ROLE OF AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION ON COMPREHENSION OF OBEDIENCE, COMPLIANCE AND CONFORMITY AMONG CHILDREN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Aims: It's important to understand the influencing factors. The present study attempted to identify the comprehension of children between the age group of 8 to 13 yrs about obedience, compliance and conformity. The study also attempted to know the role of agents of socialization.

Settings and Design: Qualitative Research Design was used for the study. Samples between the age group of 8 to 13 years are considered for the study (N=10).

Method & Material: Open ended semi-structured interview questions were developed by research scholars. Thematic and content analysis was executed.

Results & Analysis: Results show that, children have better idea about obedience, but not too clear about compliance and conformity. Family plays a stronger role on obedience, compliance and conformity. Friends have a greater influence on compliance and conformity. Media plays a major role on compliance and conformity. School has a greater effect on obedience and compliance. Religion plays a major role in teaching obedience, compliance and conformity.

Keywords: Obedience, compliance, conformity, children, agents of socialization

Introduction

Childhood is a notably significant phase of human life which serves with countless events of growth and development, supposed to be carried along throughout the life. The values inculcated during childhood plays a pivotal role in shaping one's personality. When one gets older, the social roles that he or she has to be bearing expand well beyond the boundaries. Social roles never- endingly influence us till our graves and so does in that one major phase of development being childhood. The concept of social role is imbibed in a person, with the social influences that one is subjected to; which includes the family, the neighbourhood, the gender of the individual, the peer group, school set up, religious influences and also the exposure of the individual to mass media. Social influence takes different forms as in implicit expectations and explicit expectations wherein the former the set of unspoken rules and latter are a set of clearly and formally stated rules. The social influences on which this investigation puts its focus on includes conformity, an implicit expectation, and also compliance and obedience which belong to explicit expectations. Humans may possess an inherent tendency to imitate the actions of others. People often mimic the gestures, body posture, language, talking speed, and many other behaviors of others. Researchers find that this mimicking

increases the connection between people and allows our interactions to flow more smoothly [3].

Obedience is a particular way in which one behaves in accordance to the order raised by any higher authority. Obeying orders from an authority figure can sometimes lead to disturbing behaviour. Yet following orders has been the most accepted social norm. Conformity is the voluntary change of behaviour that one initiates to gain a feeling of belongingness. People, often change their attitudes and behaviors to match the attitudes and behaviors of the people around. One reason for this conformity is a concern about what other people think about them. Another reason for conformity is that, people believe that others have better knowledge than them. Adding to this, relying on norms would be a strategy followed to build belongingness, when people are not certain about their actions [1]. Compliance is a responsive behaviour towards a direct or indirect request. Child compliance refers to the degree to which children does what parents ask them to do and refrain from doing what parents ask them not to do. Children comply with parental requests for different reasons. One main distinction is between willing compliance and coerced compliance. Parents' attempts to socialize young children lead to a dynamic interplay between parenting behaviours to control child behaviour and varying incidences of children's compliance and non-compliance. Many forms of non-compliance in children are developmentally appropriate. Certain levels of resistance to parental control reflect children's developing autonomy [4], one of the key aspects of healthy child development and well-being [12]. If children's non-compliance rates rise above a certain threshold, however, this can reflect emotional and behavioural regulation problems, or problematic parenting, and can in some cases lead to the development of conduct problems [2]. It's important to identify the comprehension of obedience, compliance and conformity among children. Level of knowledge and influencing factors would act as a gateway to build on techniques to improve knowledge and to have specific focus on major contributing factors.

Review Of Literature

Present study focuses on identifying the agents contributing to the comprehension of obedience, compliance and conformity among children. Review of literature would show the influence of different agents of socialization on obedience, compliance and conformity. Studies related to obedience, compliance and conformity has been given in detail.

Obedience has been studied under social psychology. A study by Passini & Morselli (2009) [10] showed that people who attach importance to both obedience and disobedience in the relationship between the individual and society recognize the importance of democratic values and consider themselves responsible for the defense of human rights. People who value only obedience and consider disobedience as a threat to the status are more authoritarian and individualistic people. Research by Milgram (1963) [6] showed that obedience is a basic element in the structure of social life. Some system of authority is required for all communal living. Obedience as a determinant of behaviour, is of particular relevance to our time, links action to political orders, it could be ingrained human tendency, indeed a prepotent impulse overriding training in ethics, sympathy and moral conduct.

