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PARENTAL INTERVENTION IN NURTURING RESILIENT SOCIETY IN PAKISTAN[1]

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ABSTRACT

The relationships between children and their parents that are warm and supporting are the most crucial elements in developing resilience and dealing with potential challenges. Child development research has developed and greatly advanced offering ideas and concepts ranging from evidence of when, where and how parents can shield their children from environmental stressors impacting their lives and growth.

Childhood is idealized as a carefree time where children only cherish relationships with their parents. However, youth alone cannot offer guard against all emotional odds and traumas that many children have to face. Children are encountered by multi facet problems from settling in new classroom environments to maltreatment by classmates, domestic abuse or even severe consequences of behavioral rigidity. Thus along with the physical transformations children often are confronted with uncertain behavioral responses from their peers, friends and family that requires them to develop skills of resilience. Like many other responsibilities, developing resilience significantly lies with of parents as custodians of their mental and physical well-being.

The research is being conducted in the scenario of Pakistan where culture places immense value in family cohesion and parental supervision. This research is an endeavor to lay out the role of young parents as an integral part in developing resilience during early years of childhood which will provide strong foundations for human

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prosperity and ability, indispensable for the development of healthy, adaptable and tolerant young minds. Moreover, early interventions will facilitate children to come out from challenging experiences with a positive perspective towards culture, social and religious differences, learn from failures, and become adaptive to changes.
Keywords: Resilient Society, Parental Intervention, Role of Yung Parents.

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PROPOSED RESEARCH QUESTION

This research is an attempt to explore:

1. If soft parental interventions in early childhood years, facilitate in building resilient and sustainable Pakistan?
2. If parents of young children can be trained to facilitate in building resilience among youth in Pakistan?

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The dream of the contemporary world is the prevalence of society having a strong sense of citizenship engaged in performing a plethora of civic responsibilities; however, to achieve and maintain sustainability is a crucial task in struggling economies like Pakistan. Pakistan took independence from British rule emphasizing the ideology which promotes peace, equality, rule of law and tolerance for everyone.

The baseline for this study is to connect the upbringing and basic nurturing of children, by following the principles of civility, resilience, peace, and tolerance that remain the core of any progressive society. This research work will find standardized measures to address the challenges of inculcating a sense of civic engagements and enabling resilience in early childhood learning through the utilization of parents as a significant resource. The research intends to explore parents' actual and potential contributions towards nurturing participative adolescent minds that facilitate them in evolving as cultured human beings.

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Few works are concerned with resilience concerning children and young people, but the specific role of parents needs to imply in active citizenship participation to nurture social innovation, social equity, and well-being. It is important to understand that most soft interventions to develop resilience through active citizenship programs start at ages later than 15, that is when the child becomes a young adult; however early learning years, from age 1-10 years, remain the most crucial for effective learning and behavioral adoption. Modern countries known for their peaceful, responsible and tolerant environments, for example, Iceland, New Zealand, Canada, Austria, and Denmark, etc have acknowledged this factual reality and have reformed their education and learning systems to incorporate human well-being as a significant part, not just for students but also for parents. This study also aims to establish the significance of the role of young parents in nurturing community resilience during early childhood years within the context of Pakistan, where 68% of the total population is falls into the youth category.

The early childhood years in accordance to research are important for children to experience quality care; opportunities to learn cognitive, social, and self-regulation skills; have sufficient nutrition; and sturdy family support from society. Young children who are rich in strong relationships with ample resources of internal adaptation become enriched with human and social capital necessary for the success as they connect to school and society. These children are manifestation of pliability when faced by adversities as long as their fundamental protective skills and relationships progress overtime. When the protective systems for human development face disruption young children are likely to face threats and may learn to respond in violent behaviors as they grow older. To disassociate this linkage, it is crucial that social institutions such as schools or households are empowered and enabled to engage in learning and implementing techniques with the child and develop moderate and responsible behaviors. (Najam-us-Sahar & Muzaffar, 2017)

