

## Exploration of the Influence Mechanism of Multi-Generational Interaction on Young Children's Socialization Development – Based on Grandparents and Parents Co-parenting Families

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### ABSTRACT

Young children's socialization development begins at home, and the window of opportunity for this development is between the ages of three and six. In China, grandparents visit their children's homes to assist in caring for little children, a practice known as co-parenting, due to the influence of traditional family values and family economic strategy. The different parenting philosophies and lifestyles of the two generations of caregivers, grandparents and parents, add to the complexity and conflictual nature of multigenerational family interactions, which undoubtedly have an impact on and are closely related to the socialization and development of young children. This is especially true in cases where grandparents and parents are raising children together. In view of this, the purpose of this paper is to examine the mechanisms by which multigenerational interactions affect the socialization and development of young children. To this end, this paper approaches the issue from the perspective of family systems theory and provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature. It attempts to reveal how multigenerational interactions affect young children's socialization development and to explore the mechanisms by which multigenerational interactions work on young children's socialization development.

**Keywords:** Young children, Behavior, Influence mechanism, Multi-generational families, socialization development.

### 1) INTRODUCTION

The socialization of young children is critical to their overall health and development [1]. In this process, children gain experience in building relationships, communicating, and navigating the social environment. Social development in children is by a great extent determined by their social context. Family form one of the immediate social context within which any given child grows. Family helps to shape a child's earlier experiences, that in turn helps to shape their personality and ability to develop relationships. Family helps children learn various social skills and abilities such as communication, cooperation and ability to solve conflict. Through the help of family, children equally learn to understand their emotions and how to properly manage them.

Since families are the first places where children engage with one another, they have a significant impact on children's social development [1]. However, the effect method varies depending on the kind of family. Families exhibit various differences from each other based on their structure and composition. On the basis of structure and composition, families can either be nuclear or extended. Based on composition, families can also take the form of one generation if all family members fall under one generation or multigenerational family, if family members are from different generations.

Although more and more studies confirm the great influence of the family on children's socialization development, the mechanisms by which multigenerational interactions influence children's socialization development are still something that needs to be continuously explored in different social and cultural contexts [8]. Multi-generational families comprising of grandparents, parents and children form the most common types of families in various parts of the world, more especially China. Socialization development of children raised in a multi-generational household, differs from that of children raised in one generation household. The difference is commonly attributed

to the fact that multi-generational families provides children with the opportunity for multigenerational interaction; whereby children gets to interact with people of different generations who in turn impacts their social development differently. The above opportunity is often not available to children raised in one generation households, resulting in differences in socialization development between the two categories of children.

The paper through a systematic literature review, undertook to determine the influence mechanism of multi-generational interactions on the socialization development of children. Based on evidence from China and the help of family systems theory, the paper considers how co-parenting impacts children socialization development, and the mechanism through which multigenerational interactions shapes socialization development among children.

## 2) **METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted under a research methodology that involved a systematic review of existing literature. Based on the research methodology of the systematic review of the literature, the researchers of this study considered five peer-reviewed journal articles related to how multigenerational family interactions affect children's socialization development. Articles were selected based on several considerations, including relevance to the research topic, credibility of the information, and timeliness.

## 3) **SYSTEMATIC REVIEW**

The study was undertaken to ascertain whether multi-generational families were of benefit to children in China, based on their impact on creativity. Data was collected from 1710 elementary school children from two schools in Shanghai China. The creativity of each child was measured using the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking-Figural (TTCT) [2]. The study findings indicated that children from multi-generational families whereby co-parenting by parents and grandparents was used exhibited lower level of creativity. The study findings further indicate that children creativity declined further in grandparent headed families. According to the study, the lower level of creativity among children raised in multi-generational families arises from the inability of grandparents to stimulant their cognitive abilities.

The study sought to ascertain how family structure during childhood, impacts various aspects of child development, that get manifested at adulthood. The study particularly aimed at determining how family structure affects brain development and cognitive performance at adulthood [3]. Taking a two generation family structure in which, how grandparents impacts children development was explored. The study results obtained indicated that people who at childhood grew up in multigenerational households exhibited superior cognitive abilities as compared to those who lived in one generation families and single parent families. The results are attributed to the enrichment grandparents make on the home environment where most children grow.

