

Identifying the Reasons for the Low Level of Parental Involvement in the Personality Development of Primary School Students

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Abstract

Personality development plays a significant role in shaping children's behavior, attitudes, and future social adjustment. Parents, as the primary agents of socialization within the family environment, have a major influence on the personality development of children. However, in the contemporary social context, many parents face challenges in providing adequate guidance and support for their children's overall personality growth. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the low level of parental contribution to the personality development of primary school students and to identify the factors affecting such involvement. The study was conducted using a mixed-method research design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. For data collection, three schools in the Kalkuda Educational Zone of Batticaloa District were selected through the convenience sampling method. The sample consisted of 28 primary school students and their respective 28 parents. Questionnaires, interviews, and observations were used as the main data-gathering tools. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and interpreted descriptively. The findings of the study revealed that parental involvement in children's personality development was comparatively low. Several factors influencing students' personality growth were identified, including parenting style, parents' occupation, limited time spent with children, overprotection, excessive freedom, family conflicts, economic difficulties, and parents' educational background. The study further emphasized that parents should allocate quality time for their children, maintain healthy parent-child relationships, fulfill emotional and social needs, and give equal importance to personality development alongside academic achievement.

Keywords: Primary school students, personality development, parental involvement, parenting style, family environment, mixed-method study.

Introduction

In general, personality is an external characteristic such as one's appearance, figure, speech, nature, and manner of travel. It is widely said that a person is considered to be a good personality when he has a clear appearance that can be seen in others. This is a narrow concept of personality. There are also cases where personality is judged as something that is seen in one person and not seen in another. There is no

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universally accepted definition of personality. This is because various psychologists have defined personality based on their own positions and the experiments they have conducted.

The term personality is a variation of the Latin word “Persona”, which refers to the masks used by actors in ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. These actors wore these masks to express their happiness, sadness, and anger. Thus, the term “Persona” was used to refer to external appearance and obvious and visible characteristics. However, the many characteristics of an individual, the totality or set of various characteristics beyond superficial physical characteristics, are called personality.

Therefore, personality includes a stable behavioral system that a person exhibits, including characteristics such as one’s mental attitude, actions that can and cannot be accomplished, the way of facing problems, beliefs, desires, life expectations, outlook on life, and way of thinking. This personality develops because of a child’s knowledge, ability, attitude, attractiveness, mental health, good interaction with the environment, positive feelings, and good actions. In that way, it can be seen that various factors influence personality.

(1) Genetic Factors

Family history researchers suggest that intelligence and special abilities may be inherited. Studies on identical twins confirm that even though identical twins are raised differently, their intelligence is very similar and their behavioral patterns differ. As a result of genetic defects, physical or psychological disabilities can have negative effects on personality development.

(2) Physiological Factors

A person’s nervous system influences his or her behavior. The activity of the endocrine glands and hormones secreted by the adrenal glands affects the functioning of the nervous system. As a result, changes in arousal levels occur, leading to hyperactivity, depression, anxiety, lethargy, and similar behaviors. These also affect personality. While many physiological variables affect personality, the degree of their influence can vary depending on the nature of the environmental experiences an individual faces. The prenatal environment of a child during pregnancy has an impact on the physical and mental development of the child. Some examples of these are malnutrition in the mother, mood disorders, medications used by the mother, and diseases she suffers from.

(3) Environment and Other Factors

Another factor that influences our personality development is our environment. It can be our family, school, social or economic environment. The experiences that emerge from the interaction with the above environments differ from one another. The environment within the families in which individuals grow up also varies greatly due to various factors. Socio-economic factors, social class, beliefs and values related to child-rearing methods, disciplinary techniques, punishments and the educational level of the parents are some of the family variables that influence the development of children.

This personality development begins in the mother's womb. However, it is at the age when a child becomes aware of himself that his personality is affected. On that basis, the primary school period, when a child goes from his family to school, is seen as a period with very complex behaviors. On that basis, the term primary education refers to the education that children who have completed the age of five receive in school from grades 1-5. The focus of a child's mind on education takes place at this stage. Therefore, primary education is seen as a necessity for a child to develop his abilities and potential.

