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Across Generation Study of Aggression and Moral Disengagement among Students

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ABSTRACT

In the present study, a comparison was made across three generations of male respondents of the same family to determine whether aggression and moral values had undergone any change. Further, the sample was spread across the rural and urban regions of Haryana, as apparently violence and moral disengagement appear to be the product of modern societal changes and should therefore be higher among the urban population. For this purpose, a purposive sample of 20 male students of 11th and 12th classes, who were residing with their father as well as grandfather, was elected from rural and urban areas of Haryana. Two-way ANOVA was used to analyse the difference in aggression and moral values. Further, correlational analysis was also done to study the relationship between the variables. Results indicate that contrary to general belief, aggression and moral disengagement was more in the rural respondents. Further maximum moral disengagement was observed among the adolescents. Technical advancement and modernisation, which contribute to rapid economic growth, are universally desired; however, the conflict has been found to be the greatest in developing nations, least in modern Nations and intermediate in the least developed nations. This surging violence can be attributed to the rapid social change which occurs due to advancements and generates instability..

Keywords: Moral disengagement, Aggression, Values,

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian culture, which was traditionally characterised by humanistic and familial, and benevolent values, is undergoing a metamorphic change. Cultural barriers have broken down as a result of the global flow of communication, and individualistic and materialistic values are taking the place of traditional values. The breakdown of the family system has augmented the situation as families place a fundamental regulatory action (Perrot and Martin Fungier, 1987) in helping its members to internalise social and moral values and develop responsible roles. Media has further contributed to this situation by glamorising violence, corrupt practices, attainment of materialistic goals and breakdown of family ties (Yadava, Kumar and Sharma, 2000), thereby teaching the young about suffering and humanness. Once a powerful source of

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values, the elderly are now often neglected. So the younger generation is unable to imbibe their rich experiences.

Over the last decade global flow of communication where the electronic media has resulted in cultural homogenisation, thereby leading to a radical restructuring of social life in our country, which is characterised by structural dualism. A majority of “have-nots” are struggling with the problem of basic survival, and a minority of “haves” are ready to adopt the lifestyle of Western affluence (Joshi, 1991). During the last few years, even the suburban and rural areas have been transcended by electronic media. This segment of Indian society, ingrained in orthodox values, was not ready for the western cultural invasion. Thus this exposure would result in conflict between ingrained values and projected values. The main sufferers are adolescents, as they are facing a dilemma as to which values to accept. The present investigation was conducted to determine whether the joint family system inculcates the members against these western influences. A comparison of values was made across three generations in a rural area which had access to the cable network for the last 5 years but was least influenced by the growing disintegration of the family system.

(A) Method

Sample - A purposive sample of 20 (10+1, +2) students, their parents (mother, father), and grandparents (N= 60) was selected from a government school (village: chang, Distt. Bhiwani). Subjects belonging to the upper caste, as well as lower castes, were taken (jat, Panjabi, Rajput and Kumhar).

Tools- A Personal Value Questionnaire (Sherry and Verma, 1971) was used

Procedure - Each student was contacted at home, and the test was administered to all three respondents (adolescent, parent, grandparent) in a single sitting. In certain cases where the parents/grandparent were illiterate, the questions were read out, and responses were recorded by the investigator.

(B) Results and Discussion

A comparison of the mean value scores indicate that the adolescent (A) group has the highest scores on aesthetic, economic, power and hedonistic values. The parent (p)group scores were highest on social, democratic and health values, while the scores of the grandparent group (GP) were highest only on the religious and family prestige values. Hierarchical comparisons of the mean values indicate that for the adolescent, the economic value was the most salient, While religious value was of the least importance. For the parents and grandparents, family prestige ranked highest, while aesthetic values were of the least importance. The relationship between

the hierarchy of the values was computed with the help of rank difference correlation. All three comparison revealed positive relationship ($\rho = A\&P = 447$; $A\&GP = 342$; $P\&GP = 65$). There appears to be a progressive deviation in the salience of the values from the grandparents to parents and to adolescents; the value of ρ was found to decrease across the generations. Even though none of the comparisons was found to be statistically significant, these, however, indicate that there is a change. Traditional values (family prestige, religion) give way to materialistic forces ones (economic and power) even in rural areas.

In order to test the significance of the difference among the means of the three groups on each of the values one way ANOVA was applied. Further differences between the individual groups were tested with the help of Duncan's range test. Significant differences were found among the mean value scores of the three groups on 5 values [$F = \text{religious}:14.87(p < 0.01)$, $\text{Aesthetic}:7.69(p < 0.01)$, $\text{economic}: 11.54(p < 0.01)$, $\text{power}:17.35(p < 0.01)$, $\text{family prestige}: 6.32(p < 0.02)$]. The remaining 5 values were not found to differ significantly across the three generations. Thus it is apparent that social, democratic, knowledge hedonistic and health values are imbibed from the elders. The results with regard to the hedonistic component were surprising. Even the G.P.s gave more importance to the present and basic pleasures which were still important to them.

From the data, it could be seen that all the three groups were significantly different from each other on the religious and power values. However the effects on the two values were reversed. While the grandparents were higher on the religious component, the adolescents were higher on the power value, and the parents were in between the two. Thus it appears that there is a progressive deterioration in religious values across generations, and the need for power, irrespective of the means for attaining it, is increasing. On the remaining three values, i.e. aesthetic, economic and family prestige, the differences between the adolescent and the parent/grandparent were significant, while the difference between the mean values score of the parent and grandparent were not significantly different. Here again, the mean value score of the adolescents was higher on the economic and aesthetic components, while it was the lowest for the family prestige. The results indicate that adolescents are more appreciative of beautiful harmony, fine arts, dance, poetry etc. They are becoming more materialistic, and the desire for money has also increased. These changes in values could be attributed to their exposure to the materialistic values being projected by the electronic media. On the other hand, this exposure does have a positive influence on them as it has made them less orthodox.

Thus these results indicate that short-term exposure to the Westin values, as it occurs during the formative period when the values have not been ingrained, can lead to a change in the values

making the individual more self-centred and materialistic. However it makes him less orthodox and opens new vistas such that he becomes aware of the potential opportunities. This will eventually result in a further breakdown in values as he will move away from the family, and the values which have been preserved in this generation will progressively deteriorate in the next. Also, the joint family system cannot ward off the influence of cultural invasion; rather, its very existence appears to be susceptible to this influence.

Further comparisons across different economic, social and subcultural groups (towns, metropolis) will make the scenario more clear.

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