

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Comparative Study of Maternal and Paternal Roles in Character Building of Elementary School Children

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Abstract: This descriptive survey examined the impact of parents on character development of elementary school children in Tehsil Sehensa, District Kotli, AJ&K, comparing maternal and paternal roles. Using simple random sampling, 300 parents (150 fathers, 150 mothers) were selected. A 30-item five-point Likert scale questionnaire was validated by five experts and pilot tested on 30 parents (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$). Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean scores, and independent t-test. Fathers demonstrated significantly higher overall mean scores ($M=4.48$) compared to mothers ($M=3.82$). Fathers strongly agreed on teaching children to face hardships ($M=4.47$), practice self-discipline ($M=4.52$), be responsible ($M=4.49$), monitor media ($M=4.50$), show zero tolerance for verbal abuse ($M=4.51$), be kind ($M=4.57$), be patient ($M=4.56$), be honest ($M=4.56$), instill Islamic values ($M=4.57$), show empathy ($M=4.44$), use appropriate language ($M=4.65$), focus on good morals ($M=4.59$), and spread kindness ($M=4.70$). Mothers showed strong agreement in teaching honesty ($M=4.31$), Islamic values ($M=4.56$), kindness ($M=4.01$), and appropriate language ($M=4.40$). The t-test revealed a significant difference ($t=15.796$, $p=0.000$), indicating fathers play a more prominent role in character building at elementary level. While mothers contribute significantly, particularly in honesty, Islamic values, and language, their overall involvement is lower. Findings highlight the need for enhanced maternal engagement and shared parental responsibility.

Keywords: Character Building, Parental Role, Secondary School Children, Fathers, Mothers, Character Traits, Islamic Values

Introduction

Education is a very important factor for both the development of a country and the shaping of an individual's personality. It is the main support of a society and a nation, and therefore, education system should be continually developed to fulfill the different needs of a child if we want the child to develop completely. Education is a very important part of a person's life, in fact, it is one of the key factors by which an individual can have a good quality of life. It is the foundation of a society and it can produce economic prosperity, social cohesion and political stability (Lickona, 2004). Students, teachers, institutions, and parents all play important roles in the development of students' character (Epstein et al., 2009).

Character building encompasses experiences that teach students essential life lessons—lessons about keeping promises, paying attention, and exercising caution. Many character-building situations are painful and emotionally draining, yet with proper support, students survive them and become better people as a result. Character development does not happen in a day, week, or month; it is a continuous process that should continue throughout a child's life (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Children occasionally return home from

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school with issues involving teachers or peers, and through character-building dialogues, they can discover positive ways of dealing with difficulties (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008).

Character development comprises the most important behaviors and practices for living and working successfully in a diverse culture, while simultaneously encouraging student character development. Character development and character education both aim to make students better members of society by instilling ideals and providing mentoring (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). Despite this, character development is viewed as a traditional purpose of formal education. Character development is impossible to achieve without increasing students' ability to think critically and thoughtfully (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). When it comes to character education as a teaching and learning tool, if it doesn't include character education, it focuses solely on academic performance (Lickona, 2004).

Problem Statement

With positive character, a student can succeed in any field of life. Similarly, a child with poor character cannot be an ideal student for teachers and parents. Effective communication between child and parents strengthens relationships and develops positive bonds (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). However, some parents are simply unaware of the harmful repercussions of their lack of involvement in children's character development. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the role of parents in character building of children at the elementary school level in Tehsil Sehensa, District Kotli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Objectives of the Study

The study pursued the following objectives:

1. To explore the role of mothers and fathers in character building of children at the elementary level in Tehsil Sehensa, District Kotli AJ&K.
2. To compare the role of mothers and fathers in character building of children at the elementary level in Tehsil Sehensa, District Kotli AJ&K.

Significance of the Study

This research may assist parents in instilling moral principles and positive character in their children. Parents can help their children develop character through deliberate, proactive, and comprehensive steps. The study may instill in children the ideals of caring for others, honesty, responsibility, and other vital characteristics that define good citizens. This study will be implemented in schools so that students are aware of the proper course to take.

Review of the Related Literature

Understanding Character and Character Building

Character is the core component of humanity. Just as an organization is known by its work culture, a government by its organization, and a performer by their artistry, an individual is known by their character. Character provides a kind of recognition or reputation to an individual, creating all distinctions. The term character is as old as human civilization, owing its origin to ancient customary systems of society, dance, drama, and play where specific individuals were identified by the characters they portrayed (Lickona, 2004).

