

**PERCEPTION REGARDING INFORMALLY TAUGHT CULTURAL VALUES AND SKILLS AS  
NEGLECTED AREA IN MODERN DAY EDUCATION**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This research study aims to understand and explore the role of informally taught values and skills which are required to have for living in a society and a culture. Therefore the main purpose of this research is to highlight those skills and values which are being taught informally to the individuals. These informal ways might include teachings of older family members in the form of versatile knowledge and numerous vocational skills which are not formally taught in classrooms and are very much necessary for individuals to be efficient at life and mentally sound in every aspect. In addition to this, through the literature review it also covers the comparison between the informal and the modern/formal teachings to educate a child. Furthermore, this study intends to identify the role of informal ways and behaviors, social and cultural interactions of individuals and informal remedies and advices in the upbringing and education of an individual. Considering the nature of the research topic, this is a qualitative exploratory research in which three data collection tools have been used which includes semi structured interviews, participatory observation and focused group.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Cultural values, life skills, informal education, formal modern education system*

**INTRODUCTION**

There is an important role of education in the development of humans as well as of a country. In general, education is a process of conveying and acquiring knowledge and skills through formal and informal settings. Formally it is given in a structured environment e.g. classrooms and informally education of daily life is given in non-formal settings where concerned skills and knowledge are sought to make every individual function well in society e.g. at home, social gatherings and so on. This is done through communication, observation, interaction with little or nearly no involvement of books and other academic literature. For instance, children learn how to move, communicate (Singh, 2010) and learn with acquisition of values through the processes they go through and by observing their adults (Smith, 1997). Since, the purpose of education is not just making children economically literate but to help children in growing and acquiring the knowledge, skills and developing their characters that make them literate as well as responsible and the contributing members of the society (Sloan, 2012). However, today modern education is lacking in many things and has a lot of weaknesses. It has also been criticized by many researchers and used as the only way to progress. Before the formulation of modern education system, the system of informal education was used as a way to teach cultural values and skills. A cultural aspect is one of the major factors that influence humans and education (Morris, 2013) and defined as a degree to which a group of individuals' exhibits their ideas, practices and social behavior (Fong et al., 2016). According to Shah and Amjad (2011), every region has a cultural background which consists of some cultural and informal practices that necessarily include teachings and advices from the elders of the family. On the other hand, life skills are those positive and flexible behaviors that enables to deal with the challenges and demand of daily life. These skills includes; interpersonal relationship skills, communication skills, surviving skills, empathy etc.

These abilities can acquire through learning and practice in life (Sequeira, 2012). In this regard, the culture of Pakistan is deep rooted with people who have great wisdom and who have informally shaped as well as educated people's minds in a way that their moral conscience overpowered the agenda of modern day education system that is competition and survival. Our eastern culture is rich of such informal learning and teachings and this knowledge of values, skills/remedies was gained through experience and exposure of the individuals to the nature (Shah & Amjad, 2011). These experiences of teaching and learning were taught to the generations in informal ways such as at home by observing elders and by reinforcement which really helped individual people in order to learn different lifelong learning skills. Moreover, the need of time has brought innovation in our older generation who understood the natural resources available around them and has been using these natural resources as remedies to make their life easier. It includes the use of natural herbs for medication, informal farming strategies that includes the preservation of foods, informal method to preserve food, the different ways of teaching certain values to their kids, that includes the way of life especially the concept of whole family, marriages, relationships, so forth and so on (Huang et al., 2017). Our ancestors have successfully educated their next generation by imparting such knowledge through informal ways which were basically used to teach these three basic lifelong learning skills; moral and ethical values, survival skills and self-medication.

Before the introduction of formal education in the era of British-India these teachings were there and for a long period time these were implemented and people used to learn a lot from them. However, after the emergence of modern education system, teaching cultural values and norms was to some extent neglected which could be very effective part of teaching. According to Schreiber (2016), education is now considered as an access to keep oneself updated and to know the ways of earning money easily. Establishment of the scientific, professional and technical courses to train the individuals for huge organizations and for competition, made the system of education as a system of training the pupils for earning and to use them as employees in order to sustain the economy (Triventi et al., 2016)

