



ASSESSMENT OF MORAL VALUES AMONG CHILDREN OF JOINT AND NUCLEAR FAMILIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

It is a general consensus that moral values are on constant decline in the present day society which are indicative of a civilized and uncivilized person. With the serious increase in juvenile delinquency, increase in studying the causes, cures and prevention of juvenile delinquency has become a psychological and a sociological concern. The level and types of youth crime can be used by commentators as an indicator of the general state of morality and law and order in a country, and consequently youth crime can be the source of 'moral panics'. It has been found that family system influences the personality development of the child and this in turn influence the altruistic behavior which is also an aspect of moral development in children. Therefore to assess the impact of family nurturance on development of moral values present study provides a quantitative comparison between the moral values of children belonging to joint and nuclear families. Two hundred children (100 from Joint families and 100 from nuclear families) of late childhood years (10-12 years) from rural areas of Ludhiana District were assessed for the moral values using Moral value scale. Difference was assessed using student's *t* test. Results indicate significant differences between the moral values of children of joint and nuclear families. Children of joint family had significantly higher moral values as compared to children of nuclear families.

Key words: Moral Values, Joint Families, Nuclear Families.

Introduction

"Adolescents' begin committing antisocial behavior before entering grade school and are versatile in that, they engage in an array of destructive behaviors, offend at exceedingly high rates, and are less likely to quit committing crime as they age (Delisi 2006). The causes of such behaviour is the lack of conscience and moral values among children. The inability to differentiate between right and wrong. Roots of these traits develop right from the early childhood years, remain dormant but unleash when they enter adolescence period and in extreme cases can also lead to juvenile delinquency. Therefore, children must be exposed to an environment that helps develop high morality in children so that children themselves become capable enough to regulate their behavior. It has been found that family system influences the personality development of the child and this in turn influence the altruistic behavior which is also an aspect of moral development in children. Altruistic behavior is a learnt behavior rather than an innate one and the level of altruism is higher among nuclear families than joint families (Sharma *et al* 2010) which are surprisingly opposite to the general belief that joint families are more altruistic. India's social norms are more restrictive for girls. They are taught to have patience, forbearance, kindness, helpfulness and the like characteristics. Thus, their rearing is different from boys which may be an important cause of higher level of altruism among girls than among boys (Sharma *et al* 2010). Another reason may be that girls mostly identify with mother who are the most sacrificing and altruistic member of most of the families on the contrary no gender differences in the development of moral judgment among Indian children was found by (Saraswati & Sundaresan 1989) because of switching over from joint to nuclear families, the childrearing practices are not gender specific.

Methodology

The present study was undertaken to assess moral values among children of joint and nuclear families from district Ludhiana Punjab. Two hundred children were assessed.

Results and Discussion

1 Distribution of total respondents across various dimensions of moral values in relation to family type

Table 1 and fig 1 explain the distribution of total respondents across various dimensions of moral values in relation to family type. The dimension of 'truthfulness' ($z=2.71$; $p<0.1$), 'resistance to stealing' ($z=2.47$; $p<0.05$) and 'resistance to cheating' ($z=2.43$; $p<0.05$) showed significant differences between joint and nuclear families with higher proportion of children in joint families than nuclear families. Only one dimension i.e. 'honesty' did not show any statistical difference. Overall it can be concluded that more than half of the sample in joint families (64.00%) showed desirable moral values as compared to that of children in nuclear families (43.00%) which is less than half.



Table 1: Distribution of total respondents across various dimensions of moral values in relation to family type

Dimension of Temperament	Total Respondents(N=200)				
	Joint families(n=100)		Nuclear families(n=100)		Z-value
	f	%	f	%	
Truthfulness	66	66.00	47	47.00	2.71**
Honesty	55	55.00	55	55.00	0 ^{NS}
Resistance Stealing	70	70.00	53	53.00	2.47*
Resistance to Cheating	65	65.00	48	48.00	2.43*
Total	64	64.00	43	43.00	2.98**

*P < .05%, **P< 0.01%

These findings are congruent with the findings of Joshi and Pooranchand (1994) who reported that adolescents from joint families have higher scores on moral values than the adolescents from nuclear families.