Benigni (2006) defines character as an individual's set of psychological attributes that affect that person's capacity and tendency to function morally. This means that character can direct an individual to do good or evil, thus demonstrating moral functioning. A variety of appeals and extrinsic motivations aim to make children work harder and do what they are told. Character education includes three aspects: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008). Character education in formal and non-formal settings can be taught through the moral experience of teachers, although this experience provides students with temperance.

There are generally nine pillars of character: trust in God and love for all creation, autonomy and responsibility, honesty, respect and courteousness, altruism, helpfulness, confidence and perseverance, leadership, humility, tolerance, peace, and unity (Sodli et al., 2016). These nine pillars of character can be taught through a comprehensive educational model combining three approaches: knowing the good, feeling the good, and acting the good (Sodli et al., 2016). Knowing the good relates to cognitive knowledge; feeling the good connects to emotional appreciation of virtues, driving individuals to improve; and acting the good develops into beneficial habits through growing self-awareness (Sodli et al., 2016).

Character Traits and Good Character

Character traits are all aspects of a person's behavior and attitudes that constitute that person's personality. Everyone has character traits, both good and bad, often displayed through descriptive adjectives such as patient, untrustworthy, or jealous. Character traits may also relate to appearance—tall, short, wearing heavy coats—but primarily concern how a person acts. A person might be mean or friendly, and these descriptions help others understand the person better and comprehend why they act as they do (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Character traits are typically defined as descriptions of individuals in terms of relatively stable patterns of behavior, thoughts, and emotions. The Five-Factor Model (FFM) is the most researched taxonomy of traits worldwide, within which a large number of characteristics are consolidated into five broad trait dimensions (Yin et al., 2021). Different researchers view traits and values as different aspects of character, drawing on integrative models of character that propose three levels of character parts, varying in their degree of contextualization (Park et al., 2017).

There are three interconnected areas that address good character: self, others, and community (Park et al., 2017). With their own genuine self, students can demonstrate self-discipline, responsibility, loyalty, courage, and self-control. Character traits such as honesty, respect, empathy, kindness, and caring influence students who have connections with classmates, teachers, friends, and family. Key good character attributes that can be implemented in education include integrity, honesty, responsibility, humility, empathy, fairness, forgiveness, authenticity, courage, generosity, patience, consideration, kindness, lovingness, optimism, loyalty, trustworthiness, and self-discipline (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999).

Importance of Character Building in Education

Families today often provide less supervision and moral guidance than previous generations, leaving children less proficient as young citizens as they frequently lack the skills needed to contribute to society. Due to technology and educational advancement, families are leaving their children's development up to schools (Epstein et al., 2009). If the moral development of young children is expected, communities must become more involved to help offer students the opportunity to be positive leaders and contribute through community service. Research confirms that effective character development requires strong collaboration between schools, families, and communities, as students' behavior is strongly influenced by the synergy between teachers, parents, and the social environment (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Many students without any supervision may have nothing to do during weekends and could end up making poor choices, getting into trouble, or using alcohol or drugs.

Good character education programs emphasize consequences for decisions and support the need for children to learn resources that promote good character. With character education programs, it is useful to have support from all responsible adults in a child's life (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Teachers can help young people become aware, responsible, respectful, and capable citizens by incorporating diverse character training programs within their schools and community. Teachers can observe how their students relate to each other and notice the way students communicate, interact, play, and collaborate throughout the classroom. The integration of educational philosophy with humanistic psychology supports character development through meaningful learning experiences, democratic teacher–student relationships, and the cultivation of values such as responsibility, autonomy, empathy, and respect (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008). School

counselors may also contribute to character education by including it in weekly guidance lessons in the classroom, playing a strategic role in developing student resilience and character through a growth mindset, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping strategies.

To implement character education, school staff must become a comprehensive, caring, and contributing community in which all share responsibility for character training (Lickona, 2004). Schools that actively engage families in character education create a more cohesive student support system. When parents reinforce these principles at home, children are more likely to embrace these values daily (Epstein, 2001). Effective character education programs are encouraged to adopt a three-prong approach incorporating student thinking, feeling, and behavior. Schools may wish to provide opportunities for moral decisions and recognize appropriate responses. Schools should involve parents and community members as full partners in character-building efforts, as cross-sector collaboration has been proven to reduce juvenile delinquency, increase discipline, and shape students' character with integrity (Henderson et al., 2007). Programs designed to cultivate character strengths help students not only in ethical reflection but also in developing a sense of responsibility that broadens beyond friends and family to encompass society at large (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