Musinguzi et al (2018) [7] conducted a study on factors influencing compliance and health seeking behaviour for hypertension in Mukono and Buikwe in Uganda. Results showed that patient factors were related to awareness, perceived severity, perceived effectiveness of therapy, adverse effects and perceived fears of lifelong dependence on medicines. The patient's socio economic status also played a role. Cross-sectional study by Nofal, Subih, Al Kalaldeh (2017) [8] on factor influencing compliance to the infection precautions among nurses and physicians in Jordan showed that despite poor knowledge, Jordanian healthcare

professionals reported high scores for positive attitudes and compliance with IPCs. Clinical training programmes are required to enhance knowledge and understanding of IPCs.

Piumali & Rathnayake (2017) [11] studied factors affecting consumer conformity behaviour in virtual communities; with special reference to generation 'Y' in Sri Lanka. Results shows that there is a positive impact of eWOM, personal involvement, sense of belongingness and community expertise are the factors that affect to the consumer conformity behaviour in virtual communities and one of the factors (Self-Esteem) is not significant. Another study by Levitan & Verhulst (2016) [5] studied conformity in groups- the effects of others' views on expressed attitudes and attitude change. Study shows that when people are asked their attitudes publicly, they adjust their responses to conform to those around them, and this attitude change persists privately, even weeks later. Accordingly, such purely social processes of attitude change may be every bit as important as more traditional cognitive informational processes in understanding where people's political attitudes come from and how they may be changed.

Pascula (2014) [9] studied conformity, obedience to authority and compliance without pressure to control cigarette butt pollution. Study showed that conformity was operationalized with a sign placed above ashtrays. Obedience was operationalized by the setting of the experiment: the Prefecture symbolizing authority and the shopping mall, a "non-authority" setting. The amin effect of conformity and obedience but not the BYAFT. However, the BYAFT effect depended on the presence or absence of authority and conformity. The introduction of environmental variables, here consisting of signs placed above ashtrays, modulates and alters the behaviour of a subject in a given setting. It can indeed be imagined that the intensity of obedience varies according to the setting in which it operates.

Review of literature shows there is still a need to identify the perception of obedience, compliance and conformity, particularly among children. The present study focuses on identifying the comprehension and contributing agents of socialization on obedience, compliance and conformity among children.

Method

Research Design: Qualitative research design.

Research Question

- What is the comprehension of obedience, compliance and conformity among children?
- What are the contributing agents of socialization on obedience, compliance and conformity?

Objective

- To study the comprehension of obedience, compliance and conformity among children.
- To study the contributing agents of socialization on obedience, compliance and conformity.

Inclusive criteria

- Children residing in Urban Bengaluru are considered for the study.

Exclusive Criteria

- Children diagnosed with psychological disorders are not considered for the study.

Operational Definitions:

- **Obedience:** Obedience is a form of social influence that involves performing an action under the orders of an authority figure.

- **Compliance:** Changing behavior at the request of another person.

- **Conformity:** Conformity is the act of fitting in with the group. It's the tendency to change one's behavior to match the responses of others is often adaptive.

- **Agents of Socialization:** Individuals, groups and institutions create the social context for socialization to take place. It is through these agencies that we learn and incorporate the values and norms of our culture. Bourdieu (1990) presents individual socialization as a process by which individuals are influenced by the class cultural milieu in which they are being reared.

Sampling Technique: Snowball Sampling technique was used for the study.

Sample: Children between the age group of 8 to 13 years are considered for the study (N=10).

Tool of Assessment

- Open ended semi-structured interview questions developed by research scholars under the guidance and scrutiny of the experts.

Procedure

Consent was taken from the samples to be part of the study and also record the interview. The interview was felicitated by the research scholars among samples through online mode due to pandemic. Thematic and content analysis was executed for the recorded responses.

Analysis of Data: Thematic and content analysis.

Results & Analysis

Societies have seen the development of institutions that assist in the transmission of culture, such as family, school, religion, mass media, peer group and many more [13]. Family, media, school and peers play a major role as agents of socialization. Present study makes an effort to understand the prominent agents of socialization on obedience, compliance and conformity. Six Themes have been developed based on the data collected through interview technique.