Although most parents are very keen to unfold capabilities and personalities of their children, many of them remain unaware of the significance of such soft interventions, while others lack knowledge of finding ways to deliberate and discuss such issues of societal and community concern at younger level. Most of the times they expect

schools to play a significant role in developing active citizenship practices among children, such as engaging them in cleanliness drives, social bonding days, plantation drives or diversity days. Despite schools' active response in nurturing children, parents most often fail to perceive the significance of their own role in nurturing community resilience. To comprehend the part parents may play in endorsing resilience towards violent extremism in children, it is important to trust their innate capacity and processes. This research intends to establish the need for parental groups to engage in soft interventions during early child-development years. It is suggested that activities encouraging active citizenship would immensely facilitate in building resilient Pakistan. (Najam-us-Sahar & Muzaffar, 2017)

Pakistan has faced many social, economic, and political challenges both on local and international fronts. To curtail these issues, it is crucial to develop a resilient and peaceful society where tolerance prevails. There is dearth of research work in Pakistan where young parenting may be considered as effective mechanisms in nurturing children that exhibit civic efficacy, tolerance, and adaptability in situations of social conflicts. These characteristics are integral in creating social innovation, social equity, and social well-being.

Learning process in children begins within households conducive for open discussions where parents not only influence with their cognitive and social skills but also provide a neutral platform for exchange of knowledge and values. In households with a conducive environment through parental engagement, children are exposed to information and enabled to learn through listening, speaking, reading, and writing while engaged in creative activities. This participation is a key for reinforcement of academic acceleration per the expectations laid down by teachers in schools (Goodall & Montgomer, 2013). The upbringing of children has a close link to the growth and prosperity of the child.

There are few entry requirements and no mandatory parenthood preparation, but this remains one of the most challenging tasks in deciding future generations' welfare. Parenting has a clear and pronounced impact on the growth, and results of children in both short-term and long-term (Rutter, 2007). Not only are parents well positioned to

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provide love, affection, security, and support, but engaged adults can serve as a buffer and cope with the effects of growing up in a violent or high-risk community for children (Blum, Astone, Decker, & Mouli, 2014).

The value of parenting has long been recognized, and as early as the 1970s, as an evidence base emerged, the prevalence of parenting manuals and strategies was formalized into a science in the global north (Bray, R.; Dawes, A.;, 2016) (Gardner, Montgomery, & Knerr, 2015). These manuals provide different parental behavioral processes deemed essential for particular outcomes in infants, pre-adolescents, and adolescents. However, most parenting strategies in high- and low-income environments remain focused on infancy and early childhood (Rahman, Malik, Sikander, & Roberts, 2008)and while there is evidence that early childhood strategies may have positive long-term consequences, few evidence-informed approaches are available for adolescents (Cluver, Orkin, & Boyes, 2014).

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHILD-PARENT BONDING

As children develop from infants to teens to adults, they undergo a series of developmental stages imperative to physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and all other aspects of personhood. The parents 'encouragement, motivation, support, and access to activities enhancing developmental tasks becomes significantly important at this point in times. (Child Development Institute, 2019)

Parents are their child's first teacher and remain the best mentor through the course of life for their children. Carrying out roles as a coach, parents expose a child to age-appropriate challenges encouraging development and allowing the child to experience life learning lessons through wider interaction with environment.

"Child Development specialists have learned that from birth children are goal-directed to experiment and learn from each experience. Child Development experts have taken the concept of scaffolding from the building trades. Just as scaffolding is to support the structure of the building as it is being built and gradually taken down as the building can stand on its own, a parent will need to provide the support for a child to allow them to safely and productively explore and learn from their environment. As the child

matures and develops mastery, the scaffolding is removed or changed to allow the child to become more independent. If the child is not ready, the support is reinstated and then gradually withdrawn once again." (Child Development Institute, 2019)

Parent-child relationship is counted as an essential tool in developmental psychology to understand how individuals develop. Child development theory of Sigmund Freud believed that adult development was a function of relationships that children share with their parents. Children also learn how to behave and relate to others through our relationships with our parents. Lev Vygotsky's theory of child development viewed parents as masters and the child as an apprentice in learning. Albert Bandura's social learning theory associated parents to models who exhibit behavior that children then copy. For example, if parents hug children and care with physical affection, Bandura's theory would assume that children would become huggers too. (Schissel, 2013)

In the context of contemporary parenting that is characterized by a number of social changes further set challenges before parents in fulfilling their parental responsibilities (Pecnik, 2008). The change in the child's position in the society is the most challenging one as supported by the affirmation of the rights of the child in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The behaviors and attitudes of parents towards children are now have become a matter of public policies, not just in context of child protection from parental violence and neglect, but also in promoting parental behaviors and attitudes fostering the child's well-being and best possible development. Recommendation 19 of (Council of Europe, 2006) *on policy to support positive parenting* defines "positive parenting" as parental behavior based on the best interests of the child, that is nurturing, empowering, non-violent and provides recognition and guidance which involves the setting of boundaries to enable the full development of the child.