In the Pakistani education system, the new curriculum is focusing on several things such as knowledge, skills, character building and values, Pakistani nationhood and national integration but the critiques who have wrote about the education and its outcome in Pakistan suggests that all the fundamental and integral teachings such as that of moral values, ethical values and relationship advices which help individuals to live and sustain in the society are been widely neglected by the modern education system. Today's educated people are ashamed of doing work with elders and with hands. They are also ashamed of their local languages, customs and traditions that have damaged the notion of community and left many people disconnected from their families and culture (Jain, 2018). The honor and respect of literate and educated people are given to those who possess the degrees and certificates as evidences of their education whereas, those individuals who do not get any official or certified degrees and called as uneducated and illiterate. In fact, there exists so many people on this planet who do not seek formal education but are very much knowledgeable and have great wisdom which are the compulsory elements in order to solve many challenges and difficulties that we face in our lives (Jain, 2018). He puts emphasis on acknowledging the significance of the skills and learning through local customs and norms which don't need the proper certification or degree. He further adds that in the mainstream of hidden curriculum there are many things that could be appreciated but we can't build a genuine movement for localization without seriously reconsidering education. He is now putting emphasis on eliminating the formal education learning processes and encourages people to become part of their own learning process and to enter into different kinds of unlearning processes to remove the globalized mindset and to start to see how we all are deeper and deeply interconnected at a more profound level.

To summarize all these studies, as the world started evolving and progressing towards an advanced future, education system seemed to be revolutionizing in different areas around the globe. Before expanding the modern education in the subcontinent, education of daily life was given in non-formal settings where skills and knowledge were taught to make every individual function well in society. The focus of education was on teaching moral skills, religions knowledge, basic mathematics and logics at home which has no any proper curricula but had significance most importantly living with love, harmony and peace. However, all the basic teachings of moral values, ethical values and relationship advices been widely neglected by the modern education system in Pakistan. Resultantly, the children and youngsters are far away from their cultural teachings, from what they actually are as a human and from their role to sustain their lives. In India, the work of Manish who is the co-founder of Sawaraj University, putting emphasis on eradicating the formal education learning processes and encouraging people to become part of their own learning process to eliminate the globalized mindset and start to see how we all are closely interconnected at a more profound level. Regardless formal education alone does not serve the needs of real and practical learning of an individual. So, in order to instill real learning in people and amend the current educational set up we most importantly need to acknowledge cultural, and informal learning as the part of compulsory education.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- To explore some of the values and skills which are being taught to children in informal setting even they are going for formal education.
- To understand the importance of such values and skills as a part of lifelong learning.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What is the importance of informally taught cultural values and life skills to the children as a part of lifelong learning?
- What are some of those values and skills which are directly or indirectly taught to children other than formal setting such as at home from elders or by observing them and others?

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

As (Stephens, 2008) argues that students and teachers do not reflect some of those qualities which could be the part of them and have been neglected in the mainstream education. Here comes the role of cultural values, norms and its teaching or informal education; a learning environment where children learn, build and strengthen their moral and cultural values to value and worth the diversity for a peaceful and harmonious life. This study aims to highlight that both formal and informal education are equally important for a human to become a whole and lead a harmonious life. None of these two dimensions should be neglected only because we glorify and practice the other as a fundamental central of education. This study relies upon an ethnographic exploratory research that attempts to explore the role of informal teachings and learning that help in the brought up of an individual and are passed on from generations to generations.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study is purely qualitative and exploratory as it required in depth study and information in order to understand and acknowledge the role of cultural values and life skills through informal ways of teaching. There have three types of tool used in a particular sequence, started with the focused group discussions, interviews and then personal observations. These tools are used by keeping its social outlook in mind in order to explore the views, experiences and motivation of individual participants towards informal ways of teaching and learning certain skills in order to grow and for the survival of their generation. Convenience sampling was therefore applied to approach the target audiences for this study. Selected participants for the group discussions were from the local university of Sindh, in the form of three groups (each group had 3-4 participants). Participants were informed in advance and consented for the group discussion. Later on, a formal meeting was arranged with them and they were guided by a researcher who introduced the topic for generating the discussion and helping a group to participate in more of a natural way and lively discussions. They were asked their views regarding these particular questions that what they have been taught since their childhood from their parents and grand-parents and what values and traditions they have witnessed in their culture or in a family. They were also asked about how they had learned such values and traditions and why these values have been taught to them but the participants couldn't give any satisfactory answers of this even the audiences were unable to answer and tell us about how and why. Their emphasis was on that as such values and traditions are considered good and comes in manners and also taught us through our religious books and religious scholars and Prophet (P.B.U.H) so that is why it's been taught to generation to generations. A sufficient range of opinions from the participants were collected from the discussions which later helped the researchers in making clear and specific questions for an interview guide and reducing the vagueness and helped them in getting the initial themes and findings for the research study.