The most important influence of the family environment that affects the personality development of children comes from the family environment. The maximum contribution in shaping the personality of a child is made by the parents themselves. Especially for a child studying in primary school, their parents are the greatest source of love, affection, guidance, care, supervision, inspiration and enthusiasm. A loving, affectionate and compassionate mother creates a healthy maternal relationship with her child that helps in the development of the child's personality. Since our childhood environment mainly consists of our parents and siblings, a large part of our personality is the result of their influence.

Freud was the first theorist to emphasize the influence of parents in the formation of personality. His views have been echoed by almost every theorist. Allport (1937) considered the child's relationship with the mother as the primary source of affection and security and a key stage for later personality development. Cattell (1946) saw childhood as a crucial formative period with the behavior of parents and siblings shaping the child's personality. Erikson believed that the child's relationship with the mother in the first years of life is important in developing a trusting attitude (Erikson, 1963). Maslow suggested that it is essential for parents to meet their child's physiological and safety needs during the first two years of life (Maslow, 1943). Numerous studies have shown that parental praise can develop a child's sense of

autonomy, realistic standards and expectations, mastery, and self-efficacy, and can enhance their intrinsic motivation to achieve them.

Baumrind (1991) identified four major parenting styles that influence children's personality development. These parenting styles differ according to the level of parental warmth, control, communication, and involvement shown toward children.

Authoritative Parenting

Authoritative parents create a warm, supportive, and democratic family environment. They establish clear rules and expectations while also encouraging open communication and understanding. Parents explain the reasons behind their decisions and listen to their children's opinions. Children raised under authoritative parenting often develop positive personality traits such as self-confidence, independence, emotional stability, responsibility, and good social skills. This parenting style is widely considered the most effective for healthy personality development.

Authoritarian Parenting

Authoritarian parents emphasize strict discipline, obedience, and high control over children's behavior. They expect children to follow rules without questioning and usually provide limited emotional warmth and communication. Because of excessive control and punishment, children raised in authoritarian households may become fearful, less confident, dependent, withdrawn, or sometimes aggressive. This parenting style may negatively affect emotional and social development.

Permissive Parenting

Permissive parents are highly lenient and flexible toward their children. They provide considerable freedom and place few demands or behavioral expectations on children. Although these parents may be loving and caring, they often avoid setting firm rules and discipline. As a result, children may experience difficulties with self-control, responsibility, decision-making, and discipline. They may also struggle to respect rules and authority.

Uninvolved/Neglectful Parenting

Uninvolved or neglectful parents provide minimal emotional support, supervision, and guidance to their children. They show little interest or involvement in

children's daily activities and development. Due to the lack of parental care and attention, children may develop low self-esteem, emotional insecurity, behavioral problems, poor academic performance, and weak social relationships. This parenting style is considered highly harmful to personality development.

Research on the personality development of children among such parents is the need of the hour. Furthermore, the development of personality-related competencies is an important part of the eight competency levels included in the education policies of Sri Lanka. These include creativity, broad thinking, intelligence, decision-making, problem-solving, critical analytical thinking, teamwork, individual interaction, and discovery. All of these are obtained from the parents, who are the initial foundation of a child. When these are provided correctly, the child gets the motivation to move towards his next stage. If they are not provided correctly, the child dares to exhibit many complex behaviors. In this environment where raising children is seen as an increasing challenge for parents today, this study has been conducted with the aim of identifying the reasons why parents' contribution to the personality development of primary school students is low and presenting recommendations for the same.

Aim and Objectives

Aim

To identify parental factors that affect the personality development of primary school students and to make recommendations for them.

Objectives

1. To identify the parenting (child-rearing) style of primary school students.
2. To identify the role of parents in the personality development of primary school students.
3. Identify the factors that affect the contribution of parents in the personality development of primary school students.
4. Propose recommendations for the development of the personality of primary school students.

Research Gap

Many psychological studies have confirmed that personality development is influenced by various factors. Genetic factors, physiological factors, family

environment, social environment, and educational experiences are widely recognized as the main factors that shape personality development. These studies have clearly established that personality is not determined by a single factor, but by the interaction of multiple influences.

