



Introduction

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Abstract The papers included in the section on *Perspectives and Voices of Children and Adolescents*, provide diverse perspectives on child-parent relationships. They address issues in the context of parenting by fathers, concerns in parenting children with chronic medical conditions, academic stress and its social construction and parental concerns for cyberbullying, in fact, meaning-making of bullying itself by adolescents. The contributions raise several themes and concerns constituting the field of child and adolescent development and socialisation. There are also suggestions for potential inquiry in the field of socialisation and possibilities in methodological innovations.

Keywords Socialisation · Children's voices · Adolescents' voices · Adolescents' concerns

Introduction

This Special Section of *Psychological Studies* devoted to the theme of Socialisation in Contemporary India: Perspectives and Voices of Children and Adolescents, shares a representation from across the themes that have been researched in the urban milieu of India and in urban Pakistan. The themes also include topics related to children with special needs. It is obvious that the status of research in this area is not satisfactory. The lack of funding and weakening of infrastructural support in the academic setup have been major hurdles in undertaking full-fledged research in this area. However,

some cross disciplinary research straddling education, children in vulnerable situations and children's rights, areas that require immediate interventions, have been researched and documented. While a mention will be made and attempts will be made to look at research in these domains, this is not an exhaustive review of such works. After looking at some research on socialisation and voices of children, which is based largely on the study of middle-class Indian families and children, areas for future research will be outlined.

Themes in this Section

Contemporary Voices of Children and Adolescents

Sriram (this Section) has brought forth what children had to say about their fathers and showcases the varied role that fathers are playing and more importantly what fathers meant to the children. Meaning making about significant others and important social others in a child's life is necessary, it works in grounding emotional life by creating emotional security required which then allow the child to focus on the learning of other skills. This theme is not much explored but needs to document the contributions of the father and other male members in the family. As family socialisation is not simple, and complex interactions that are going on need documenting and theorising. The integrative review of studies by Sriram suggests that different types of families have varied interaction patterns that have divergent implications for parenting and socialisation.

Cyber Bullying

Linked to the serious problem of the digital media being used for exploring sexuality, bringing in intimate interpersonal interactions into the public domain, harming another's reputation, and at times avenging felt insults, etc., we have newer forms of cyberbullying other than stalking on the

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digital platform. Iqbal and Jami (in this Section) share what Pakistani adolescents have voiced about bullying digitally, that “cyber memes” do the rounds and “cyber mobbing” takes place. One can imagine this to be akin to psychological lynching and induce depression among young individuals. Cognitive and affective consequences were noted. The attack on the individual leaves one with no solution and this situation requires a newer ways of thinking about how to handle the issue. More exploration could reveal the pervasive nature of the phenomena and what impact it is creating cognitively and psychosocially.

Academic Distress among Children/Adolescents

India after gaining political independence in 1947 independence has struggled to become literate but at the same time, we have been able to whip up a frenzy about selected areas of education and that would eventually ensure upward mobility. Academic distress is also the result of various types of social construction reflected in the media as well and has been captured by Hakim and Konantambigi in a mixed-methods study (this Section), exploring how social construction of the phenomenon has taken root. Academic achievement and excellence are constructed at all levels of society. The academic drive has resulted in enslaving adolescents to long hours of study (read, labour) (Kommuri & Konantambigi, 2018) and decrease in the time for play (Ramachandra, 2015), instilling the fear of school (Misra & Konantambigi, 2019; Mukhopadhyay & Mukunda, 2019) and ‘the marks’ culture’ in schools (Mukhopadhyay & Mukunda, 2019); in setting up of tutorial classes to prepare students for competitive examinations in the metropolises, Tier I and Tier II cities as well, and with Super-30 at the head of such enterprises (Narayanan, 2014).

Along with socialisation for varied issues, value inculcation is also emerging as a key challenge. Rani (in this Section) has traced one of the cultural routes used in socialising children—storytelling. Storytelling can become therapeutic, vicariously taking us through the experiences of the characters in the story, or it can evoke thoughts and emotions about the problem in the story and instil a readiness to execute a skill or strategy.

Children in Difficult Circumstances, Care and Parenting

We continue to grapple with special education and care of children with disability as no new support systems come up or are not available on a continuous basis for a variety of reasons. Desai (in this Section) after having raised the problems faced by parents, discusses ways of facilitating health care access to children with chronic medical conditions and the impediments faced in hospital settings through two examples in the Indian setting. Child friendly ways to navigate the

hospital space (in Vododara) and use of play spaces and play therapy (in a cancer care centre for children in New Delhi) have been brought forth by Desai.