There are four justifications for why character building should be incorporated in education (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). First, education is a powerful process to develop character. It is widely agreed that character building should begin in the family, then continue in school and community. Education in the family is the primary schooling to develop a child with good character building. Education in school further reinforces the good character building that children acquire from family. In the community, children have opportunities to practice good character in daily life interactions. Second, education is a long-term process, extending from childhood throughout life. Character building should be acquired from childhood. Contemporary scholarship supports this view, confirming that character development is a lifelong process (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Third, teaching character building cultivates convictions that help avoid bad character. Education develops not only intellectual quotient but also emotional quotient, social quotient, adversity quotient, ecological quotient, and spiritual quotient. Through character-based education, students develop freedom to realize their potential optimally. Fourth, through education, character building can be taught to teachers, students, and all school stakeholders (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008).

Role of Parents in Character Building

Parents play a significant role in the character development of every child (Seginer, 2006). During development, children constantly interact with parents, imitating them in all situations. They like to do what their parents do and act like their parents. For every child, primary education comes from home and family. If children receive negative experiences from family, it will affect their character. Thus, individuals raised in good families demonstrate good character and vice versa (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Parents need to be mindful of their activities and examine their qualities because if their qualities are good, they can effectively teach their children. Parents should remember that children constantly observe them and attempt to follow them. Parents should behave well, especially before children, avoiding arguments and resolving disagreements peacefully and harmoniously (Josefsson et al., 2013).

Parents who create positive home learning environments understand the importance of discussing academics and homework (Zhu et al., 2022). They also comprehend that family values pass from one generation to the next. Children are losing trust, abandoning life, and feeling insecure about themselves at alarmingly young ages. Parents are part of the solution; they can help reverse this trend by building character qualities in children (Epstein et al., 2009). The ways families discuss and support character development from preschool through adolescence are vital to positive youth development (Park et al., 2017). Parents have unique opportunities to help children identify and build on their character qualities by changing how they provide praise. The more specific the praise, the more meaningful it is for a child (Halstead, 2007).

Parents have a duty to educate, nurture, and lead their children through specific stages that prepare them for society (Zhu et al., 2022). Family connections with children provide nurturing foundations offering companionship, affection, and support (Josefsson et al., 2013). Within families, children have their first direct early experiences that shape their future life through physical, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual preparation (Lickona, 2004).

Mothers' and Fathers' Distinct Roles

In most families, mothers play the primary role with their children. From birth, mothers remain close to children, providing food and drink, taking care, and constantly being with them. That is why most children consistently prefer their mothers over other relatives (Seginer, 2006). A mother's instruction to her child is fundamental education that cannot be overlooked. A mother should be wise and skilled at teaching her child. Some say that a mother is a nation's teacher, highlighting the weighty responsibility of being a good educator and family leader (Halstead, 2007). Whether positive or negative, a mother's instruction impacts her children's development and future attitudes. A mother constantly strives to fulfill her children's needs. As long as expressions contain love and warmth within a mother's heart, children will readily comply. Based on capabilities and family responsibilities, a mother's role in children's instruction includes being a source of love, caregiver and manager, confidante, life manager within family, personal life guide, and emotional teacher (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Many people assume fathers simply work to support the family while mothers manage children and household tasks. However, parents should cooperate in teaching children—not only mothers (Lamb, 2010). Fathers are leaders, teachers, and family managers. A father's attitude affects children's character. Fathers serve as identification figures for children, benchmarks for their conduct. Without diminishing mothers' work and responsibility, based on capacity and duty as a father, fathers' roles in children's training are more predominant as: control source within the family, family connector to society and the outside world, security provider to all family members, protector from external threats, judge enforcing rules when conflicts arise, and teacher from a rational perspective (Cabrera et al., 2000).

Methodology

This study was designed to explore the role of parents in character building of students at elementary school level. The study was descriptive in nature and employed a cross-sectional survey method to collect data. The population of the study consisted of parents of students studying in elementary schools of Tehsil Sehensa, District Kotli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Using simple random sampling technique, the sample size consisted of 300 parents (150 fathers and 150 mothers) of students from elementary schools in Tehsil Sehensa, District Kotli AJ&K. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used as the research instrument to collect data from mothers and fathers. The questionnaire consisted of 30 statements about the role of mothers and fathers in character building of children. The Likert scale included: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Partially Agree (PA), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SDA). The research instrument was validated by five educational experts from the Department of Education, University of Kotli AJ&K. The educational experts suggested minor changes in the instrument to improve its effectiveness and reliability. After study supervisor approval, the questionnaire was launched for data collection. The researchers conducted pilot testing to check the accuracy and language of the instrument. Using a pilot study, the researcher distributed questionnaires to 30 parents. The researchers incorporated all points raised by pilot testing participants. The reliability of the instrument was checked using Cronbach's alpha statistical technique, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.79, which was acceptable for further research. Data were collected personally by the researchers after testing reliability and validity from the sample of the study. The researchers distributed 300 questionnaires to mothers and fathers. The time taken to complete the questionnaire was two weeks. After two weeks, the researchers received 70% of the data. An additional week was given, after which the remaining 30% of parents responded.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis. The researchers employed frequency, percentage, mean scores, and independent sample t-test for data analysis.

