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The lived experience of parents from educating morality to their children Phenomenological study

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Abstract:

BACKGROUND: The aim of this study was to identify the parents' experience of moral education to their children in secondary school and with a phenomenological method.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: Participants include parents of students who received a high score after taking Dr. Lotfabadi's moral development test and extracting the results. The students' parents consciously and satisfactorily participated in the semi-structured interviews prepared for this purpose, and the interviews continued until the saturation stage, so the final sample size was 22 participants. The data obtained from the interview were then analyzed using the Van Menen method to discover the meaning of the students "parents" experiences of moral education.

RESULTS: Findings were revealed in 5 main themes of social ethics, family ethics, individual ethics, self-care ethics, and environmental ethics and 15 sub-themes.

CONCLUSION: According to the findings of this study, it seems that parents to pay more attention to the components of social ethics, family ethics, individual-human ethics, self-care ethics, environmental ethics to succeed in raising children with desirable moral development pay special attention to these components to raise worthy children with desirable moral development.

Keywords:

Ethics, moral education, phenomenology

Introduction

Human societies have always been concerned with educating a worthy generation, and moral education has always had a high status.^[1] The family is the oldest and the first social institution. This institution is the most suitable organization to meet the physical and psychological needs of members and the best platform for raising an efficient generation that believes in moral, human, and social values. It is also the basis for providing emotional, economic, legal, and security needs and psychological peace of individuals.^[2] Scholars of educational sciences and psychology recognize the influence of two main factors of heredity and environment in the formation of personality and moral and

behavioral characteristics of children and believe that among environmental factors, the most influential and general factor is the family and parents are the most central among family factors. The influence of parents, due to their privileged position and more interaction and the fact that they are the first educators of children, is more than other factors.^[3]

The family is the child's first educational environment. The impact of the family on the child begins without preamble and with a certain power and may continue throughout a person's life.^[4] Parents as the first model have a serious impact on the intellectual and practical dimensions of children's personality, methods of their interaction with the environment and others, the

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formation of their self-confidence, self-esteem, emotional stability, how they deal with problems, shaping their behavior, etc.^[5] Ethics and moral education are the highway to the prevention of social harms, as well as the root of all social reforms and the means of combating the corruption and anomalies of societies. For this reason, the promotion of morality in society is one of the great and long-standing human ideals and has been considered by various human and divine schools throughout history. This is doubly important, especially in modern times. Because the development of scientific technologies man's drowning in material affairs and his sense of needlessness of morality increases the ground for increasing moral deviations and anomalies.^[6]

In recent decades, despite the great efforts of educational systems around the world and the development of moral issues, various moral deviations are increasing, especially among young people and adolescents.^[7] This is one of the most challenging issues that have been very much emphasized by experts. Therefore, today, the need to pay attention to ethics is felt more than ever.

Psychologists such as Eisenberg and Losya^[8] and sociologists such as Becker and Epstein^[9] and Vincent and Tom^[10] point out that the family is the most fundamental and first environment that influences human space and relationships. Even a person's influence from other environments can originate from the family environment. The family has a great role in determining the style and policy of the future life, morals, health, and performance of the individual.^[11]

The child acquires his first understanding and experience of virtues and morals under the influence of the moral teachings of the family. His attitude and knowledge about values such as honesty, love, altruism, courage, modesty, responsibility, trustworthiness, mutual respect are formed and developed under the influence of family moral education due to the long and continuous companionship of members. According to research, sincere and effective communication between parents and their children can teach them moral issues.

Berkowitz and Grych^[12] argue that the influence of parents on their children's moral development includes the development of empathy, conscience, altruism, and moral and parental logic that explain their behavioral reasons to their children, and in particular emphasizes the consequences of this practice that children will have more empathy. Educating these parents (as inherent moral educators) to their children is the key to their children's moral development.

Smetana^[13] argues that parents are involved in ensuring children's well-being, protecting their rights, and

helping children learn how to communicate with others. Hosseinipناه and Zendedelan^[14] believe that the influence of parents on their children's attitudes and behavior is very significant. They play a key role in shaping their children's beliefs and transmit their attitudes and beliefs directly and indirectly to children, and children accept this influence by observing the actions and behavior of parents. Stepp^[15] believes that the well-being of a society depends to a large extent on the moral health of its members. How parents can help their children grow and instill a set of values in their children to contribute to community health. Burnett^[16] study also shows that parents are the first educators of children who play a very important role in shaping an individual's attitudes, values, behaviors, and habits and skills. Maccoby^[17] shows in his study that although parents are not the only factor in the continued socialization of children. However, the family is always considered as the first and main space for children to socialize. It is the parents who determine and plan how the children will spend their time. They determine the identity of the people with whom children will interact.

