The theme perception about parents explored children's perception about parents' worth, ideal parents, and least wanted parents. Children explained that their life is all because of their parents and without parents they can not exist. Children explained their perception of ideal parents. According to them, parents who love their children and do not snub them are ideal. The least wanted parents were those who do not go for a job and did not stop their children from bad deeds. Parents' perception about the least wanted parents mainly included those who beat children or stay angry all day.

The main theme of children identifying parenting practices explores what children perceive about parents' used methods and how they respond. Children explained that most parents use their guidelines from time to time. They explained that parents use a negative practice that is they threat them of beating, throwing children in front of a beggar, or sending them to a boarding school. Children receive these punishments if they disrespect their parents or do not study well. The theme parenting practices showed children's reactions. Sub-themes include affectivity and behavioral response. The findings revealed that children feel happy when parents show a loving attitude. Contrary to that when parents show anger or beat children, they feel bad and sad. Other theme shows children's perception of a good and happy time with their parents. Sub-themes include affectionate period and interactive activities. Other children explained that doing activities with parents is when they feel loved.

Parents think what they do is right but often that is not what children think. As in one theme children explained that when parents don't fulfill their promises and beat children due to other sibling's mistake, they do a wrong deed. As parents think parenting is not easy similarly children also think about parent's difficulties. According to the being apparent is difficult task. Parents must perform many



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duties which makes them miserable.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study revealed that parenting in Pakistan is a mix combination of everything. It's all about keeping a balance. In the present research there were roles identified. Where maternal roles were linked with house chores, looking after children, giving them food and paternal roles were linked with financial support and taking children out. There were some mutual roles as well. Children's perception about parents was similar to parent roles identification. According to parent parenting is about giving the best physical and mental health to the children so that they turn out to be a good human. Parents used many ways for teaching but focused on a balanced parenting. They believe that ideal parenting is one where parents don't hit or beat children. Similar result was found from children's perception about ideal and least wanted parents. Parents prefer control. To maintain their control they do strictness which children do not like. They stated that happy parents are good parents. There were many factors identified which influenced parenting which caused pressure such as job pressure, social pressure, financial pressure, health issues, social support, religion. Children also perceive that parents work all day and fulfill their needs. They also reported that being parent would be a difficult task. Additionally parenting in pandemic was explored where parents said that they built a strong relationship with children but sometime got tired. As children reported pandemic duration they explained it as a boring time period because they could not go out and missed their social activities.

Limitations and suggestions

Following are the limitations and suggestions of the study

The data was collected only from Bahawalpur so that we cannot generalize it to the parenting perception of big cities or other provinces.

Sample size was quite small. Only 15 families were involved, which also limits the number of points of view that could have been identified, as well as the richness of the thematic results.

A non-probability method employed was used in the study which relies on a convenience approach to the sample may create a bias in the selection process as to the representativeness of the sample.

Long term consequences of parenting practices on children's well-being were not identified

The use of self-reported interviews is subject to socially desirable answers especially when there exists familial responsibility or cultural norms.

Recommendations

The study in future can cover the geographical area that will include different cities and provinces in Pakistan to enhance generalizability and cultural representability of the research.

Another solution to the problem is to expand the sample size and diversify it to provide more detailed information on parenting practices and perceptions in various demographics. The combination of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys or behavioral observations would complement the quality of data and enable an improved perception of parenting.

Separate focus groups with parents and children might allow them to speak more freely and allow finding out where parents and children share common opinions or whether their



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methods are similar or different in a group-like environment.

There should be longitudinal studies to find out how parenting practice affects the psychological, emotional and behavioral lives of the children.

Future studies should also focus more on the attempts to investigate the role of fathers especially as the findings indicate a change in the conventional role of the father in raising the children.

Implications of the study

The present research can enhance parental knowledge about their children, how they perceive parenting practices. It also identified the paternal role confusion which can be helpful for fathers in engaging a healthy parent-child relationship. This can also be used for developing parental programs for children's better development and healthy well-being especially in early childhood. This would be very helpful for parents to understand what their children perceive of their behaviors and might create a strong relationship by better understanding.

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