Children who have weaker relations and attachments with their parents are more vulnerable to risks and mental illness (England & Sim, 2009). They may end in stress, poverty, social disadvantages, civic disengagement, and religious extremism. This gives rise to the dire need of pliability development over the years and especially during the early childhood years.

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Over the past several decades, researchers have identified parenting-related knowledge, approach, and practices that have connections with improved outcomes in children (Schlagel & Walsh, 2015). Moreover, there is a need of parenting-related programs, policies, and workshops initiatives to create awareness amongst young parents regarding the active role in upbringing civic beliefs and engagements in young minds. This has been a general practice that parents substantially rely on schooling for developing civic awareness; yet, expected outcomes remain unachieved without the active participation of young parents. The early years of childhood are the ones where children can develop all the skills and necessities required to face challenges of life.

This research was also conceived on the premise that parents are major influencers in a child's life specifically in the culture of Pakistan, wherein parents are considered highly respectful and inspirational persons. Children in early years are unconditionally dependent on their parents for communication, collaboration, learning and engagement; consequently, they are also familiar with their child's behavioral responses towards various social stimuli therefore children are provided with personalized and customized forms of learning in accordance with their temperament and capabilities, while parents also ensure their availability in times of situations where the child is confronted with ambiguity in comprehension of any given situation. Thus, it can be suggested that engagement of young parents in training for active civic participation would create an immense impact in developing resilience towards religious extremism, among children.

RESILIENCE

Resilience, derived from Latin word resilire, is a general concept that can be defined as the capacity to withstand or come out of significant challenges threatening development, viability, and stability of humanity (Ann, Abigail, & Julia, 2013). While definitions vary, resilience is the capacity of the individual to demonstrate the personal strengths needed to cope with some kind of challenge, hardship or adversity (Roffey, 2012). Resilience refers to successful transformation, or the ability, after suffering adversity, to retain or recover mental health. Definitions have progressed with the advancement of scientific knowledge. Resilience is now studied as a multi-disciplinary research, including psychology, psychiatry, sociology, and more recently, biological

disciplines, including genetics, epigenetic, endocrinology, and neuroscience. There is still no prevailing opinion on an operational definition. The key issue is how some children, men, and women overcome hardships without producing adverse consequences for physical and mental health (Schulte-Körne, 2016). As compared with a dynamic method, the first differences in meanings focus on conceptualizing resilience as a personal trait. A myopic view defines resilience to be a personal characteristic that exists after a brief significant incident of disturbance. Former work on resilience focused on the limited qualities or attributes that helped people overcome hardships, such as mental functioning. Groundbreaking studies focused on adversities to childhood (Davidson, Devaney, & Spratt, 2010). Over the time, categories marking hardship extended to include traumatic life experiences statistically connected with transition problems or underlying mental illness over the lifespan. Such incidents included parenting failures, deprivation, unemployment, traumatic events, natural disasters, crime, war, and physical disease.

For about thousands of years' people are fascinated with the encouraging stories of civic responsibilities, judging individuals who triumph over adversity, the scientific study of resilience only began in the 1960s and 1970s. Nonetheless, endeavors have been made in the past five decades of research articulating that early childhood is an important window of time for the conceptualization of promoting resilience towards extremism. These years mark the establishment and emergence of the most important protective systems for human development, promising interventions to prevent and reduce risk, improve resources, promote competency thus laying strong foundations for future development.

RESEARCHMETHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive study involving collecting data from a sample of young parents to obtain baseline information. Data is collected from parents of children age 3-10 years enrolled in pre-primary and primary classes of different educational institutes in Karachi. 200 parents of young children were recruited via purposive sampling from Neighborhood schools, City level schools, Convent / Missionary schools, Cambridge system, and Religious Madrassas in Karachi.

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Karachi is the largest city of Pakistan and capital of Sindh province as well as country's economic hub, with representation of diverse religious, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Since our study samples involve all major types of educational institutions catering to young children and participants' socio-demographic diversity, we expect that our samples are adequately representative of Pakistan, facilitating generalizability of findings to entire country.

For a comprehensive investigation of this topic structured questionnaire involving single best response, was developed based on literature review, in consultation with subject experts with vast experience in this field.

This questionnaire attempts to identify and record active parental interventions by devising instructions and engagement in child's learning in household matters. It consists of 11 items, with responses on Likert scale indicating frequency of behavior. It will facilitate in gaining insightful information on (i) how active are parents in nurturing their child to develop resilient behaviors in challenging social situations, (ii) whether parents make an intentional effort to facilitate in learning the norms of social innovation, social equity and social well-being.

RESULTS

Data was collected from couples who qualified for the definition of young parents for this research. Parents belonged to mixed academic background, from Metric to Post-Graduates.

Results in table 1 showed that parents and children spend limited time in shared activities. Only 1 in 10 parents were spending 5 or more hours per day with their children. Activities that may positively influence children's development such as reading, playing and having meals together, mostly are of short duration. Almost half of the 200 parents (48%), have up to 2-3 hours screen time in company of their kids. Slightly more than half (52%) parents spent 2-3 hours reading or studying together with children. Almost one third (34%) parents spent an hour or less in entertainment/play activities. Playing activities with parents comprise of 34% and that also only about an hour or less. One in five parents spent only an hour or less family time with their children, which includes meal time.

Table 2:				
Item	**Responses**			
	Frequently	**Occasionally**	**Rarely**	**Never**
Ensuring that children diligently follow household rules	26	**44**	15	14
Visiting family and friends along with child(ren)	**40**	28	19	13
Being vocal about opinions on matters of general interest in presence of child(ren)	28	**37**	19	16
Child(ren) being comfortable in communicating with people from diverse social and ethnic background	20	18	**44**	18
Discussing with child(ren) to respect opposite gender outside of family & friends	16	**38**	27	19
Using foul language in presence of child(ren) against a member of family or domestic staff	12	**50**	18	20
Encouraging child(ren) to find new ways to address small problems	23	**40**	20	17
Sitting with child(ren) to discuss new topics of general concern and information from around the world	21	**35**	29	15
Sitting with child(ren) to discuss topics of religious concern and information	17	30	**43**	10
Sitting with child(ren) to discuss their safety and security	23	28	**37**	12
Note: All figures are Rounded off to nearest zero				

Table 1: Number of hours that you spend with your child(ren) daily						
	1 Hour or less	***1-2 Hours***	***2-3 Hours***	***3-4 Hours***	***4-5 Hours***	***5 Hours or more***
TV / Media	***12%***	***10%***	***48%***	***10%***	***13%***	***7%***
Study/ Reading	***18%***	***30%***	***20%***	***12%***	***12%***	***8%***
Play/ Entertainment	***34%***	***20%***	***11%***	***16%***	***9%***	***10%***
Family time/ Meals	***20%***	***39%***	***15%***	***11%***	***8%***	***7%***

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Table 2 summarizes the responses being observed and highlights some key points:

- ✓ Parents are inquired about family rules and the results revealed that slightly less than half parents had devised at least some rules for their family, while about a quarter (26%) were quite strict with family rules.
- ✓ 15% parents reported significant flexibility by devising situation-dependent rules, which 14% reported having no rules at all.
- ✓ Parents were inquired of the frequency they visit their families and friends along with children, results showed that 40% of parents frequently visited their friends on regular basis.
- ✓ Only 1 out of 5 parents believed that their children were frequently comfortable in communicating with people from diverse social and ethnic background, while 18% reported their children were always uncomfortable.
- ✓ 38% of the parents talk about gender respect with their kids and teach them to practice respect for opposite gender.
- ✓ Half of the parents admitted to occasionally using foul language in presence of children against family member or domestic staff, while one fifth parents never did so.
- ✓ Less than a quarter of parents (23%) frequently allowed their children to take up innovative methods to address day to day problems (a very important trait for learning resilience), while more than one third (37%) rarely or never allowed.
- ✓ Slight majority of parents (53%) rarely or never discussed events and topics related to religion with their children.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Childhood is considered as a time of blithe, but growing with time brings bizarre of emotional hurts, daunting challenges, and shocks that cannot be dealt only with increasing age. Children are confronted with situations where they have to acclimatize to new classrooms, online schoolings as of new normal, harassments by peers, or even thrash about home environments. These uncertainties of the complex world can make anything but a carefree childhood. Children who thrive with abilities of adaptability