For semi-structured interviews, the female participants were choose to be interviewed by keeping the contextual realities in mind. As researchers focus was to indicate and highlight this neglected perspective of current education system and how these norms and values is being taught by parents to their children, and its importance so in this regard mainly the role of mother and females is considered very prominent particularly in the context of Pakistan. They are considered to perform very integral part in teaching values and in raising children. Their contribution in child brought up can't be neglected. However, the fathers mostly busy in doing outside the house workloads so they get less time spending time and hours with their little growing children. So, the researchers thought to collect the data from the females of the households both working and housewife; mothers and grandmothers. Researchers faced few challenges including finding the participants for interviews from diverse cultural background and conducted only from the females having Sindhi cultural or Urdu cultural background. Another challenge was that most of the females were feeling nervous in giving interviews so, researchers selected two volunteers for conducting interviews from those participants which were known to them. Around three face to face interviews were conducted by the researchers and

volunteers which were lasted for 25-30 minutes for which interview guide had specific themes; basic survival, moral and ethical values, self-medication or home remedies to be covered and list of questions to be asked from the interviewees. Questions that might not include in the guide were also asked where necessary for further clarification or connecting the ideas and did not follow the way as outlined in the interview guide. Before interviewing, researchers made sure to inform the participants about the study, asked their permission to be a participant for their study. In the whole period of research, researchers have also observed, analyzed and reflected upon their experiences, practices and values related to such ways of teaching and learning certain skills and values from their parents or grandparents. Although they have been living in the context but have never paid attention on these issues but since they decided to do their research on this topic they consciously paid attention and conduct very systematic observations in family and relative gatherings and observed the way elders promote or teach different concepts to their kids. They also observed and reflected the ways and behaviors of their elders while unintentionally teaching them values and sharing the good thoughts and their experiences. They sat in family gatherings, interacted with elders and were more focused on the talks and behaviors which helped them in conducting this study and further strengthened their research methodology.

#### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The interviews conducted from the participants were in Urdu for the ease of the participants so that they can easily understand the topic and freely share their thoughts, learning and experiences without any language barrier. The data analysis process started with transcribing the discussions happened with focused group participants. Relevant sections of the discussion were categorized and transcribed under these following headings/themes: Moral and ethical values, medication and basic survival skill. The information from the interviews were also translated and transcribed into these headings. In writing the final work parts of quotation have been included in a way that the sense of originality can be sensed. However, some efforts were made to refine the language of these quotations so that the intended message can be understood by the readers.

#### **MORAL AND ETHICAL VALUES**

Researchers have mentioned in their literature review section that moral and ethical values are an integral part of life. The philosophy of education, learning or simple knowledge is very broad that covers numerous factors. Education alone have been found critical to the achievement of environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behavior that lead a society towards sustainable development as mentioned in Agenda 21 (Huckle et al., 1996). The participants in research were asked about these values in semi structured interview and as per the comment of one research participant, these values are utterly important as the part of upbringing, they mentioned that *"This has always remained a necessity no matter what era we are living in. These are actually part and parcel of our society. We teach our children ethical and moral values so that when they move in society, they are able to imitate exemplary behaviors which ensure the society with a better tomorrow and with good human beings."*

Now after knowing about the significance of such values we needed to explore whether or not all these values are part of our today's education system. Literature suggests that we highly lack in the integration of all these values in curriculum and in overall process of education. And if we by chance happen to practice and propagate ethical and moral values then it is in name only, without religiously preaching and practicing them. In such a way, education system isolates humans and teaches them the lesson of control over all others and discrimination eliminating any possibility of ethical socialization and cooperation which is known to be the true essence of education (Mochida, 1983).

Many research studies that are parallel to this have claimed that modern education system fails to integrate values as an important part hence the outcomes that it produces are very limited and concern only the achievement of material things. Authors and researchers emphasize that education should necessarily act as a contributing factor towards societal purposes like good citizenship, preparing the learners to be productive members of society in order to preserve cultural values in the long run (Gingell & Winch, 2008). G.M. Trevelyan a famous English historian says that, *"Education has produced a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading."* A participant in our research study in response to the question about the structure of modern that; *"Today's education is very modern. The education in older times was good than modern education. Children were taught necessary knowledge and got mostly trained at their homes in the company of their elders"*

The discussion above implies that modern education system does not cater to the needs of a holistic approach towards life and different ethical and moral values that are important in the walk of life. People, however want their children to learn these values in order to prepare a sound and healthy society which is evident from the response of one of our research participant,

*"Surely, what I have got from my parents I would like my children to learn all those values and practice them in their lives for example; they should be generous, grateful, do not lie, hospitable at all times and kind to every living being."*