However, although these main influencing factors are well documented, relatively few studies have given detailed attention to the specific role of parenting-related factors within this broader framework. In other words, while parenting styles are often mentioned as one of the important environmental influences, there is limited in-depth research focusing on how different parenting styles and parental involvement directly contribute to the personality development of primary school students. Furthermore, in the Sri Lankan context, studies that specifically explore parental factors influencing personality development at the primary education level are still limited. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by focusing on parenting-related factors and their influence on the personality development of primary school students.

Literature Review

Theories Related to the Development of the Personality of the Child

Theories on child development have been presented by different psychologists based on research. Among them, the views of Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, and Erik Erikson are particularly important in understanding child development (Erikson, 1963; Freud, 1923; Piaget, 1952). In this regard, psychoanalysts like Freud and Erikson and self-thinking theorists like Rogers have presented various views in this regard. From that time until today, various studies and experiments have been conducted on child development and related theories have been presented.

Freud (1923), a Viennese physician and psychologist, developed a comprehensive theory to explain human behavior and child development, known as the psychoanalytic theory. In his study of children, he found that childhood experiences influence their later development. He also conducted scientific studies on the mind, motivation, and personality. Piaget, while explaining child development, emphasized the process of learning or change and revealed the importance of biological factors in child development. In this way, he explained intellectual development and moral development and published the theory of intellectual development. According to this, intellectual behavior is the result of factors such as the child's maturity, experience, the upbringing that affects the nature of the child's experience, and the education received during growth.

Contributions of Parents in the Personality Development of Primary School Students

Researcher Paula Olszewski-Kubilius (2018) found that the family has a powerful influence on the developing child. It affects attitudes, beliefs, opportunities, habits, and personality traits. The family plays a major role in determining who a child becomes and what he or she accomplishes. Furthermore, parents play a critical role in helping gifted children develop their abilities and reach high levels of potential.

Parental Factors that Affect the Personality Development of Primary School Students

According to the research of Adler (1921–1926/2005), parents influence the personality development of their children by how they raise and train them, and he argued that although the role of the mother is important in early childhood, both parents equally influence the personality development of their children. He also emphasized the dangers of pampering children, which he saw as a major factor in their problematic behavior. However, he opposed the tyranny of punishment and neglect by parents. He also noted that the right amount of tenderness is needed for the personality development of children.

Tucker et al. (1997), in their study, found that divorce has become common in modern societies and that this phenomenon affects the personality development of children. Amato and Keith (1991) and subsequently Amato (2001) examined children of married parents and those of divorced parents, and found that parental separation affected the children's self-development, self-concept, academic achievement, behavioral problems, adjustment, and long-term health.

Recommendations for the Development of the Personality of Primary School Students

According to researchers such as Mohan and Gore (1987), the value of the time parents spend with their children is felt more by the children of working mothers than by the mothers who are at home with their children all the time. According to them, since a child spends more time with his parents, his needs, thoughts, expectations, and problems are identified and addressed. This makes them feel calm and develops into better personalities. At the same time, children who cannot spend much time with their parents are exposed to various psychological pressures and feel isolated, helpless, and insecure. This leads to uncontrolled lying, stealing, anger, and hatred in their lives, which escalate over time and lead to antisocial behaviors such as drug use, alcoholism, sexual abuse, murder, and robbery.

Methodology

The reliability of research findings largely depends on the appropriateness of the research methodology. This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

The qualitative method was used to explore theoretical understanding and in-depth insights related to the study. Data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and observations from selected schools, including primary school students and their parents. This approach helps to capture participants' opinions, thoughts, and experiences regarding personality development. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes.

The quantitative method was used to collect numerical data such as frequencies, percentages, and statistical information related to the study variables. This includes student responses and other measurable data. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using Microsoft Excel software and presented through tables and graphs for clear interpretation.

Sample Selection

Three schools in the Kalkuda Educational Zone of Batticaloa District, the study area, were selected through convenience sampling method and out of 852 primary school students, 28 primary school students were selected in a ratio of 30:1 and were given questionnaires. Similarly, data were obtained from 28 parents in a ratio of 1:1 from 28 students through interviews and questionnaires (Table 1). Here, only Grade five students were selected as primary school students and data were collected through adequate instructions and observation. Secondary data were obtained from surveys, website articles, magazines, school documents, reports, etc.