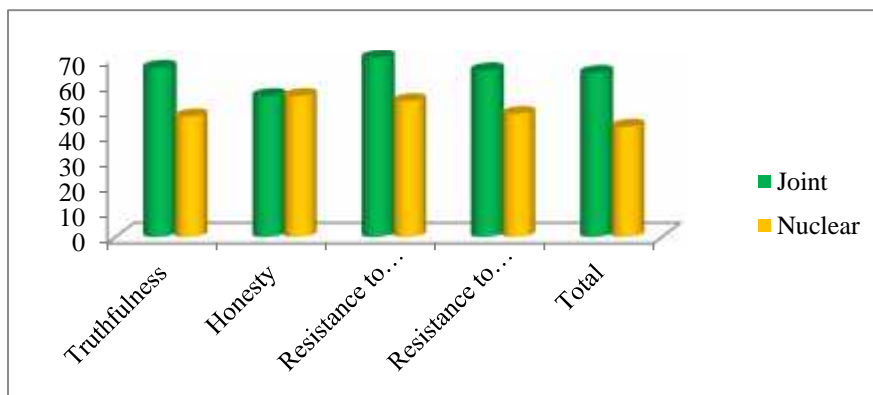


Fig 1: Distribution of total respondents across various dimensions of moral values in relation to family type

The above findings throw light upon the imperative role played by joint families in infusing high moral values in their children. Regular guidance and supervision of family members develops high values and conscience whereas lack of supervision in nuclear families makes children deviate from the path of good values.

2 . Distribution of total respondents across various levels of moral values in relation to family type

Table 2 and Fig 2 depict the distribution of total respondents in relation to family type across various levels of moral values. In joint families high percentage of respondents fall in the category of ‘very high’ (39%) ‘high’ (28%) as compared to nuclear families whereas 30 per cent respondents were in ‘very high’ and 24 per cent in ‘high’ levels. However comparatively high number of children from nuclear families displayed ‘low’ (14%) and ‘very low’ (11%) levels as compared to children from joint families.

Therefore it can be concluded from the results that though there was a statistically non-significant association of levels of moral values and family type, but it was noticed that majority of children from joint families displayed ‘very high’ and ‘high’ levels of moral values and more number of children from nuclear families displayed ‘low’ and ‘very low’ moral values which brings out the fact that children from joint families are high in morality as compared to nuclear families .The possible reason for low morality in children of nuclear family could be due to the fact that children in nuclear families does not have proper guidance of elders ,mostly both the parents are working, so these children stay lonely .Theses are the situations which force them to indulge in activities that leads to the development of low moral values in late childhood years. The results were contradictory to the findings of Sharma *et al* (2010) who revealed that children from nuclear family showed significantly more altruistic behavior than the children from joint family.



Table 2: Distribution of total respondents across various levels of moral values in relation to family type

Levels of Moral Values	Total Respondents(N=200)				t ²
	Joint Families(n=100)		Nuclear Families(n=100)		
	f	%	f	%	
Very High	39	39.00	30	30.00	4.92 ^{NS}
High	28	28.00	24	24.00	
Medium	19	19.00	21	21.00	
Low	9	9.00	14	14.00	
Very Low	5	5.00	11	11.00	

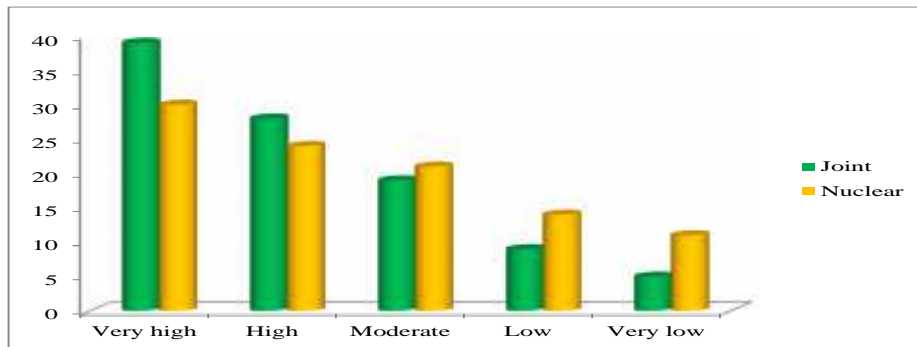


Fig 2: Distribution of total respondents across various levels of moral values in relation to family type

Conclusion

Children of joint families scored higher in all the dimensions of moral values i.e. ‘truthfulness’, ‘resistance to stealing’ and ‘resistance to cheating’, except ‘honesty’, thus overall moral values were higher among children of joint families ($z=2.98$; $p<0.01$). The highest difference was seen in the dimension of ‘truthfulness’ ($z=2.71$; $p<0.01$) indicating that children of joint families are highly truthful than those of nuclear families.

Levels of moral values were found to be non-significantly associated with family type. More number of children from joint families (39%) exhibited ‘very high’ moral values whereas very low levels of moral values were evident in nuclear families (11%) as compared to joint families, this indicates that children of joint families possess higher moral values as compared to nuclear families. Therefore family structure plays an imperative role in directing child’s behavior in right direction through proper guidance and supervision by elders. Children having low parental supervision are much more likely to offend (Graham & Bowling 1995) as seen in nuclear families in contrast to children from joint families. Therefore, children must be exposed to an environment that helps develop high morality in children so that children themselves become capable enough to regulate their behavior.

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