Results

Role of Fathers in Character Building of Children

Table 1

Fathers' Role in Character Building of Children (N=150)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	DA %	SDA %	Mean
Face hardships	59%	30%	10%	1%	-	4.47
Tolerate difficulties	60%	29%	10%	1%	-	4.48
Overcome fear	44%	42%	12%	2%	-	4.29
Practice self-discipline	68%	18%	11%	3%	-	4.52
Be responsible	66%	21%	9%	3%	1%	4.49
Monitor media	67%	18%	14%	1%	-	4.50
Zero tolerance for abuse	68%	21%	8%	3%	-	4.51
Self-control	56%	28%	12%	4%	-	4.35
Be kind	68%	20%	12%	-	-	4.57
Be patient	72%	14%	13%	1%	-	4.56
Be gentle	67%	18%	12%	3%	-	4.51
Be honest	73%	13%	13%	1%	-	4.56
Build trust	47%	36%	13%	3%	1%	4.26
Islamic values	71%	18%	9%	2%	-	4.57
Show empathy	62%	21%	14%	3%	-	4.44
Show appreciation	33%	55%	10%	1%	1%	4.19
Understand consequences	73%	19%	7%	1%	-	4.65
Do volunteer work	45%	44%	11%	-	-	4.35
Use appropriate language	73%	19%	7%	1%	-	4.65
Do good deeds	76%	16%	7%	1%	-	4.65
Focus on good morals	72%	15%	13%	-	-	4.59
Observe character	56%	39%	4%	1%	-	4.48
Value family	48%	45%	7%	-	-	4.41
Be an inspiration	50%	39%	11%	-	-	4.40
Share real stories	40%	48%	10%	2%	-	4.26
Use teachable moments	68%	19%	13%	-	-	4.55
Give wisdom	76%	14%	8%	2%	-	4.64
Spread kindness	76%	18%	6%	-	-	4.70
Provide practice opportunities	77%	14%	9%	-	-	4.69
Talk politely	69%	23%	8%	-	-	4.61
Overall Fathers' Mean						4.48

The data presented in Table 1 strongly indicates that fathers perceive themselves as actively and effectively involved in the character building of their children. Given an average of 4.48 for 30 items is a very high score, it represents a high agreement level with positive paternal engagement. Fathers indicated agreement with the strongest points of prosocial behavior and direct moral instruction. For instances, statements such as "I teach children to spread kindness" (M = 4.70) and "I provide children with opportunities to do good deeds" (M = 4.69) were the two most highly rated mean score items. Therefore, these indicate that these fathers consider teaching children to be kind and do good deeds as a priority. The entire group of items is consistent with very high scores related to teaching about good deeds (M = 4.65), encouraging acts of kindness (M = 4.57), and focusing on instilling good morals (M = 4.59).

Besides, the figures also demonstrate that fathers regard discipline and responsibility as two of the core values to be taught to children. The three items for teaching children to know their consequences ($M = 4.65$), making a habit of self-discipline ($M = 4.52$), and having the strictest attitude against verbal abuse ($M = 4.51$) were all rated as highly agreed on since their mean scores surpass the 4.5-mark. Moreover, besides being limited to just a few data points, disagreement percentages (DA and SDA) across all the items are extremely low and sometimes even 0%, which in itself creates a good case for the unanimity of the fathers' views among the 150 in the study. Although, items like "encouraging appreciation" ($M = 4.19$) and "building trust" ($M = 4.26$), when compared to others, were rated slightly lower, but still are located on the positive side of the scale. To sum up, the fathers in this research report that not only are they the ones who discipline but at the same time are the ones who teach kindness, patience, and moral values. Thus, they play their part in children's character development in a well-rounded way.