The study aimed at determining how multigenerational interactions, impacts children's social emotional and cognitive development [4]. Using a sample of 13744 children aged between 9 months and 5 years, the influence of multigenerational interactions, particularly the influence of grandparents on cognitive and social emotional development of Children was considered. Changes in children cognitive ability was assessed using the help of British Ability Scale and socioemotional outcome [7]. The study findings indicated that children from multigenerational families exhibited higher socioemotional and cognitive abilities. The study findings indicate that grandparents contacts with children serve as another source of information and support to children, which in turn bolster their cognitive and socioemotional abilities.

The study undertook to ascertain the impact of multigenerational families on socialization development of children, as evidenced from their academic performance. The study's conclusions, which were reached by surveying a sample of Chinese junior high school students, indicate that grandparents had an impact on their grandchildren's socialization and development, which may have been reflected in their academic achievement [5]. When children from multigenerational families are compared with those from other family structures such as one generation families and single parent families, children from multigenerational families exhibit high levels of academic performance. The study findings show that children raised in multigenerational families registers high levels of academic performance as grandparents' prompts families to invest more on social capital [5]. High levels of investment on social capital in turn helps to enhance socialization development among children, which in turn helps to realize high levels of academic performance.

The study was undertaken to help ascertain the of co-parenting on children, more especially in multigenerational families where mother and grandmother are involved [6]. Through analysis of interview data obtained from mothers and grandmothers in families with children below 7 years. The study findings exhibited widespread mother-grandmother co-parenting in Indonesia, and its impact on socialization development in children [6]. The study findings indicate that multigenerational households provides a more diverse family, and enriches child-adult interactions, thus enhancing their socialization development.

The study aimed to determine how children's socio-emotional development in China is impacted by co-parenting. Using a total of 72 participants who comprised of grandmothers, mothers and children from different parts of Beijing China. The impact of grandmother co-parenting on the socio-emotional development of children was measured using the Infant-toddler social and emotional assessment (ITSEA) [10]. The study findings indicate that grandmother co-parenting helps to enhance interactions with children thus positively contributing to their socio-emotional development. It however, shows that grandmother involvement does not weaken mother-child attachment and both helps to reduce their dysregulated behaviors thus enhancing their socio-emotional development, then when the child experiences only mother-child attachment.

The study aimed at determining the influence of grandparent co-parenting on young children's personality and adaptation. The study was completed through the input of 422 parents in Shanghai China, who took part in the study by feeling in a questionnaire [11]. The study results indicate that co-parenting impacted children's personality and adaptation. The influence is evident from the higher pro-social activity exhibited by children raised by parents. The study also indicated that co-parenting resulted in lower anxious-preoccupied attachment than when grandparents solely takes the parenting responsibility [11]. The study confirms that grandparents' influences socialization development in children, particularly through their tendency to provide children with what they always want.

The goal of the study was to ascertain how co-parenting, which is one of the most popular parenting styles in China, affected the effortful control of the children. A 10-month survey of 253 preschool-aged children from multigenerational co-parenting households was used to conduct the study [12]. The study specifically sought to reveal how co-parenting between a woman and her grandparents and a father and his grandparents influenced children's effortful control. The ability of any individual to control their emotions, behaviors, and cognitive capacities is referred to as "effortful control" [14]. According to the study's findings, parents make an effort to coordinate their co-parenting techniques with their grandparents' in an attempt to maintain consistency in their efforts and instill in their kids the proper amount of hard work and control.

The study examined the effects of grandparent-parent co-parenting, which is common in China, on the emotional development and temperament of young children. It was carried out by testing 145 infants, ages two to three, on their social emotions and emotional control techniques [14]. The results of the study suggested that co-parenting by grandparents affected some areas of an infant's development. They demonstrate how co-parenting has an impact on newborns' social emotions by affecting their emotional management techniques. According to the study, co-parenting by grandparents affects infants' emotional adjustment according to their effortful control levels; co-parenting has a minimal impact on infants with high effortful control levels and fosters the emotional adjustment of those with low effortful control [14]. The study results, however indicates that co-parenting do not have any influence on infant temperament.