Table 1

Details of the Samples Taken

Name of School	Types of school	Number of Students	Number of Parents
A	1AB	10	10
B	1C	10	10
C	Type (II)	8	8
	Sub-Total	28	28
		Total	56

Data Gathering Tools

In this study, both primary and secondary data collection tools were used to gather relevant information. Primary data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and observation. Structured questionnaires were administered to Grade 5 primary school students to obtain information related to personality development and parental influence. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents of selected students to gain deeper insights into parenting styles and parental involvement. Classroom and behavioral observations were also carried out to understand students' social and emotional behavior in a natural school environment. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, research articles, websites, school records, reports, and magazines.

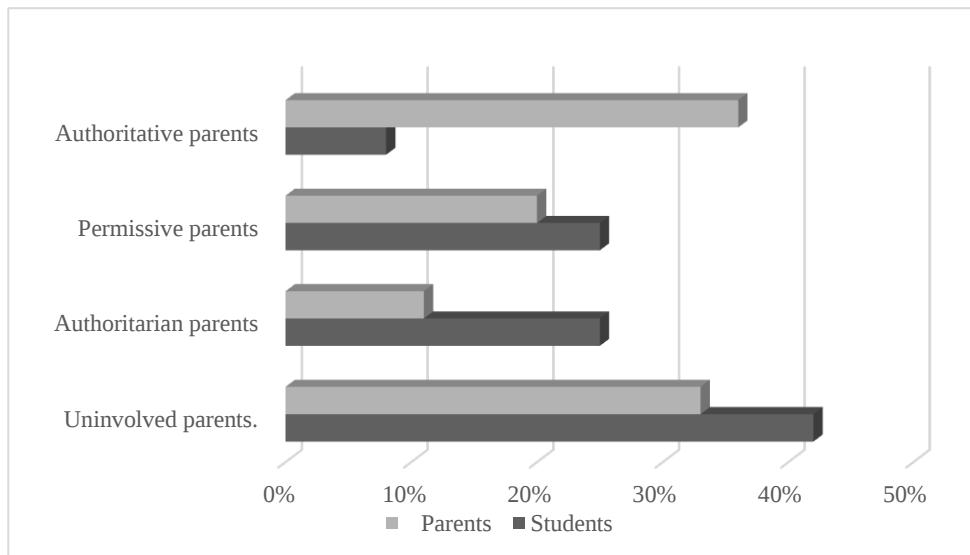
Research Ethics

Ethical considerations were strictly followed throughout the study to ensure the safety and rights of all participants. Prior permission was obtained from school authorities and informed consent was taken from parents and participants before data collection. The identities of students and parents were kept confidential, and all information was used only for academic purposes. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time without any pressure. Care was taken to ensure that no physical, psychological, or emotional harm was caused to any participant during the research process. All collected data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes.

Results and Discussion

Identifying the Parenting (Child-rearing) Style of Primary School Students

Parents shape their children's cognitive abilities and personalities through the tasks they set for them, the ways they respond to specific behaviors of their children, the values they explicitly and implicitly promote, and the behavioral patterns they adopt. According to Baumrind (1991), four major parenting styles influence a child's personality development: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. The following chart illustrates the responses given by parents and students to a questionnaire that was asked to provide information on the way parents interact with their children and their upbringing (Figure 1).

Figure 1*Parenting Style*

Here 36 percent of parents responded that they raise their children in an authoritative style in a supportive environment, 20 percent of parents raised their children in a permissive style, a very small number of parents, specifically 11 percent of parents, raised their children in an Authoritarian style according to traditional standards, and 33 percent of parents raised their children in a non-involved parenting style, without showing any sign of involvement in the child's personality development. How do parents behave towards you? When asked, 42 percent of the students said that their parents did not show any signs of personality development and raised them in a non-involved parenting style, 25 percent of the parents raised their children in an Authoritarian style according to traditional standards, while 25 percent of the parents raised their children in a permissive style, and 36 percent of the parents raised them in an authoritative style in a supportive environment for their children. Here, it is evident that most of the children show a very unwelcome personality in their parents' upbringing.