Role of Mothers in Character Building of Children

Table 2

Mothers' Role in Character Building of Children (N=150)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	DA %	SDA %	Mean
Face hardships	15%	56%	26%	3%	-	3.84
Tolerate difficulties	10%	26%	44%	17%	3%	3.24
Overcome fear	18%	24%	37%	18%	3%	3.38
Practice self-discipline	41%	21%	30%	9%	-	3.96
Be responsible	19%	40%	27%	10%	4%	3.80
Monitor media	63%	20%	13%	3%	1%	4.41
Zero tolerance for abuse	24%	27%	31%	11%	7%	3.50
Self-control	17%	38%	43%	2%	-	3.89
Be kind	29%	50%	18%	3%	-	4.01
Be patient	16%	48%	33%	3%	-	3.78
Be gentle	26%	36%	34%	3%	1%	3.85
Be honest	57%	21%	18%	4%	-	4.31
Build trust	17%	59%	17%	6%	1%	3.85
Islamic values	72%	12%	14%	2%	-	4.56
Show empathy	45%	26%	21%	7%	1%	4.08
Show appreciation	13%	49%	28%	10%	-	3.64
Understand consequences	13%	33%	38%	11%	5%	3.39
Do volunteer work	44%	25%	25%	6%	-	4.05
Use appropriate language	65%	14%	16%	4%	1%	4.40
Do good deeds	29%	38%	26%	6%	1%	3.88
Focus on good morals	60%	18%	19%	3%	-	4.37
Observe character	11%	44%	31%	14%	-	3.53
Value family	11%	35%	48%	5%	1%	3.50
Be an inspiration	16%	14%	38%	20%	12%	3.03
Share real stories	13%	18%	31%	35%	3%	3.02
Use teachable moments	48%	24%	17%	7%	4%	4.04
Give wisdom	65%	12%	19%	4%	-	4.38
Spread kindness	65%	14%	16%	4%	1%	4.38
Provide practice opportunities	53%	29%	10%	8%	-	4.05
Talk politely	80%	14%	6%	-	-	4.12
Overall Mothers' Mean						3.82

Unlike the fathers' data, Table 2 shows a detailed perspective of mothers' perceptions of their role in character building, with an overall mean score of 3.82. Although this continues to show a generally positive level of involvement, the scores are less high and more diverse than those given by the fathers.

Most of the time, in areas that relate to giving direct moral and behavioral instruction, mothers scored themselves the highest. In particular, teaching polite manners ($M = 4.12$), monitoring media content ($M = 4.41$), helping with children's language usage ($M = 4.40$), and inculcating Islamic values ($M = 4.56$) were all areas where the mothers gave themselves a high rating. Such high scores indicate that mothers consider themselves to be the main agents of immediate social etiquette and values in the family setting.

Nevertheless, the results point out some fascinating aspects where mothers' assumed roles are less visible. Propositions about controlling one's emotions and being a source of personal inspiration were met with lower average scores. For example, "I am a role model for my children" had the lowest average score at 3.03, with 32% of mothers stating they disagreed or strongly disagreed. Teaching tolerance ($M = 3.24$), fear management ($M = 3.38$), and sharing real-life stories ($M = 3.02$) were other examples of the low-scoring items. When the responses were looked at closely, it was noticed that for these items, there is a bigger spread of answers with quite a few moms saying "Partially Agree" or "Disagree" in contrast to the fathers' data. It is possible that mothers do not realize their impact in these aspects, or that they use other means not reflected by the given items, or it may be that these specific character-building duties are viewed as being either a shared responsibility or mainly assigned to fathers. In sum, mothers reinforce their agreement with their roles in imparting particular behaviors and values; they seem less sure, however, of their roles as inspirational personalities or in fostering their children's emotional strength.

Table 3

Comparison of Fathers' and Mothers' Role in Character Building

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Father	150	4.48	5.7	2.32	15.796	.000
Mother	150	3.82	12.3			

In Table 3, the results of independent sample t-test are shown which compare the roles of fathers and mothers in character building of children. The test showed a significant difference between mean scores of fathers ($M=4.48$, $SD=5.7$) and mothers ($M=3.82$, $SD=12.3$) with $df=2.32$, $t=15.796$, and $p=0.000$. The mean score of fathers (4.48) is much higher than that of mothers (3.82), which means that fathers contribute significantly more than mothers in character building of children at secondary school level.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

Results from this research show very clear differences between fathers and mothers in how they work and contribute to character development of children studying at the elementary school level in Tehsil Sehensa, District Kotli. Fathers generally registered higher average scores in almost all aspects of character building, and their overall average score was 4.48 while that of mothers was 3.82. The independent t-test corroborated this difference as being statistically significant ($t=15.796$, $p=0.000$), i.e. that fathers have a considerably more leading role than mothers in character building at the elementary school age. These findings align with previous research by Lamb (2010) who emphasized that fathers play a unique and critical role in child development, particularly in areas of discipline and boundary-setting.