Theme 1: Understanding of Obedience, Compliance and Conformity: Samples were asked questions to know about their understanding of obedience, compliance and conformity. Samples could explain obedience, but had lass clarity on compliance and conformity. Though they could explain, yet there remained a slight doubt. Listening to parents, teachers and elders has been considered as obedience. One of the samples said "I obey my parents, and my grandmother, because they ask me behave like that". When compliance and conformity was explained, it was expressed that, obeying to others is compliance. One of the samples said "me and my friends have same behaviour". Understanding about compliance and conformity was less when compared to obedience. Listening to parents, teachers was the highest priority. It was also mentioned that, they obey since parents and teachers are strict. One of the samples said "it's important to listen, but at times becomes little difficult". It can be understood that, children will obey to parents or teachers or elders, but are they happy obeying everything told by elders should be questioned. There could be situations where children might have difficulty in obeying every order given, they might want to have freedom of expressions. Coming to compliance, samples felt, its very important to follow orders. It keeps us safe. "These are set of rules given, which would help us and keep us safe" said one of the samples.

Rules or orders would protect them from danger. Children would not have complete knowledge about the world outside, safety rules at home, or outside would protect them. Speaking about conformity, samples felt its nice to behave or follow like friends. One of the samples said "me and my friend, are both same, we both have many things in common". Behaving like friends, acting like them becomes important for acceptance. Pleasing friends plays a major role. "Conformity means to try and change how you are to fit to someone else's standards" said one the samples. Another sample said "its irritating to listen to friends, there is no need to listen to them, both of us will not be comfortable". Another sample said "there is no guarantee that they will accept even after listening to them". This is a different approach or perception towards conformity. Children these days stay at home and are also highly influenced by media. Clinging on to gadgets, is preventing them from experiencing real time relationships with friends. Distancing is building the gap. A sense of doubt can also be noticed. Acceptance or not, they are preferring to deal alone than waiting for approval from others. On the whole it can be understood that children do have idea about obedience, not much of a clarity about compliance and conformity. Mixed opinions and knowledge about obedience, compliance and conformity shows a need to train children at an earlier age.

Theme 2: Role of Family: Family was considered to be the most important part of life. Learning starts with family. Samples expressed highest regards to their family. One of the samples said "family helps in studies, teaches us to be careful, teaches' us dos and don'ts". Another sample said "we learn how to love from family". Samples also expressed that; family teaches us not to trust everybody. Habits are learnt through family. Right behaviour is taught by family. One of the samples mentioned "family teaches us to be obedient". Responses by samples shows that family has been one of the major agents of socialization. Listening and obeying to family has been the criteria. One of the samples said "family also teaches us to follow rules like traffic rules, behaving when we go out, eating habits and good manners". These responses shows that the family has a greater influence on obedience, compliance and conformity.

Theme 3: Role of Friends: Friends always play a major role to all, at any stage of life. Children between the age group of 8 to 13 yrs are at the highest level of influence by friends. A smile and happiness were seen when they were asked about friends. One of the samples said "I have learnt to be kind from my friend". Another sample said "I like to play with my friends, we enjoy staying together". It shows that, children share lot of experiences with their friends. They prefer to be with friends. It's the fun filled time with each other's company. One of the samples said "I learnt different language because of my friends". A different perspective was noticed by the response of one of the samples that "I don't have to listen to friends, or I don't have to obey them". Samples had mixed opinion about their response towards influence of friends on them. Responses show that friends have an influence on obedience, compliance and conformity.

Theme 4: Role of Media: The concept of media was restricted to mobile and television. Many samples didn't have any other forms of usage of media. Based on the experience's samples had, they explained the influence of media on them. One of the samples said "I don't think media has any influence on us". Another sample said "media teaches us to be obedient, like how it is shown in some of the cartoons". It shows that there is a continuous learning happening through media. One of the samples said "media shows not to trust strangers". News have been giving alarms to keep people safe. "Media give knowledge to us; we will know what is happening around the world" said one of the samples. Media is seen as a knowledge center. Samples have also mentioned that, they learn cooking through media. They get entertained, they can make videos by themselves and upload. Media has a very effective influence on children.

Theme 5: Role of School: Effect of school has been connected with obedience. One of the samples said "my school is strict; I have to obey". Another sample said "my school teaches me safety rules, obedience". It's not one, there are many studying like them. One of the samples said "I respect my teachers; I will listen to whatever my teachers tell". An obedience out of respect is noticed. "We learn moral values, help each other and study together". Schools teaches children to be together, learn together. School has been a place for learning. School has a direct influence on obedience.