**BASIC SURVIVAL SKILLS**

Second theme that emerged from the data was basic survival skills that are informally taught to individuals in the form of training informally by elders. Survival is basically the act of living in the world from the day of birth till death. For living in this world, we need and require a lot of things which help us in continuing our lives in the world of variety of species, weather and things. We need to have skills for extreme and bitter conditions to cope up with and continue to survive and live our lives. The requirement of survival skills has changed as time passes because of the changing in life and living styles, eating habits and increase in population. During one interview a research participant mentioned about the importance of education being a tool to lifelong survival, *“Knowledge surely is a lifelong survival path, and it should be treated that way but unfortunately our education system is promoting such standards of acquiring knowledge where it should only be seen as a means of earning employability”*

It has been established that basic survival skills are connected with society and people. Nothing can be learnt in isolation, this is the reason that we need to make our learners capable enough that they observe the things that happen in their surroundings closely, learn lessons from their and then practice them in their routine. For integration of such skills in formal ways we have to make our education system based on problem solving and reach to a more practical approach towards any and all tasks that we give to students. One of our research participant responded to the question when we asked them about how they managed to be scientifically aware of the facts concerning daily life *“We didn’t know about proper terms and written instructional information. So we used to understand and learn from our capacity of mind. Observation was a necessary requirement for us to drive conclusions and understand something properly.”*

**SELF-MEDICATION OR HOME REMEDIES**

Self-medication describes the use of medications or home remedies in the case of any emergency and problem before going for the medical consultation from the doctor regarding dosage, indication and treatment (Bennadi, 2013). It becomes a first priority of people and commonly practiced all over the world especially in Pakistani context. In the rural areas, the remedies is used to reduce the medical expenses load as most of the people could not afford the high fees for their treatment and medicines. Self-medication is an art which doesn’t come over night but requires a certain level of knowledge and expertise which can be learnt from elders or comes from experiencing a variety of things through experimentation. One of our research participants shared their own view about self-medicating tips and their firm belief on them as, *“All these things come from our elders and they surely got them from their elders hence it becomes a lifelong chain of passing on information. Every time I use these tips they work for me which made me believe that they are workable and should be passed on to next generation also.”*

This is something that an individual never learns at school despite of the fact that he/she will need to use this in many stages throughout their life. Home remedies and medications at home first are very advantageous to people, it facilitates use of clinical skills efficiently, increases access to and exposure to medicines and help economically as well in reducing prescribed drug costs (Hughes et al., 2001).

Our analysis suggests that learners should be exposed to environment as much as possible even in the formal setting of education. This is the only way through which they could be made efficient and smart in such a field like medication. One of our research participant mentioned about the importance self-medication near them, *“We have been hearing about these life saving tips/totkas since we were kids. Our elders used to do these things that is why we have acquired them and implemented in our lives, for example in the case of flu we often use honey for kids and apply homemade massage cream to lessen the effect of flu.”* Thus, we can conclude that there is still requirement of embedding these skills into our modern education system both formally and informally through curriculum, classroom activities, society wise projects and the like.

**CONCLUSION**

This research study is conducted in order to highlight the importance of informal ways of teaching cultural values and survival skills which play a significant role in an individual’s brought up. On one hand where modern education promotes to be self-centered, materialistic and competition with the world economy this informal teaching of cultural values teaches to bring people together, create a sense of empathy, care, love and live for one another. So, from the above findings and discussions we can conclude the importance of informally learnt values and claim that the informal education is very important for the survival of human beings. Pakistan is rich of such knowledge and has lots of values and has a system where there was once given great importance to such informal teachings. Pakistani culture is so rich that it possesses not only agricultural lands, mountains, historical places and cities, diverse traditions and norms but also rich in its cultural values, medication skills and teachings. Such values, skills and teachings have been transferred through different means in the different generations. However, from past few decades the entire system is changed and we are now witnessing the system of modern education which ignores the cultural and ethical values and knowledge and with the passage of time these cultural values and knowledge are slowly and gradually fading away. However, these values actually are undeniably important and we learn them in the form of informal education from our elders or parents which helps us to be a lifelong learner to survive in that environment. There were few initiatives

taken by Manish Jain, a well-known educationist of India whose perspective is to promote the values, teachings and skills that are neglected by the modern education system and have founded an institution with the name of Swaraj University in India with the concept of unlearning the formal learning processes and each individual taking part in their own learning processes. In Pakistan, there are few studies conducted on this topic, therefore this study attempts to bridge this gap with the above mentioned objectives.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Particularly, in Pakistani context there are only few works done on these topics. Hence need of more researches to acknowledge the role and part of informal ways of teachings is required.
- The modern formal education must align with the cultural values and responsibilities and must not neglect its importance in the life of an individual.
- The goals of modern education must promote the skills in individuals being a human not making them machines and robots to work for earning money and fame.
- Modern education system must include such learning materials that are crucial and give prior emphasis to the holistic development of an individual hence, making them efficient citizens.

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