Fathers' Dominant Role in Character Building

Fathers, on the other hand, showed their strongest engagement in teaching children how to cope with adversity ($M=4.47$), self-discipline ($M=4.52$), responsibility ($M=4.49$), and media content monitoring ($M=4.50$).

These results are consistent with the conceptualization of fathers primarily as control agents within families, linking children to the outside world and readying them for the difficulties of society (Cabrera et al., 2000). In addition, fathers' role in illustrating perseverance and responsibility is indicative of their conventional roles as family organizers and safety guardians (Seginer, 2006).

The elevated means of fathers in instructing patience (M=4.56), honesty (M=4.56), Islamic values (M=4.57), and empathy (M=4.44) imply that they do not neglect even moral and spiritual education. This is contrary to the typical view that mainly mothers give moral guidance (Halstead, 2007). It is also worth noting that fathers intensely teaching Islamic values (M=4.57) is very relevant especially in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir cultural setting where religious education is highly appreciated (Halstead, 2007).

Fathers were highly involved in teaching their children how to use proper language (M=4.65), to understand the consequences of their actions (M=4.65), to be kind and helpful (M=4.65), to have good morals (M=4.59), kindness (M=4.70), to give practice opportunities (M=4.69), to talk politely (M=4.61). These results imply that fathers are thoroughly involved in character building, exploring various facets such as communication, moral reasoning, behavioral consequences, and social etiquette (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

That fathers pay keen attention to children's character (M=4.48) and actively assist in making them realize the value of the family (M=4.41) point to their role as monitors and guides. The fact that fathers are role models (M=4.40) and make use of teachable moments (M=4.55) reflects the character education approach that they use on purpose as they understand character development happens through everyday interactions and experiences and not just through formal teaching (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008).

Mothers' Contributions to Character Building

Mothers expressed the strongest agreement in developing Islamic points of view (M=4.56), checking media content (M=4.41), using suitable language (M=4.40), teaching honesty (M=4.31), and giving attention to good morals (M=4.37). These items depict those intimate motherly roles that have traditionally been associated with nurturing religious identity, ensuring safety, and maintaining household standards (Epstein et al., 2009).

Mothers also participated meaningfully in encouraging kindness (M=4.01), fostering empathy (M=4.08), teaching self-discipline (M=3.96), and preparing kids for responsibility (M=3.80). Impressively, mothers still manage to find teachable moments (M=4.04), giving wisdom for good deeds (M=4.38), teaching kindness (M=4.38), providing practice opportunities (M=4.05), and teaching polite conversation (M=4.12) that show their active participation in character development (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

On the other hand, mothers were less active than fathers in some important areas. Teaching kids to tolerate (M=3.24), overcome fear (M=3.38), understand consequences (M=3.39), work as inspiration (M=3.03), and tell real-life stories (M=3.02) were given relatively lower mean scores. Higher mother standard deviations (12.3 compared to fathers' 5.7) shows that mothers varied more than fathers, some mothers being highly engaged and others participating minimally (Seginer, 2006).

Significant Differences and Their Implications

The significant difference between fathers (M=4.48) and mothers (M=3.82) really points to important findings about parental roles in character education of elementary school children (Park et al., 2017). The differential could be due to a number of things:

For one thing, cultural norms in Pakistan probably see fathers as the main discipliners and moral role models, particularly for elementary school kids (Halstead, 2007). It might be that as children grow, fathers start taking on the role of character preparation and setting children up to meet community standards (Lamb, 2010).

Another thing is that fathers' function as the family links to the outside environment gains more prominence during the elementary school period when children are encountering a wider range of social situations (Cabrera et al., 2000). A father's push to endure, his pointing out the consequences of actions, and self-discipline guide his children toward an external world orientation (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

A third thing is that mothers could be concentrating a lot on the here-and-now care, as well as the emotional support, and not so much on giving the child a character lesson (Seginer, 2006). It is possible that their lower scores in teaching consequences and story-telling are an indication of a different style rather than lack of involvement. Besides, the emotional bond that mothers share with their children might come in ways that the items of this study haven't fully captured (Josefsson et al., 2013).

Lastly, it is quite possible that elementary school children turn to fathers on their own for help with some character matters, especially those that entail outside problems, discipline, and planning for the future (Lamb, 2010). This developmental pattern might be the reason behind fathers' higher level of involvement at this particular phase (Park et al., 2017).