Finding out the Role of Parents in the Personality Development of Primary School Students

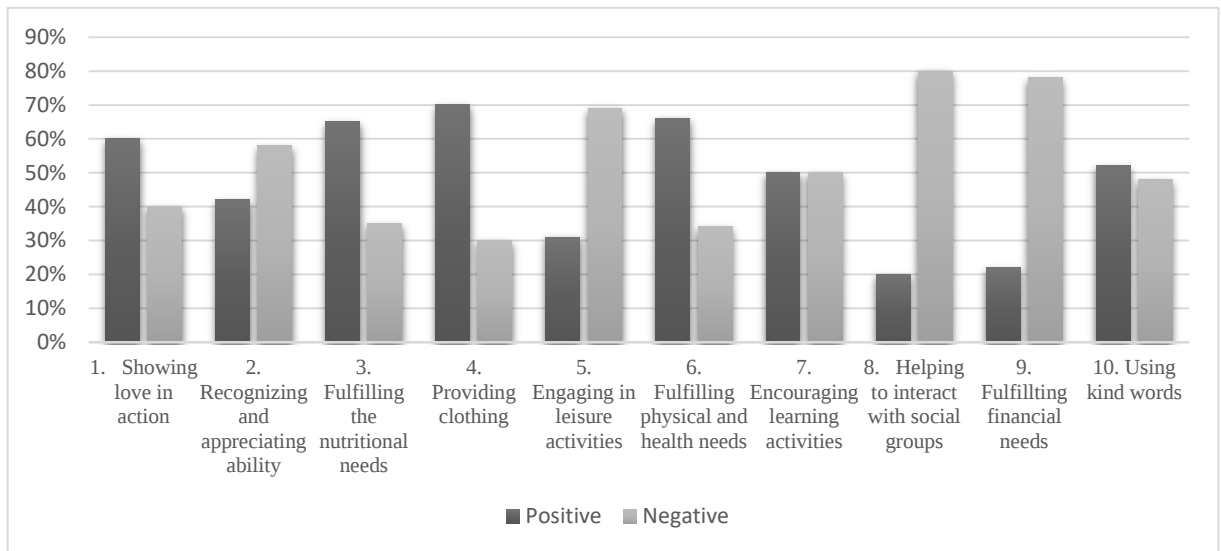
Mohan and Gore (1987) identified ten essential ways parents foster healthy personality development in their children, ranging from physical provisions to psychological support. On a physical and practical level, this includes fulfilling

financial responsibilities, providing clothing, and meeting nutritional and health needs. Psychologically, parents shape development by demonstrating love through their actions, speaking with kind words, and validating the child's abilities through active appreciation. Furthermore, the authors note that parents play a pivotal role in a child's broader growth by stimulating learning activities, sharing recreational leisure, and guiding their integration into social groups.

10 questions were asked based on the above-mentioned concepts and data were collected on the basis of strongly agree, agree, cannot say, reject, and strongly reject. The data can be divided into positive results and negative results as follows (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Role of Parents in the Personality Development of Primary School Students



Since most of the samples responded negatively, it shows that the role of parents in the personality development of children is low.

Identification of Factors that Affect the Role of Parents in the Personality Development of Primary School Students

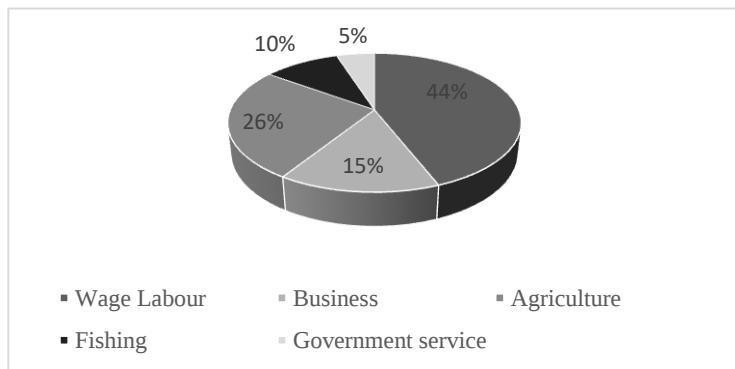
Findings Regarding the time Parents Spend with Their Children

When parents were asked the question, "Do you spend enough time with your children?" 44 percent of them answered yes out of 100 percent of them and 66 percent

of them answered no. When the same question was asked to students, 36 percent answered yes and 64 percent of them answered no. When parents were asked about the reason for this, their answers were as follows. In it, they presented work as the main reason why they could not spend enough time with their children. The following graph shows the jobs they carry out.