Looking at Some Themes and Research

Role of the Father

The theme is contemporary (and though it has been more than 2 decades after being explored and written about in India (Sriram, 2011), we have fathers who are involved in providing guidance but also, hands-on as well. Going that equal mile or more (SES differences exist) the domain is still of women and mothers. Culturally the disciplinarian, the model to be emulated, the provider (gratitude to the provider), a psycho-social figure that has been looked up to, such roles of the father have been recognised and documented. Fathers’ differential role from that of the mothers began emerging in the late 1970s and 1980s. Chawla and colleagues have looked at the role that fathers play in creating and mediating in the academic learning environment through play and other activities. They have utilised visual methodology (read, high costs) but require confirming results on larger samples (this is a small sample for exploring the theme and methodology) (Chawla-Duggan & Konantambigi, 2022; Chawla-Duggan et al., 2020).

Adolescent Voices

Parental conflict while quite common in adolescence, if combined with perspective taking and negotiation openness, resulted in feeling understood and in seeking solutions to problems (Kapadia, 2017). Other qualitative studies have found similar results (Lobo & Konantambigi, 2018; Agrawal, Kapadia & Pant, 2005). Parents did realise that the digital media was something that was here to stay and that it would be a part of their children’s lives and they, therefore, became open to negotiating the norms of use in the larger context of their study times and household chores that they had to undertake. Yet another perspective comes from adolescents being self-critical about the impact of new technology, the digital gaming platforms (Dowerah, 2019). The adolescents are aware of the time it consumed and the addiction it was creating. Dowerah (2019) also found that identity exploration could be seen as adolescents talked about the social experience and the fulfilment of fantasy needs as they developed confidence and skills in negotiating the gaming platform and the game with others, while at the same time alienating them from the real world. On the other hand, Lobo and Konantambigi (2018) reported that, especially the mobile phone, was something of convenience, and engagement with digital media was for relaxing and that they were willing to negotiate with parents about

the time they spent on the media. Lingam, Bhallamudi and Rao, (2018), in a slum setting of Mumbai, found that the processes where the ill-effects, like, the adolescents in the study being pressurised by older adolescents to share the numbers of their girl siblings, as a harassing experience and one fraught with danger. Knowledge about the mobile and its functioning empowered the children vis-à-vis their less literate parents. It created quarrels among the siblings and they had to negotiate time to use the mobile. Parents were concerned about girls ‘going out of hand’; boys watched pornographic content. Boys were addicted to substances and wanted to run away from home – so mobile addiction was a better option, the parents reported (Lingam, et al, 2018).

Academic Stress and Other Concerns of Children

Shah, Gondane and Konantambigi (2018) and Adhikari, Joshi and Konantambigi (2018) have explored children’s voices in Nepal to understand their concerns. Academic stress, anger, concentration issues and general feelings of stress (Shah and Konantambigi, 2018), in addition to academic stress, and not being supported by teachers in a Nepal, girls in the sample also reported being at conflict with the restrictions placed on their grooming and movements (for their safety) and restrictions that are practised during menstrual period (Adhikari, Joshi & Konantambigi, 2018). Kapadia (2017) has highlighted, the voices as well as concerns in freedom required to explore their lives, to get support for their career choices and intermingling with members of the opposite sex. Similar concerns were raised by Singhal and Rao (2004) in a large scale survey of adolescents. Adolescents reported that parents were insensitive towards children and teachers were over critical. They experienced psycho-somatic symptoms, there were social interaction inhibitions more so with the opposite sex, 32% felt alienated by the activities of peers, 19% had financial problems across the socio-economic status (SES) groups and 40% of them perceived academic difficulties. Children in private schools had more problems than children in government schools; Muslim children had more problems compared to their Hindu and Christian counterparts.

Bullying has made its heads in Indian schools and it has been to a lesser extent on the digital platforms was reported across the schools from different boards of education in the outskirts of New Delhi, and children from lower income groups (assumed to belong to Government schools) reported significantly lesser extent of bullying compared to those in private schools (children here were assumed to belong to middle and upper-middle class income families) (Misra & Konantambigi, 2019). Meaning of bullying, “gundapanthi” (playing rough and being a bully) and ways of reducing the

problem were also discussed by children in this mixed methods study.

