Family Climate in Nurturing Individuals' Self-Concept: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT
In general, family has a significant influence on how individuals form their self-evaluations because they form their primary self-concepts in their familial context, which serves as a foundation for secondary self-concepts formed through relationships outside the family. Therefore, this paper aims to focus on the influence of family climate in nurturing individuals' self-concept. This study obtained the data from qualitative research for the doctoral degree of one of the authors and involved 46 millennial respondents who lived in Malaysia. The Google Forms (Docs) have been utilised in conducting a web-based written interview from May to July 2021. By referring to the feedback of the respondents, this study found the family climate influenced the self-concept of the individuals in five aspects, which are in terms of their ideology, education, character building, religious belief, and political belief. This study believes that the identification of the influence of family climate toward the self-concept of their family members allows more opportunities for them to improve their families' significant responsibilities in helping their children build and refine their positive self-concept. As a result, key qualities and characteristics of good citizenship are promoted at the individual, interpersonal and societal levels.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature on sociology to the family psychology research area, particularly in relation to the understanding of positive family climate and its influence on self-concept through a qualitative approach that can promote the creation of good citizenship.
1. Introduction

Earlier, Oti (2005) referred to a family as a collection of people who have affinity, consanguine, or adoption relationships and are within two generations of each other. In other words, a family is a social group defined by shared dwellings, economic cooperation, and reproduction. A family can also be referred to as a group of two or more people who are connected through blood, marriage, adoption, stepparenting, or fostering and who normally live in the same household. According to Resett et al. (2016), family has a major influence on how individuals form their self-evaluations as they develop their main self-concepts in their familial context, which serves as a basis for secondary self-concepts formed through relationships beyond the family.

Self-concept is one aspect of personality. Because of its inextricable link with the construction of a healthy and balanced personality, Openshaw, Thomas, and Rolling (1984) as well as Yaacob (2006) refer to the self-concept as the most crucial dimension of personality. The self-concept of an individual involves structures that are a fundamental aspect of their mental health, such as a feeling of high personal value, which is associated with greater psychological well-being (Harter, 2012; Resett et al., 2016). Self-concept is related to the judgement of individuals of how positive or negative all areas of life are. Therefore, it may project all the expectations of individuals as a way of interpreting their lived experiences (Harter & Leahy, 2001).

When conveyed through acts of affection and acceptance of an individual's actions, many scholars, such as Hattie (1992), Felson and Zielinski (1989), as well as Rosenberg (1979), believe parental support greatly contributes to a good self-concept of the growing individual. Previous research (for example, Baharudin & Zulkefly, 2009; Mandara & Murray, 2000; Brody & Flor, 1997) has found that the way a family functions and the quality of its members' growing interpersonal interactions has a significant influence on the individual's self-concept. Other researchers, like Kiritsis and Papadopoulou (2011) and Song and Hattie (1985), found that when parents are involved in their children's learning and education, many of their functional traits are supported by their practices, attitudes, and expectations. They claim that this situation has an influence on the individual's self-concept.

Many investigations have concentrated on the specific function of the mother in comparison to the role of the father in detecting the involvement of parents in shaping the self-concept of adolescents. Previous research (for example, Hendricks et al., 2005; Nelson & Valliant, 1993; Peretti and DiVittorio, 1992) discovered a statistically significant link between the absence of the father from home and the adolescent's self-concept. However, the level of significance was low. Gecas and Schwalbe (1972) found a substantial link between the two (especially between father and son). Then, according to Makri-Botsari (2000) and Graybill (1978), the mother is the individual's primary point of reference, the dominant figure with whom they form a close interaction relationship.

2. The Aim of this Study

McLoughlin et al. (2020) highlighted limited research on the potential influence the family climate, particularly that of the parents, has on the development of an individual's personal beliefs about such typically unobservable entities and events. Therefore, this paper aims to focus on the influences of family climate in nurturing individuals' self-concept. This study believes the identification of these influences is crucial to be
highlighted in knowing the influence of the family climate on the individuals and thus, allowing more ways to improve their significant roles.