Figure 3

Reasons for Parents Not Being Able to Spend Enough Time with Their Children



Here, 44 percent of parents are found to be wage earners. While 15 percent are in business, 26 percent are farmers, 10 percent are engaged in fishing and five percent are engaged in government jobs (Figure 3).

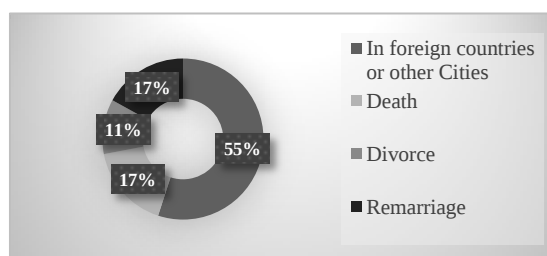
Findings on Parental Separation from Children

Studies have found that parental divorce can have a significant impact on children's personality, behavior, emotional well-being, and sense of security. Children from divorced families may experience more behavioral and emotional difficulties than children from intact families (Amato & Keith, 1991; Amato, 2001).

Accordingly, when parents were asked about parental separation from their children, parents gave a variety of answers. The following chart illustrates this.

Figure 4

Reasons for Parental Separation from Their Children



According to the study conducted, 10 out of 28 parents are with their children, while 18 are separated from their children. On that basis, 55 percent of parents here have separated from their children because they are abroad or out of town for work. Meanwhile, 17 percent of children responded that they were separated due to the death of a parent, 11 percent that they were separated due to the divorce of their parents, and 17 percent that they were separated due to remarriage (Figure 4).

Findings on Family Structure and Size

When it comes to family structure, questions were asked based on two concepts: extended family and nuclear family, and the data were collected as follows (Table 2).

Table 2

Nature of Family

Family type	Students	Parents
Nuclear family	75%	71%
Joint family	25%	28%

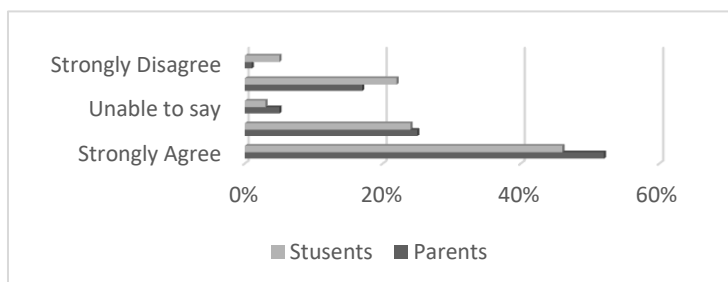
Similarly, data was collected through questionnaires and interviews regarding the number of family members. The number of family members was found to be three or more.

Nature of Family Conflicts

A child may be under stress due to disunity between parents. The results of the data collected for the question “Do conflicts occur in your home?” are shown below, focusing on the fact that verbal abuse, physical violence, alcoholism, etc., can have a major impact on the development of the child.

Figure 5

Nature of Family Conflicts



Based on the results obtained, it is seen that conflicts occur more often in most families. This can directly impact the personality development of students.

Recommendations for Developing the Personality of Primary School Students

Based on the results obtained through the interviews and open-ended questions of the questionnaire, the data were subjected to thematic analysis, and this has been discussed in the section titled Results and Discussion.

Conclusions and Implication

Identification of the Parenting Style of Primary School Students

36% parents reported that they raised their children in an authoritarian style in a supportive environment. 20% parents reported that they raised their children in a permissive style. A very small number of parents, 11% parents, reported raising their children in a traditional authoritarian style. 33% parents responded that they weren't interested in the development of their child's personality and were raising them in an uninvolved parenting style.