Comparison with Previous Research

These results are consistent with the literature concerning the role of parents in character development (Lickona, 2004). The theoretical perspective in the literature called fathers "the main point of control within the family, family connector to society, security provider" (Cabrera et al., 2000). The high mean scores of fathers in various character dimensions lend quantifiable support to the above mentioned conceptualization.

Fathers teaching their children to face hardships (M=4.47), to practice self-discipline (M=4.52), and to assume responsibilities (M=4.49) is in line with the portrayal of fathers as people who get children ready for societal life (Lamb, 2010). Likewise, father's role in teaching patience (M=4.56), honesty (M=4.56), and Islamic values (M=4.57) coincide with their role as moral guides and family leaders (Halstead, 2007).

The study describes mothers as "source of love, caregiver, manager, confidante, life manager, personal life guide, and emotional teacher" (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). The ability of mothers to instill Islamic values (M=4.56), monitor media (M=4.41), and teach proper language (M=4.40) are consistent with the nurturing and protective role (Epstein et al., 2009). On the other hand, their rather low scores in teaching consequences, overcoming fear and inspiring point to a possibility that mothers' emotional guidance may be working through different channels than those measured in this particular study (Josefsson et al., 2013).

The large disparity in means between fathers and mothers is reflected in studies which show that parental roles may become specialized during the elementary school years (Seginer, 2006). As children seek to develop independence and prepare themselves for social roles, fathers' character education involvement may be mostly focused on external achievement and societal integration, while mothers provide emotional support and daily guidance (Park et al., 2017).

Conclusions

This study investigated the role of parents in character building of children at the secondary school level in District Kotli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The findings demonstrate that fathers play a significantly more prominent role than mothers in character development.

It is concluded that fathers effectively instill in their children the capacity to persevere in the face of adversity to achieve goals, to tolerate difficulties, to overcome fear, to practice self-discipline, and to be responsible individuals. Fathers actively monitor children's media content, demonstrate zero tolerance for verbal abuse, train children in self-control, encourage kindness toward others, and cultivate patience. Fathers shape children into gentle individuals, teach honesty, develop trust, instill Islamic values, and foster empathy. They encourage appreciation, help children understand consequences, support volunteer work, teach

appropriate language, and instruct children to perform good deeds. Fathers maintain strong focus on good morals, observe character closely, teach family importance, serve as inspirations, share real-life stories, use teachable moments, impart wisdom for good deeds, teach kindness, provide practice opportunities, and prepare children for polite communication.

It is concluded that mothers also contribute meaningfully to character development, teaching children to face hardships, practice self-discipline, and be responsible, though their involvement is comparatively lower than fathers'. Mothers monitor media content, teach tolerance and self-control, encourage kindness, cultivate patience, shape gentleness, teach honesty, develop trust, instill Islamic values, foster empathy, encourage appreciation, help children understand consequences, support volunteer work, teach appropriate language, instruct in good deeds, maintain focus on morals, observe character, teach family importance, use teachable moments, impart wisdom, teach kindness, provide practice opportunities, and teach polite conversation. However, mothers show lower engagement in teaching tolerance, overcoming fear, understanding consequences, serving as inspiration, and sharing real-life stories.

The significant difference between fathers and mothers reflects cultural expectations positioning fathers as primary moral authorities and preparers for societal life during adolescence. While both parents contribute to character development, fathers assume greater responsibility for explicit character instruction focused on external challenges and future preparation, while mothers provide consistent emotional support and daily guidance.

The results indicate that mothers should be more involved in education of character, and parental responsibilities should be shared more equally. This is especially important during adolescence when character is being developed. It is important for schools, communities, and families to work together not only to support mothers but also fathers in their character- building role as it has been recognized that a well- developed character requires the unique contributions of both mother and father.

Implications for Practice

The findings carry significant implications for families, schools, and communities.

For Fathers: Fathers can become aware of and value the fact that they have a major impact on shaping their children's characters. They show that they are key players by being deeply involved in the process of guiding children through perseverance, willpower, taking responsibility, patience, honesty as well as the values of Islam and kindness. One way for fathers to improve what they do may be to give children regular chances to work on problems and duties, since this type of "learning by doing" could solidify the lessons delivered by word. At the same time, talking openly about media culture and what effect it can have on character may turn out to be very important, especially in view of how kids are surrounded by digital media nowadays. On top of that, dads might keep being examples of patience, honesty and living by the Islamic principles, as it is through witnessing that children pick up most.