Contemporary Situation and Influence

Technology has brought in more screen time, gaming on the internet and other engagements on the digital platform. While many children are adapting to the digital mode for varied activities of their life, including social media for personal relationship maintenance, (Deworah, 2017; Lobo and Konantambigi, 2018) some children and adolescents are developing addictions as evidenced by practitioners reports (Personal Communication, Mamatha Shetty, June, 2018; Sonali Tanksale, September 2021) and parental reports (Lingam, et al, 2018) – parental reports could be of excessive use, without a clear indication of assessment of addiction, one cannot be certain. However, excessive use and use to the exclusion of other activities is a possibility. The medium is here to stay and adolescents and young adults struggle to make sense of their experience and to monitor their compulsion to use the digital platform. The qualitative explorations reveal that some aspects are addictive (binge watching of television shows and internet platforms which could be linked to personality aspects.

Mehra & Konantambigi, (2019) and young adults are striving to make sense of the experiences that are instant, both enjoyable as well as negative. Considered in the larger context of their life, digital experiences may not be all that pervasive, but it is definitely a space that they have to traverse and negotiate which consumes time (impinges on other life activities), energy and resources. The medium is threatening as the interactions could be there somewhere on the digital space and could be shared with others who matter in our life. The social and emotional implications could be pervasive as shown by research in urban Pakistani context (Iqbal & Jami, this Section). Emerging sexuality needs guidance in dealing with and adapting without negative repercussions for persons involved. An ethic of personal care is required. In the light of practices like consumerism and easy/uninhibited sex, American adolescents started a counter movement called the Straight-Edge Movement which was to preserve the self and therefore not indulge in practices that diminish the body (through alcohol, substances and sex; sex was to be preserved for a caring relationship) (Haenfler, 2007, 2013).

Digital engagement and addiction have an added concern as younger children were given mobiles to attend classes, interact with classmates (to get class notes or homework tasks, etc) during COVID-19 lockdowns. Control over digital engagement and exposure would have definitely come down. How the virtual and the digital worlds are going to

be reconciled and integrated in psychologically healthy ways could be an important topic of research.

Family Stability

Family stability (which has been under stress in the Western world) needs to be supported in the Indian context as it has contributed to adjustment (Kojima, 2005). Cultures adapt differently to the conditions created by development goals and the technological, globalised world around the individual. Societal support in terms of work-life balance, maturity and competence in using the media and other consumables; a balance of material wants and spiritual-ecofriendly values, and other values and modes of development that favour cooperation over competition are the most likely choices in reducing distress and conflicts of the current generation and the generations to come.

Socialisation of Children and Adolescents

The contemporary condition created by technological revolution, changes in the values and goals of parents and children, competition for existing resources and jobs, the consumer oriented economic milieu and the prevailing cultural ethos, create challenges for providing guidance to children and directing the next generation. The challenge will rest with providing where-withal for emotional and social well-being while steering clear of problems what might result in addictions, joblessness, a loss of identity and lack of employment related skills. Emotional socialisation, and in many instances building psychological life-skills assumes great significance.

Apart from (Kapadia 2017; Agrawal, Kapadia and Pant, 2005), Chaudhary and colleagues have explored the theme in socialisation, exploring beliefs and theories about child care practices, themes in child-rearing and in theorising about the practices and exchanges (Chaudhary & Bhargava, 2006; Chaudhary, 2012a, 2012b; Tuli, 2016; Lamm, Keller, Yovsi, & Chaudhary, 2008).

The research in the domain of emotional socialisation (Ganapathy-Coleman, 2017) has shown how a theoretical perspective from the developmental niche and cultural psychology can help understand emotional socialisation. Kamoj and Konantambigi (2014), in an ethnographic study, used the developmental niche approach, while Pai and Konantambigi (2019) explored the approaches of mothers of children in middle childhood in socialising their children for emotional competence and in achieving other goals of life. Emotion regulation skills, which indicate the skills children and adolescents have and which could also be due to socialisation have been explored as well. These studies deal with emotional socialisation in contexts of low socio-economic strata (Nayana, 2015; Kamoj & Konantambigi, 2014), in an

orphanage, (Fathima, 2015), middle-class families (Sudha & Konantambigi, 2022; Bagasrawala & Konantambigi, 2022) and linkages of emotion regulation to variables of adjustment and coping (Sudha & Konantambigi, 2022; Bagasrawala & Konantambigi, 2016; Yagnik, 2016; Bhatt, 2015)