Addressing the issue of moral education is important because moral education not only affects the destiny of the individual but also the moral life of society depends on it. Moral values are not separate from the life of the individual and society and affect the whole life of human beings. In this study, it is tried to clarify how the children with high moral development have been affected by the atmosphere in the family center? And what has been the performance of families and parents in providing moral experience and developing their moral understanding and reasoning? What methods and mechanisms have parents used to develop and enhance their children's moral understanding? Furthermore, what attitude and moral reasoning did the parents of students with high moral development scores have in the face of issues such as independence, freedom, responsibility, cooperation and assistance, altruism, patience and contentment, courage, fairness, respect for the opinions of others, etc? Achieving the answers to these questions can provide us with a practical model, although limited so that it can be used in the moral education of children.

Materials and Methods

Study design and setting

The present study is a qualitative study that has been done by phenomenological method. Phenomenology is an approach that describes specific phenomena, objects, and life experiences as they appear.^[18] In this study, hermeneutic phenomenology with emphasis on van Manen^[19] perspective and method was used to explore the experiences of parents of ethics education. The goal of

phenomenological researchers is to create a constructive description of the actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences that we encounter in the biological world. The product of phenomenological research should be simple and straightforward so that readers who have experienced the phenomenon can analyze their reality with identified topics.^[20]

Data collection tool and technique

In this study, two tools of questionnaire and semi-structured interview were used. To select the students' parents for the interview, use the Kalberg Moral Development Questionnaire, which was localized by Lotfabadi^[21] and their reliability and validity were also measured by them.

Study participants and sampling

In this regard, the questionnaire was randomly distributed among 200 high school students in four talented girls "and boys" schools. Questionnaires were coded to identify students, and after collecting and extracting the results based on the data, students who scored high on the moral development test were identified. Among these parents, 22 people were purposefully selected based on the highest scores of students from Lotfabadi Ethical Development Test^[21] and those who were willing to participate in this study. The interview continued until data saturation. The duration of the interview varied from 46 to 130 min.

Data analysis was performed from the first interview and in parallel with the interviews. Then, all information was read carefully to gain a sense of the students' parents' beliefs and experiences, so that it could be understood by the researcher. Then, all the words and sentences related to the phenomenon were extracted and coded. Then, by re-reading the information and categorizing it, the themes were obtained.

Reliability and validity

For the reliability and validity of the results in qualitative research, four criteria of validity (internal validity), transferability (external validity), verifiability (objectivity), and reliability (reliability) are used. To validate, to increase the accuracy of the data, the findings of the interviews were referred to the participants to review. in other words to determine the validity of findings, results were presented to the participants and they were confirmed regarding the accuracy and completeness.^[22] Furthermore, the accuracy of the data was done by the subject experts and the subcategories were re-extracted from the text of the interviews by them and the extracted categories were compared. To increase the transferability of the findings, the researcher multidimensionalization strategy was used using a research colleague in the process of data

collection, analysis, and interpretation. In addition, by explaining the exact details of the data collection and analysis process, data validation was performed and to achieve reliability and that other researchers can be scrutinized in the research, all data were documented and a final report was prepared.

Ethical consideration

To observe ethical considerations for the study participants, the purpose of the research, research method, research benefits, and voluntary participation in the research was explained and after providing the necessary information about the research, the participants' willingness and consent for the interview was obtained. In addition, research participants were assured that the information obtained from them would be kept confidential and that the research results would be published without mentioning their names. To comply with this issue, the names of the participants were changed to numbers, and during the analysis of the data and the expression of the results, only numbers were mentioned.

Results

Five main themes and 14 subthemes were identified that show what and how parents experience moral education to their children [Table 1].

The main theme - Social ethics

The first main theme that was extracted from parents' experiences of moral education to their children was social ethics. Parents mean of social ethics are ideas, values, and norms that are in the community and outside the individual, and the individual acquires them in interaction with society and becomes part of the personality of individuals and shapes their ethics in society. This theme contains 4 sub-themes.