Besides that, dads may even create moments for teaching out of joint experiences and talking that would lead to character development in a natural way that is easy for children to connect with. In the end, giving emotional support along with pushing children's limits through fatherly leadership will most likely let children feel that they not only are challenged by the standard but also supported in their work to reach it.

For Mothers: Mothers are critically important in the process of forming characters especially when it comes to spreading Islamic values, keeping an eye on media, and educating children on speaking properly. Yet the research highlights ways for mothers to step up their involvement in certain major aspects. Mothers might work more on preparing children to handle problems and think about consequences, which is a way of really getting them ready for situations outside of home where they will have to act responsibly.

Children's capacity to reason morally and stand firm will be strengthened if mothers can convey their life lessons and stories, making it easier for children to see the moral backstage in the light of real-life examples of overcoming predicament. Besides that, mothers can place themselves as role models to a greater extent by explaining to kids what values they hold, what sorts of difficulties they have gone through, and what kinds of successes they have achieved. Mothers and fathers joining forces through teamwork styles in parenting whereby both contribute to each other's strengths could possibly lead to the highest level of finally character development outcome wherein children receive a fully rounded moral education.

To back up such attempts, mothers may look for professional getting-together or programs geared especially towards parent and character formation in teen years.

For Families: The study points out that parental involvement, especially of both father and mother, becomes crucial while nurturing the character of children. Families may see that raising a child's character is a joint effort by both parents, who should be committed consistently and intentionally, not just one parent. Parents may talk through and coordinate their strategies, so that kids get the same messages about values and expected behavior from different situations. They can also make family habits that lead to regular moments of character education via everyday conversations, meals, and other activities which embed moral values in the family life. Besides, providing children with life skills that include 'external preparation' (per the father's role in the study) and 'emotional guidance' (per the mother's role in the study) can work well to bring out a positive change in character development that will focus on both the external behavior and an individual's inner attitude. Lastly, families should be mindful about children's media exposure and also interacting with them while discussing various media influences on values and behaviors, thereby helping their children develop critical thinking skills as media users.

For Schools: It is well-known that schools, alongside families, play an important role in character education and they can also actively involve both fathers and mothers in their school-based character education initiatives. Schools instead of restricting parent involvement activities mostly to mothers, may work on creating such parent involvement programs that not only understand but also make use of the unique strengths that both parents bring. Giving information and training to parents about adolescent development and ways to do character education at home effectively may also be helpful both mothers and fathers to become really engaged contributors in the home environment. The school may as well arrange for the dads to have a platform where they can share their experiences and approach with other parents, which will lead to peer sharing of knowledge and support. At the same time, it is quite possible for family engagement strategies to be formed in the way they align with cultural norms and at the same time, they may raise parents' ability to get involved in a balanced manner, who are aware of the fact that various communities can have different expectations regarding parental roles.

For Teacher Education Programs: Teacher preparation programs can incorporate topics related to family structures and parents' role in character development so that prospective teachers get a comprehensive insight of how families influence children's moral development. Such programs may equip teachers with the skills to interact not only with mothers but also with fathers, acknowledging the fact that father engagement might call for different methods than mother engagement. Besides, teachers may be skilled in identifying parental involvement disparities where one parent is overburdened with character education and the other parent is disengaged, and finding ways to involve the other parent. Equally, teacher education programs can come up with ways to involve less-involved parents, especially mothers, in father-dominated character education contexts, by empowering all the parents with the knowledge and willingness to support their children's character development.

Limitations and Future Research

This research has a number of limitations. Firstly, the research area was confined to one tehsil in District Kotli, and results may not be applicable to other areas. Secondly, only parents of public school students were considered in the study, thereby omitting private school parents and their perspectives. Thirdly, the data that came from participants' self-report might be influenced by the tendency to present oneself well. Fourthly, the research design was cross-sectional, and it only presented parent roles at one point in time and did not consider the changes over time. Fifthly, the research did not consider children's views on their parents' roles in character building.

Upcoming studies need to consider these issues by: (1) conducting multi-district research in different regions of AJ&K and Pakistan; (2) including parents and students of private schools; (3) using mixed-methods with a combination of interviews and observations; (4) employing longitudinal research designs to follow parental roles through developmental levels; (5) undertaking research on children's views about maternal and paternal influences; (6) conducting experiments on family engagement empowerment programs; (7) doing comparative research to see how culture, socioeconomic status, and education levels affect parents' roles; and (8) investigating family structure changes (such as single-parent families, working mothers) and their effect on character development.

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