In another study, the purpose of the research was to determine how co-parenting between parents and grandparents affects children's socialization development [15]. The study was conducted to determine whether co-parenting helps to develop children's social skills from a social skills perspective. The study findings, brought out the important role of co-parenting in the development of socialization competence among children. It particularly shows how a harmonious relationship between parents and grandparents can help enhance socialization development in children. Referring to systems theory, the study shows that harmonious co-parenting relationship that are anchored on good social interactions between parents and grandparents provides a good example to children on how they should interact with others, thus enhancing their social competence [15]. Grandparents equally helps to provide support to parents, that helps to enhance maternal self-efficacy, which is important for a parent to ensure the social competence of children. The study recognizes observation as one of the mechanisms through which co-parenting helps to enhance social competence among children.

#### 4) DISCUSSION

##### (a) Impact of Multi-generational Interaction on Young Children's Socialization Development.

The systematic review of the existing literature in concurrence with family systems theory, shows the huge influence of multigenerational interactions in shaping socialization development in children [9]. The family systems theory views family as a single interconnected emotional unit in which the various members of society directly or indirectly impacts each other. The study findings affirm the above view as evident from how parents and grandparents co-parenting influences socialization development in children. The influence of multigenerational interactions on the socialization development of children arises from the kind of social context created in a multigenerational family as compared to other types of family structure.

The study findings indicate that multi-generational families where parents' co-parents with grandparents, positively impacts various aspects of a child's socialization development except those touching on creativity [2]. The negative impact multigenerational interactions have on creativity arises from the fact that grandparents are generally less creative and therefore, their interactions with children can negatively impair children creativity. The

systematic review of the related literature, however indicates that multigenerational interactions facilitates better development of cognitive and social emotional abilities than the other common family structures such as single parent families [4]. Difference in educational performance among children, whereby children brought up in multigenerational families registers higher performance as compared to those from single parent and one generation families. The differences are occasioned by the fact that multigenerational interactions enhance the child exposure, which in turn helps to enhance performance.

#### (b) Socialization Development Mechanisms

##### **Alternative Source of Information**

The relevant literature suggests that the impact of multigenerational interactions on children's socialization development is mediated by multiple socialization mechanisms [4]. One of the main socialization mechanisms associated with multicultural relationships is that co-parenting with grandparents provides different information resources that contribute to children's cognitive and socio-emotional development.

##### **Investment in social capital**

Grandparents also enhances socialization development among children, by enriching the home environment [6]. Multigenerational families involving grandparent occasions increased investment on social capital, which forms an important input that aids socialization development in children [5].

##### **Family Diversity**

Multigenerational households provide a more diverse family background, that helps to enrich child-adult interactions, that in turn helps to enhance children socialization development.

##### **Observation**

A multigenerational family setup, where grandparents are involved in co-parenting, and in which the relationship between parents and grandparents is harmonious, is likely to contribute to socialization development in children [15]. The contribution arises from the fact that a good grandparent-parent relationship provides them with good examples that they can observe, thus offering them the opportunity to learn on how to respond to various social situations.

#### 5) CONCLUSION

Multigenerational interactions pose a huge impact on the socialization development of children. Its influence arises from the kind of social context it creates for children, given that family form the first social encounter for children. Multi-generational families where parents' co-parents with grandparents, positively impacts various aspects of a child's socialization development except such as cognitive and social emotional abilities. It may however, have a negative impact on creativity. Different influence mechanisms explain how multigenerational interactions impacts socialization development. They include the fact that parent – grandparent co-parenting provides an alternative source of information that helps bolster the cognitive and socioemotional abilities of children. They help to enrich the home environment and contributes to increased investment on social capital, which in turn aids socialization development. The other influence mechanism is that multigenerational households provide a more diverse family background, that helps to enrich child interactions, thus enhancing socialization development in children.

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