Table 1: The main and sub-themes of parents' experience of ethics education

Main themes	Sub-theme
Social ethics	Responsibility
	Cooperation and assistance
	Altruism
Family ethics	Tolerating dissenting opinions
	Parent' relationship with each other
	Parent-child relationships
Individual ethics	Children's relationships with each other
	Patience and contentment
	Courage and bravery
Ethics of self-care	Self-esteem
	Self confidence
	Autonomy and independence
Environmental ethics	Prevent environmental degradation
	Responsibility for plants and animals

Sub-theme-Responsibility

The statements of the interviewees indicated that human beings are aware of what they are doing and have the will and authority, and this makes them responsible for the effects and consequences of their actions. If the family chooses the right way of teaching responsibility for their child, of course, it can increase it in their child and witness the emergence of worthy and responsible people in the future. *“Interviewee 18: I am responsible both inside and outside the home, and my children are aware of how committed I am to doing things and I will never postpone work to another day.”* And *“Interviewees 3 and 14 and 20: Parents’ behavior is an example for children and is very effective in fostering a sense of responsibility in children. They learn in practice when their parents take time for different things and activities.”*

Sub-theme - Cooperation and help

According to the statements of the interviewees, helping others in the form of an admirable, beautiful, and immaterial behavior, causes the desire of children to be aroused. Sometimes in the form of wishes and desires, it causes a person to do this good behavior to make his parents’ wishes come true. Therefore, after understanding the pleasure of this work, we will see continuity in action. *“Interviewees 15 and 6 and 19: We always advise our children to help others and actively participate where they need help to be a practical role model.”*

Sub-theme - Altruism

The statements of the interviewees indicated that altruism is a benefit to others that promotes the growth of humanity in human beings. *“Interviewees 7 and 16: I always tell my children to try to act in the community in a way that is helpful to others and help them. If you are a successful and wealthy person, your goal should not be money, your goal should be to help others.”* And *“Interviewees 14 and 2 and 8: We always tell my children to be careful that no one hurts you and you do not hurt anyone, and to make others as happy as you can. Because the effects of happiness and satisfaction of others return to you.”*

Sub-theme - Tolerance of different and opposing opinions

The interviewees believed that correct discussion leads to reform and intellectual transformation. This two-way communication can provide the basis for understanding and persuasion and is a mechanism for resolving disputes and exchanging information. *“Interviewees 22 and 10 and 17: It is only through logical dialogue and away from coercion that children accept your words. If you come in with love and affection and say something, they will accept it easily, and if you forbid them from something, you have to replace it.”*

The second main theme - Family ethics

According to parents, family ethics is formed in a way influenced by lifestyle. Lifestyle is also centered around

tendencies (desires, preferences) or what is called taste. This theme contains 3 sub-themes.

Sub-theme–Parents’ relations with each other

According to the interviewees, the survival of the family requires a sincere relationship, sense of cooperation, love, loyalty, and mutual trust of parents with each other in this case between family members (father, mother, and children) healthy and understanding relationships are established. *“Interviewees 12 and 14: Even if there is a difference of opinion between the parents, they should try to reach a complete agreement in the presence of their children in the field of education. And becomes a parent. Confirmation of the father’s words by the mother and confirmation of the mother’s words by the father This creates harmony and empathy between the children and the parents.”*

Sub-theme–Parents’ relations with their children

The statements of the interviewees indicated that in a healthy relationship in a balanced family, family members enjoy socializing with each other in an emotional and loving atmosphere and accepting each other. They are talking and actively listening to each other. *“Interviewee 20: We hold family meetings every Friday, which is held continuously, we review all the things we do during the week, as well as our speech and behavior. We explain, we talk, we discuss, and we exchange ideas.”*

Sub-theme-Children’s relationships with each other

It is the desire of every parent that their children love and support each other and respect each other. To be able to deepen and strengthen the relationship between children, we must start working from childhood and bring them closer together with consciously calculated behaviors. *“Interviewee 16: When my son was born, we gave a gift to my daughter (who was 3-year old) from her brother. This made her feel good about her brother. During their childhood, she took care of her brother because of my busy schedule. That’s why their relationship has become so great and intimate, and even now that they have grown up, they are friends and helpers.”*

The third main theme - Individual morality

According to parents, the inner reform of the human soul plays an important role in his personal, social, worldly, and otherworldly happiness. This theme contains 3 sub-themes.

Sub-theme - Patience and contentment

The interviewees considered patience and contentment to be the proper use of what they have and to teach children to appreciate what they have and to try to achieve everything. *“Interviewees 12 and 19: We always tell our children that life is full of problems. The best thing to do is to be patient and find ways to solve them. Also, try to deal with it in the best way you can in any situation, find a solution and*

be patient and move slowly and without haste. Satisfaction and saving are also very important, so we always advise children not to overspend and instead help others in need."