Research shows that among different parenting styles, the authoritative style is the most effective for children's development. Although parenting styles may vary depending on situations and are not always fixed, studies over many years highlight the benefits of authoritative parenting. This style combines responsibility, clear rules, and open communication. Parents explain reasons behind decisions and guide children through discussion rather than strict control. As a result, children develop better understanding, values, morals, and goals. Psychologists and psychiatrists widely consider this approach the most beneficial, as it supports healthy personality development and helps children grow into responsible and well-adjusted individuals.

Identifying the Role of Parents in the Personality Development of Primary School Students

Based on the results of the questionnaire focusing on showing love in action, recognizing and appreciating abilities, meeting nutritional needs, providing clothing, engaging in leisure activities, meeting physical and health needs, encouraging learning activities, helping to interact with social groups, meeting financial needs, and using kind words, indicating that the role of parents in the personality development of their children is low. The main reason for this is the lack of clarity about the role of parents in the personality development of their children.

Through such parental activities, parents can create a personality in the child. Therefore, parents who want to develop good parenting skills should first identify where they are. Then they should try to behave closely and in harmony with the intelligent parenting model. In this way, a good relationship with their children and their well-being will be practically guaranteed.

Identifying Factors that Affect the Participation of Parents in the Personality Development of Primary School Students

The study highlights the significant impact of parental involvement, economic conditions, and family structure on the behavior and personality of primary school children. Many parents are wage earners who work long hours, which limits the time they can spend with their children. Although they meet basic needs, limited income prevents them from fulfilling children's larger desires, leading to frustration and anxiety.

These emotional difficulties are reflected in children's behavior, including crying, fighting, lying, and conflicts at school. Lack of parental attention and emotional support is a key cause. In cases where fathers are absent, mothers may struggle to manage children alone, and children may engage in unproductive activities instead of studying. Children of working parents are often cared for by grandparents, which reduces emotional bonding. Additionally, migration for work, death, and divorce further separate children from parents, causing anxiety, depression, and social challenges.

The study also emphasizes the importance of parenting style, suggesting that a balanced approach with love and guidance is essential. Family structure, size, and conflicts also influence development. Overall, the study concludes that parental care, emotional support, and a positive home environment are crucial for healthy personality development in children.

Recommendations for Developing the Personality of Primary School Students

Parents show too much love to their children. Therefore, showing too much love to them develops an attitude of forgiving their mistakes, which leads to more mistakes. Therefore, one should avoid showing too much love and maintain balance. Also, children should not be given too much scolding and punishment. This causes children to be under more stress and display emotions such as anxiety, depression, and rudeness, which will affect their personality. Therefore, parents should show strict love.

Similarly, giving children too much freedom and ignoring them will encourage them to act without control and will also affect their personality. Parents should set aside specific time for their children and spend time with them lovingly, despite their workload. This will give them the opportunity to express their problems, needs and desires, which will calm their minds. Even if parents do not have enough income to fulfill their children's wishes, they should make them understand about it and give them hope that they will buy it later. When children are given hope, they should try to fulfill it.

Therefore, parents should pay special attention to their role and should be vigilant about their children. Even if their children cannot fulfill their wishes, they should tell them about it and correct their attitude. This will further enhance their personality.

Based on the fact that the mother has a greater role in the upbringing of the child, if the father of the parents goes for work, the mother should take care of the child carefully and do her work especially well. Similarly, children should be taught good morals and good qualities. Thus, good morals will form the foundation of their personality. Hence, by encouraging children to do their work and giving them praise, they will gain the courage to take the right decisions and face challenges. This will increase their personality.

Conclusion

According to the results of my study, it was found that the role of parents has a great influence on the personality development of primary school students. Based on this, the most important factors affecting the personality of children were found to be parents not spending enough time with their children, showing too much love, and saying unnecessary words to children.

Therefore, it is necessary for parents to increase their interactions with their children in their upbringing. They should pay more attention to solving their problems, fulfilling their needs and providing proper guidance. Otherwise, children will suffer from various psychological effects and will show lack of interest in learning, exhibit complex behavioral changes in the classroom, become anxious, isolated, tired, and fight.

This will affect their personality over time and will have an impact on their future life. Therefore, the participation of parents in developing the personality of primary school students is essential in developing a good personality, creating excellent learning, and providing good citizens needed by society in the future.

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