A series of researches at the School of Human Ecology, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai have located socialization in ecological frameworks and have tried to integrate the contextual factors (Hakim and Konantambigi, this Section; Dolma, 2020; Mehdi, 2019; Thakur, 2015; Sekhar, 2017) Socialisation for emotional development has also been explored. The themes of child care (Namgyal, 2018; Dolma, 2020; Mehdi, 2019) and socialisation (in two different communities in Pune by Sekhar, 2017) and using the ecological approaches in understanding changes in child care and socialisation (Dolma, 2020) and child care practices in communities of the North-East of India (Dolma, 2020; Mehdi, 2019; Namgyal, 2018) have been explored.

Researchers in the disciplines of education and sociology have explored certain themes and prominent among them are locating childhood in its multiplicity (Saraswathi, Menon & Madan, 2018) and exploring identities in the context of schooling, bringing in the lens of gender and multiplicity. Thapan (2014) has looked at the formation of religious identity and citizenship education. Bhandari (2014) has explored religious identity in a religious minority institution; Muslim girls' identity and citizenship in Ahmedabad was studied by Matthan, Anusha and Thapan (2014). Schooling and also the agency that children bring to the context and the negotiations and then the constructions that happen have been elaborated. Bhandari (2014) explored the formation of identities of children in a private school in Delhi built on Christian ethos. Gogai (2014) has constructed the processes through which a government school in Delhi has amalgamated the national ethos with the heterogeneity that exists in the school and the outside context.

Theorization takes us to merging of the ecological and micro-exchanges – one of them is about socialisation to deal with the digital world. Platforms like Twitter have a very short span.(Merge with the next paragraph!)

Engagement with issues are brief and people are likely to forget and move on to other issues. This is intrinsic to the nature of media, but the fact that it is there in the public domain and someone could revoke it and shame a person, create interpersonal problems is anxiety provoking. More research on the usage of media and how exactly aspects of messages, etc. move through the media to young persons and the impact that is created; and sustained counselling inputs to adolescents and young persons in dealing with this concern. More stringent guidelines or laws could be one way of dealing with the problem. Media usage is also an issue of impulse control and training. Socialisation for the coming generations would require parents and

other socializing bodies to engage children with impulse control. Impulse control and ethical aspects (and moral for many in some societies) in the context of technology and in a consumer driven world have grave consequences for children and young persons. Various agents of socialisation will need to join research to address issues that are in the domain of impulse control and ethics.

Over centuries, societies have dealt with and have grappled with such issues. In the technologically advancing age and emerging global context, the challenge is also of the use of media in perpetuating psychological harm. Societies have to come up with solutions for such problems on a priority basis.

Conceptual frameworks to understand childhood and socialisation, to understand change, to locate the focus on the individual and the family in a cultural context by incorporating a psychoanalytic lens has been discussed (Sharma, 2003). How can we view culture to see its operation in the changing ways and how are individuals and families/parents adapting and how are fathers adapting? The roles they are playing in the development of children can be explored through by the location of the psyche, family and society. Cultural psychology as well as cross-cultural psychology will provide a better framework for the quest to understand child rearing beliefs and practices (Ganapathy-Coleman, 2013) family and socialisation (Chaudhary, 2012a, 2012b, Lamm, Keller, Yovsi and Chaudhary (2008). Kapadia (2017) has delineated the contextual and ecological forces operating and has shown how one can integrate these aspects to make good sense of the data. We have an example from Ganapathy-Coleman (2013) about the use of anthropological approach in studying and understanding development in context. Together using sociological approach to connect to distal processes and anthropological-psychological approach to connect to micro-processes one can develop research plans to understand child and adolescent development in context. So also the methods of research can be combined; qualitative narratives, voices, observations (ethnographic) and large data obtained through quantitative approaches, one could take a more contextual research agenda for socialisation and for integrating children's voices into an enabling framework. One of the needs is to look at the media space where socialisation is occurring. Emotional socialisation, affect and well-being of children and adolescents need rigorous approaches to help parenting and counselling intervention efforts for all the stakeholders. In short, we have to think deeply about what Smedslund, Harre and Langenhove, (1996) and Smith, Harre and Langenhove, (1995) say about using methodologies that help capture inter-subjectivity and the intra-psychic processes. Creation of inter-subjectivities happen at societal level and therefore social constructivist approaches seem appropriate for

socialisation research and for capturing individual voices as well.

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