Sub-theme-Courage and bravery

According to the interviewees, cultivating a sense of courage and bravery in children makes them able to change their current situation and improve their situation and not be afraid of its difficulties and problems. According to the parents, the courage and bravery of the children should be strengthened. *"Interviewee No 18: Sometimes doing something and saying something requires courage and bravery. For example, I taught my children to stand up for what is right or wrong if they see it being trampled on. Even if parents and adults say or do something that is wrong, respectfully remind them."*

The main theme of the fourth-self-care ethics

According to parents, if we can strengthen some personal characteristics and skills in children such as self-esteem and self-confidence, they will be able to take care of their health "independently." Although self-care is an activity that people take to ensure, maintain, and promote their health, sometimes, this care extends to their children, family, friends, neighbors, locals, and fellow citizens. This theme contains 3 sub-themes.

Sub-theme-Self-esteem

According to the statements of the interviewees, cultivating self-esteem makes a person feel valuable and in the shadow of this value does not agree to do anything or accept any situation. *"Interviewee No 10: If you raised your children dearly and respected them and they gained dignity. They never give in to any circumstances and even in their jokes they take care of their own dignity and the dignity of others."*

Sub-theme-Self-confidence

According to the interviewees, approving children and their activities and performance and avoiding blame and reminding children of their weaknesses leads to a sense of self-confidence in them and fosters creativity in them and Prepares them to be able to start an activity and not be afraid to take responsibility and be successful. *"Interviewee 13: To build my children's self-confidence, we magnify their strengths, and if they are constantly encouraged and cared for in their work, we buy gifts for their good deeds."*

Sub-theme-Autonomy and independence

The interviewees believed that parents should not be constantly on the lookout for potential dangers that threaten their children and constantly command and forbid them. Rather, they should inform them about various issues and strengthen their self-confidence. Also, acquaint them with the laws and possible dangers so that they can act freely and independently in the society.

"Interviewee 15: I always tell my children that there will be issues and problems in life that people can make the right decisions and solve them with the wisdom and experience of experienced people. So whenever you are trying to do something, be sure to study and be aware of the right ways to do it and take responsibility for it."

The main theme of five-Environmental ethics

This theme was also extracted from the experiences of parents from moral education to their children. According to the interviewees, the indiscriminate consumption and abuse of nature by humans destroys it. They considered it immoral for man to dominate nature and to sacrifice it in order to achieve his desires, lusts, and interests. This main theme consists of 2 sub-themes.

Sub-theme-Protecting the environment and preventing its destruction

According to the interviewees, the indiscriminate consumption of human beings in nature has caused human beings to use nature as a way to follow their desires, desires and interests. *"Interviewees 20 and 11: We never leave our rubbish in the environment. Whenever we go to nature with our family, in addition to collecting our own garbage, we also collect other people's property, and our children participate in this and learn to do so."*

Sub-theme-Responsibility toward plants and animals

According to the statements of the interviewees, one of our human duties is to take care of other creatures, and in this regard, children should feel responsible toward all other creatures, including plants and animals. *"Interviewee 12 my children take care of the flowers, plants, and pets at home, and I only supervise and sometimes guide and help them."*

Discussion

Raising children who have a desirable and high moral development is the desire of all parents. In the process of education, the role of parents as effective and main factors in establishing the personality of children is irreplaceable and undeniable. Because children spend the early years of their personality formation in the family center and receive the most influence from their parents. According to the interviewed parents, they always tried to be a practical model of those principles by observing ethical and value principles and taking care of them in practice, and not only as a counselor or manager of goodness and virtues but also Virtues and good qualities first appear in their own behavior and deeds. They have also tried to be each other's helpers in this process, and wherever they have criticized each other's performance, they try to correct it away from the eyes of their children. The purpose of this study is to identify the lived experience of parents of moral

education to their children. The participants' experience was divided into five main themes: social ethics, family ethics, individual ethics, self-care ethics, and environmental ethics. Reflecting on these themes shows that ethics education has brought various experiences to parents. The findings of the present study indicate that there is a positive relationship between family ethics and parent-child relationships, which is consistent with the research of Berkowitz and Grych.^[8] In the interview with parents, the relationship between educating social ethics with responsibility and altruism was mentioned, which is consistent with the study.^[17] Based on the findings, the relationship between educating personal ethics and parent-child relationships was mentioned, which is consistent with Smetana^[13] research. It is also consistent Hosseinipناه and Zendedelan^[14] research and study on the role of parents in shaping their children's attitudes, values, behaviors and habits, and skills.

Limitation and recommendation

Holding educational workshops to improve the skills of parents in the field of moral education for children and adolescents by the country's education system and other related agencies - Preparing educational materials in the form of books, movies, etc., to nurture and improve parents' skills in the field of moral education for children, social harms, etc., The limitation this study examines the experience of parents of high school students, so its findings may not be generalizable to other educational levels. This study examines the experience of students "parents and does not include students" experience.

Ethical moral code

The present study has been registered with the code of ethics EE/1400.3.02.37674/scu.ac.ir in Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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