Theme 6: Role of Religion: Samples could not express much about religion. One of the samples said "religion doesn't teach me anything". This response shows not much clarity on learning through religion. Whereas another sample said "religion teaches me manners, good behaviour". "There are so many stories told by my grandmother, she tells me how we should be through those stories". Epics, mythology stories are the ways known to understand religion. One of the samples said "my religion is one of the oldest, it teaches us to be kind, good, have nice food habits". Religion has an effect on obedience and compliance. Children have not been able to directly connect to conformity through religion.

Discussion

Children between the age group of 8 to 13 follow rules and orders given. It's important to know that to what extent they understand these rules. Its equally important not to put them in pressure in the name of rules. Obedience should be a tool to upbring them in a healthy environment. Following rules and orders could be a necessity. Obedience would build discipline in children. Conformity refers to the change in opinions, perceptions, attitudes and behaviour that can be observed. Compliance acts as response to particular requests made. It's important for children to understand the kind of request made. Some request could be healthy and some might be destructive, its important to train children about compliance, so a they will have clear idea about whom to listen and whom not to listen. Conformity would build attitudes, opinions, perceptions and behaviour among children. According to the understanding of the samples in the present study, its important to train children at a young age about their right behaviour and their stand in life. Obedience, compliance and conformity shouldn't be a pressure on children. The study also shows that, children should be trained in earlier stages, which would prepare them for the competitive world. Early training could help them in dealing with difficult situations in life.

The study shows that family has been the contributing factor for obedience, compliance and conformity. Effect of family on obedience is noticed through responses like following rules on road, in airport or other places. Effect of family on conformity is noticed in obeying elders, having right behaviour and having good manners. Family teaches children that acceptance is important. Family teaches not to trust strangers; at the same time this could build mistrust in them, leading to confusion. Instructions could be common, and children might generalize it. Obedience is important, but not by building pressure in children. Giving clarity on compliance and conformity is important for a better future.

The study shows that friends have an effect on obedience, compliance and conformity. Children share their experiences with their friends. Good and bad times they stay together. Following like a friend can make the other one be obedient or disobedient. It depends on the choice of friends. Similar is the application for compliance. If one doesn't obey and order, it becomes a force to the other person also to break the rule for acceptance. This shows that friends have a greater effect on compliance and conformity. Children are not totally influenced by friends; hence effort should be made at an earlier age for better clarity about obedience, compliance and conformity to make right choices at right age and right time.

Present study shows that, media has been a greater influence on children in building obedience, compliance and conformity. News and general knowledge shows are building their knowledge and also preparedness for danger. Children are able to take precautions because of media. Children are enjoying spending time with media. They get connected to friends at any time. Not being very much exposed to any other form of media, children find media to be effective. All learning may not be effective, proper guidance could help children to have right influence. Children are able to learn obedience through media. They are learning importance of rules and regulations. Media has brought up the spirit of acceptance in society at large. Making videos, wanting people to like them and getting noticed are increasing among children. This might not be very safe and effective for the healthy development of children. Hence proper guidance and training can help children to differentiate between the right and wrong influence.

The present study shows that schools teach obedience and compliance. Compliance becomes important when it is assessed. Children between the age group of 8 to 13 would strictly follow rules given to them. Schools play a major role in building obedience and compliance. Conformity may not be directly noticed, but they begin to bring it to consciousness when it is assessed. If schools are not strict will children not obey? if so, efforts should be made by the academicians, parents and the experts to build obedience among children not as a response to strictness, but build it as a sense of responsibility. Its crucial to identify effective ways for building knowledge about obedience, compliance and conformity through schools.

The present study shows that religion has an effect on obedience and compliance. Children learn to be obedient through stories and moral values taught through practices of religion at home. Children between the age group of 8 to 13 yrs see religion as stories. Deeper sense of religion and its implication will be learnt as they grow older. For samples, religion has been a way to learn obedience or good habits. It shows that without being strict, religion can teach obedience. Compliance also can be related to the stories teaching their duties to be a good person. Food habits or practices for a particular religion shows the importance given to the conformity. Religion can be used as a right technique to teach obedience, compliance and conformity to children. It has to be holistic approach to identify the effectiveness of training.

Conclusion

Present study focused on identifying the comprehension of obedience, compliance and conformity among children. Results show that children between the age group of 8 to 13 yrs have idea about obedience, but not too clear about compliance and conformity. The study tried to understand the role of agents of socialization on obedience, compliance and conformity. Family, friends, media, school and religion have been found to have effect on obedience, compliance and conformity. The study proposes to develop ways and techniques to teach children the right practices of obedience, compliance and conformity. Collaborative effort of parents, academicians, experts and the government can build stronger children for healthier society.

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