and resilience can come out of such complexities. Children equipped with skills of resilience grow to nurture resilient communities that prosper social innovation, social well-being and social equity. The key takeaway of this study supported through primary and secondary data are:

- **Parental Engagement as an integral part in early childhood development for a resilient society:**

Through analysis it is evident that the most important aspects of cognitive development of a child begins in early learning years where parents can actively participate in education process through active and passive learning styles. They can be a source of learning and support so that children can have positive experience and foster to full potential. Parental engagement throughout childhood foster following individual level attributes and skills associated with resilience:

  - ✓ ***Higher levels of social competence:*** students can interact well with others in schools, with domestic staff, people around social places
  - ✓ ***Problem solving skills*****:** children able to think through managing challenges can deal better with challenges, change, and adversity
  - ✓ ***Self-efficacy:*** children having sense of independence, responsibility and confidence in their own competence in dealing challenges can retort better in the face of life
  - ✓ ***Sense of purpose, hope, and meaning:*** children with a sense of sanguinity and belief in purpose and meaning of what they tend to learn better and thrive
- **Informed parenting as methodology for progressive development of resilience against religious extremism among youth in Pakistan:**

The analysis highlights key promising practices for parents in terms of fostering children development, resilience against religious extremism, and social well-being. Different elements of parental engagement supporting children's progressive development:

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- ✓ ***Authoritative parenting style:*** Parents must exercise level-appropriate parent control, induce discussions, show warmth and involvement in children's learning.
- ✓ ***Learning environment at home:*** parents are integral parts of child development and learning environments. They learn actively and passively from different modes of expressions of their parents. Parents should have inclusive learning environment at homes in day to day activities which can foster social equity, well-being and innovation in children.
- ✓ ***Beginning engagement with learning early:*** Children who are given early learning environments, opportunities to interact with other children of their age groups, are engaged in social well-being activities are more resilient and can achieve long term positive outcomes.
- ✓ ***Staying engaged with children throughout:*** parental engagement is important throughout learning years of children and more importantly in times of transition
- ✓ ***Holding and passing on high aspirations:*** if parents consider education and values of significant importance, their children are more likely to do so. Parental aspirations, attitudes, and behaviors are closely connected to children cognitive, civic, and resilience abilities.
- ✓ ***Taking active interest in children's learning:*** it is of significance importance that parents practice inclusive engagement in children learning. They must find quality time with children to prosper progressive development.

- **Formal training to young parents on promoting social innovation, social equity and social well-being would enhance their role in building resilience towards violent behaviors:**

As supported by literature review effectual parenting and healthy parent–child relationships have a significant effect on resilience. Parent-child factors have been shown to be the most significant predictive Dispositions of 'home life' principles that tend to increase resilience give significant importance to parents who are interested in

and supportive of early child development and have high aspirations and expectations of their children, particularly where this increases self-esteem and resilience. Research shows that early interventions of parents in support of learning environments tends to increase not just educational attainment but build resilient children with socially inclusive behaviors.

Pakistan as a society faces a range of impious challenges in complex and obstinate layers. The relational **and learning environments that young children experience on daily basis have significant results on child** development. Profound impacts of parent knowledge, attitudes and behavior can be seen on children to exhibit social innovation, social equity and social well-being. Parental intervention during early child development influences multi-faceted dimensions of social well-being, health, literal and numeral literacy, and social and economic participation of children through the course of life. Children with missing parental interventions have less possibility of attaining full development and therefore have diminutive role to play in development of resilient communities.

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