

A Comparative Study of College Girls from Four Streams of Education Regarding Their Beliefs about Upbringing of Children

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ABSTRACT The study compared college girls from four streams of education (Home Science; Arts with Home Science as a subject; Arts with subjects other than Home Science and Science – Medical group) regarding their beliefs about upbringing of children and found out which of the four streams of education contributes most to the modernization of college girl's beliefs about this aspect. The sample for Home Science stream was drawn entirely from College of Home Science, Punjab Agricultural University (P.A.U.), Ludhiana and the samples for rest of the streams were taken from Government College for Women, Ludhiana. A total sample of 360 college going girls i.e. 90 students from each of the four streams of education was drawn. In each stream, out of 90, 45 students were taken from year I and rest 45 from year III of education. A standardized questionnaire on ideas about children was used to gather student's belief regarding upbringing of children. Z-test of different proportions and modernity scores were used to analyse the data. The results indicated that girls from Home Science stream attained the highest average modernity score followed by that from the Science stream on the beliefs regarding child's upbringing. It was concluded that Home Science stream contributed most to the modernization of college student's beliefs regarding child's upbringing and it is the "content" of education imparted in the Home Science stream which resulted into qualitative difference in this respect.

INTRODUCTION

Parents have some beliefs/ideas about the kind of characteristics they would like to see in their children and the child rearing methods that should be used to attain those characteristics. According to LeMasters (1976), many parents acquire these beliefs from cultural myths and folktales. Parents develop their own "implicit parenting theory" which is rooted in individual and family experiences; reference group socialization and culture. Cultural variations can be seen in the beliefs about personality development of children and appropriate ways for their upbringing. Coll (1990) reported that African-American mothers valued attributes such as independence and autonomy, whereas Hispanic mothers placed more emphasis on interdependence and cooperation.

Parental belief regarding upbringing of children also differ over a period of time as a result of global environmental changes (Bhogle 1978). A change in economic pattern from an agrarian type to an industrial type brings about changes in attitude towards child rearing and upbringing because the relationship between them and their caregivers also undergoes a shift (Henderson and Bergan 1976). The parental belief sys-

tem is also affected by variation in socio - economic background. Kohn (1997) stated that the lower the parent's social class position, the more likely he or she is to value conformity to external authority and higher the parent's social class, the more likely he or she is to value characteristics indicative of self direction.

Similarly, it was seen that an individual's parenting beliefs are also shaped by the type of parenting he or she received as a child. If parents tend to be very obedient to their elders then children also learn to respect their elders (Simons et al. 1992). Beliefs about upbringing of children were also found to vary with the place of residence. Coleman et al. (1989) found that rural parent's emphasized intellectual and emotional development significantly more than did urban parents and emphasized social development significantly less than did urban parents.

Mother's temperament was also found to influence their approaches towards upbringing of children. Hastings and Rubin (1999) observed that authoritarian mothers of aggressive toddlers were most likely to report high control, anger, blaming their children for aggression and focussing on obtaining complaints rather than teaching skills to their children whereas protective mothers used warmth and involvement

to comfort withdrawn children, especially their daughters. Besides this, it was found that the type of birth adolescent mothers give to their child also determines their attitude towards child rearing. Field (1980) noted that adolescent mothers of preterm infants had more punitive child rearing attitudes, a higher rate of disturbed mother - infant interactions and poorer estimates of developmental milestones than adolescent mothers of term infants.

The literature review has shown that several studies have been conducted on parents' beliefs about upbringing of children, but we lack such studies on today's youths, the future parents, who are continuously being exposed to various socio-ecological variables such as industrialization, urbanization, westernization, mass media and higher education. Higher education, no doubt, is one of the important factors affecting the parenting beliefs of today's youth. But the question is whether just higher education would modify or modernize college girls' beliefs on upbringing of children or it is the 'content' of that education which will result in qualitative differences in this respect. Through extensive review of literature it was found that few studies have been conducted taking religion, culture, etc. as determining factors of beliefs about upbringing of children, but there is no research which has analysed the difference in these beliefs with respect to "content of education". The present study is, thus, an exploratory attempt to find out which of the four streams of education contributes most to the modernization of college student's beliefs about upbringing of children.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The total sample for the present study consisted of 360 randomly selected college girls from Ludhiana city of India. Out of 360, 90 students were randomly taken from each of the four streams of education under study namely Home Science; Arts with Home Science as a subject; Arts with subjects other than Home Science; and the Science - Medical group. In each stream out of 90, 45 students were randomly drawn from year I and rest 45 from year III of education. These four sub-samples of year I were compared with the corresponding sub-samples of

year III for their beliefs about upbringing of children. The sample for the Home Science stream was drawn entirely from college of Home Science, P.A.U., Ludhiana and the samples for the rest of the streams were taken from Government College for Women, Ludhiana.

Tools

The main research instrument employed for the present study was a questionnaire developed by Palacios (1985) for his research. It consists of in total 17 questions related to individuals' ideas about upbringing approaches for children; role of father in child's upbringing; gender related expectations and aspirations for children; and expected characteristics/qualities in children. All the questions are totally objective in nature. The questionnaire is standardised and culture free, but still pretesting was done and it was found that no modification in the original questionnaire was required before final use.

Procedure

The respondents were randomly approached in the college itself and purpose of the study was made clear to the respondents. They were requested to give honest responses and were assured that their identity would be kept confidential and information provided by them would be used exclusively for the purpose of research work. The distributed questionnaire approach was used to collect information from the students. Each sample student was given the questionnaire individually in the class itself and was asked to fill out the questionnaire there and then only.

Data Analysis

The data obtained was analysed in the manner as was done by Palacios did in his study. The respondents of the study were identified under three main headings, namely Modern, Traditional and Uncommitted. (Refer to Table 1 for understanding the characteristic of these three categories). Z-test of different proportions was used to test the difference in proportions of Modern respondents belonging to year I and year III of four streams of education with respect to various beliefs regarding upbringing of children. The four streams of education were then given

modernity scores on the basis of Z-value that is the differences they showed in the number of Modern respondents belonging to their corresponding year I and year III of education in each question. Average modernity scores, attained by each stream of education under each category of result, were calculated to get a compiled overview as to which stream of education contributed most to the modernization of college girls' ideas regarding that category of beliefs about children.

Table 1: Characteristics of modern, traditional and uncommitted beliefs about upbringing of children

Category of beliefs	Characteristics
<i>Modern</i>	Appreciate stimulating upbringing approaches (for example, holding the baby in one's arms to stimulate emotional links); active role of the father in the upbringing and education of the child; possess no gender stereotyped expectations and aspirations for children; and desire fundamentally psychological attributes in their children.
<i>Traditional</i>	Defend restrictive/punitive upbringing approaches (for example, hold the baby in one's arms as little as possible so as not to spoil it.); and secondary role of father in the child's up-bringing; possess sexually stereotyped expectations and aspirations for children; and expect specific physical aspects in their children.
<i>Uncommitted</i>	Lack clear information and opinion about child's upbringing with most usual type of response as "I don't know".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A close perusal of Table 2 shows that the college girls from Home Science stream attained the highest average modernity score on the beliefs regarding upbringing approaches for children followed by that from Science stream and then by BA (Home Science) stream. BA stream college girls secured the lowest average modernity score of 1.5 on this aspect. The data, thus suggests that the Home Science stream imparts most modern thoughts related to upbringing approaches for children among its students.

It can be clearly seen from Table 2 that Home Science stream college girls scored highest on beliefs regarding role of father in child's upbringing by securing average modernity score of 4 and college girls from Science stream stood second and BA (Home Science) and BA stream college girls secured third and fourth position

Table 2: Comparison of average modernity score attained by girls from four streams of education on beliefs about upbringing of children.

Dimensions of upbringing	Average modernity scores			
	Streams of education			
	HSC	SC	BA	BA
			(HSC)	
Upbringing approaches	4.00	3.00	1.80	1.20
Father's role in child's upbringing	4.00	3.00	2.00	1.00
Gender related expectations and aspirations for children	4.00	3.00	2.00	1.00
Expected characteristics/qualities in children	4.00	2.33	2.00	1.66

Note: HSc = Home Science, SC=Science, BA=Bachelor of Arts with subjects other than Home Science, BA (HSc) = BA with Home Science as a subject.

respectively, on this aspect. The figure thus, shows that Home Science college girls possess most modern beliefs regarding the role of father in child's upbringing.

Data shown in Table 2 reveals that Home Science stream college girls attained the highest average modernity score followed by Science Stream college girls on the beliefs regarding gender related expectation and aspiration for children. The BA stream college girls were found to attain the lowest average modernity score on the beliefs regarding gender related expectations and aspirations for children. This illustrates that Home Science students have most gender free expectations and aspirations for children.

It is revealed in Table 2 that the college girls from Home Science stream scored highest average modernity score of 4 on beliefs regarding expected characteristics/qualities in children. The rest of streams of education were found to be almost at par with each other on this aspect by getting scores between 1.6 to 2.3. The figure, thus, clearly shows that the Home Science college girls expected the most modern characteristics and qualities in children.

General education aims at the all-round development of individuals to enable them to take their places in society as effective members. In the development of their abilities, emphasis is placed on personal development for living in a social group. The functional philosophy of education calls for "Preparation for living through living" (Hess and Holloway 1984). Home science helps to fulfill these purposes in a unique way. It helps pupils to develop a point of view that

challenges them to explore how to live together happily in their families, other social groups and communities. The very word home means the family and so home science aims at the overall development of every individual in the family: young or old, men or women. Home Science education fosters understanding of child developmental process and uses it to strengthen interpersonal relationships and parent-child relationship.

If the "content" of a particular educational stream is looked at, the Home Science education is concerned with the maintenance and enrichment of human relationships through the development and judicious use of all available human and material resources to achieve a maximal satisfying life for all members of the family. Satheesh et al. (2005) stated that all skills required by individuals to communicate to others and be well placed in the society is possible only through home science. It not just teaches child-care but Human Development and Family Studies-one of the major in Home Science-deals with human and their development i.e. from child rearing, vaccination, feeding to early childhood education to adulthood to old age; from peer and youth problems to old age problems and their solutions; from human psychology to population control; from rights of child, women and human rights (Ahlawat and Shekhar 2009). Thus, it can be very well interpreted from the work quoted above regarding the content of Home Science education that it prepares the girls for better parental roles which is also revealed in the results of the present study that Girls from Home Science stream were found to attain the highest average modernity score on all the aspects under study.

CONCLUSION

The present study revealed how streams of education vary with respect to their contributions in the modernization of college girls' beliefs regarding the upbringing of children. The college girls from Home Science stream were found to attain the highest average modernity score on all the aspects under study, namely beliefs regarding the upbringing approach for the children, role of father in child's upbringing, gender related expectations and aspirations

for the children, and expected characteristic / qualities in children. The Science stream college girls were found to attain the second highest average modernity score and BA (Home Science) and BA stream girls were observed to score third highest and lowest average modernity score on these aspects respectively. It can be concluded that the Home Science stream imparts the most modern thoughts / beliefs related to the upbringing approaches for children or beliefs regarding child rearing among its student. This means that "content" of education imparted in Home Science Stream is the determining factor in this context.

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