3. Research Methodology

The data was obtained from qualitative research for the doctoral degree of one of the authors that was collected within a three-month period from May 2021 to July 2021. The research involved 46 millennial respondents who lived in Malaysia. As mentioned by Opara, Spangsdorf and Ryan (2021), Google Forms (Docs) are underutilised as a tool to facilitate qualitative interviews within research. Therefore, this study utilised this platform to conduct a web-based written interview during the Covid-19 pandemic. A qualitative expert has validated the research instruments. After obtaining the feedback from the respondents, this study conducted thematic analysis and Nvivo 12 Pro has been utilised in managing the wealth of the data. Meanwhile, two ethical concerns were considered during the data analysis procedure to maintain the trustworthiness of research findings. The first is by maintaining the identity of the respondent confidently. When data is stated not to be correlated with an individual, confidentiality is preserved. This is supported by Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2012). This ethical concern is noteworthy since it corresponds to the term used in the informed consent forms. Second, ethical concern is demonstrated by the accurate presentation of information. To put it another way, any misleading information and biassed depiction of the main data findings can be avoided.

4. Findings and Discussion

By analysing the respondents’ feedback regarding the influences of family climate on nurturing their self-concept, this paper concluded that their family climate influenced the self-concept of the respondents in five aspects. These five aspects are, as illustrated in Figure 1, ideology, education, character development, religious belief, and political belief.

Figure 1: The Influences of Family Climate in Nurturing Individuals’ Self-Concept

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4.1. Ideology

By referring to the feedback from the respondents, shaping the ideology is the first aspect influenced by the family climate. The respondents of this study stated that:

“[…] Ideologies, habits and religion” (Respondent 1, Female, Chinese)

“[…] My ideology and attitude […]” (Respondent 3, Female, Chinese)

“[…] My education, mannerisms and sometimes ways of thinking (ideologies)” (Respondent 15, Female, Malay)

“Yes, how we behave, what we value and how we respond will influence our development as an individual” (Respondent 19, Female, Malay)

“My family shaped my ideology… […]” (Respondent 23, Female, Malay)

“[…] Because I spent 24/7 with my mother and father when I was young, 70% of my personality (ideology) has been influenced by them. Parents play an important role when influencing their children” (Respondent 28, Female, Malay)

“A lot… in terms of my character, personality, perspective (ideology), and political beliefs. Half of myself has been influenced by my family… […]” (Respondent 30, Female, Malay)

“Too much influence. My dad shaped my views about the outside world and how I should react to my problems. I will ask for the opinion of my dad if I face any problem” (Respondent 33, Male, Malay)

All the above evidence shows how the family of these respondents influenced their ideology. Generally, it can be said that the family has been producing stories that capture the individual’s theories about how the world works and how they should act within this complex universe. These narratives, which range from religious beliefs to political manifestos, and from racial supremacy to authoritarian nationalism, both describe and prescribe their conduct. These accounts are referred to as "ideologies" and cover a large portion of their personal and social lives. Zmigrod (2020) explained that the psychological study of ideology has traditionally emphasised the content of ideological beliefs, guided by questions about what people believe, such as why they believe in omniscient gods or fascist worldviews.

4.2. Education

Other than shaping their ideology, the respondents of this study also mentioned that their education has also been influenced by their family. In this study, the respondents mentioned that:
“My education, mannerisms and sometimes way of thinking”
(Respondent 15, Female, Malay)

“[…] Education, financial decisions, personality traits… […]”
(Respondent 37, Female, Malay)

Briefly, it can be said that other than serving as the child’s first point of interaction with society and as the foundation for a person’s social identity, the family also provides the child’s upbringing, socialisation, and education. Indeed, the children’s drive to learn and academic progress are linked to the consistency and quality of their family interactions. The reason for this is that diverse, supportive learning settings exist for different children who have the love, time, and financial resources to meet their school requirements.

Furthermore, this study also believes parental education has an influence on their understanding of the profession and life, as well as their experiences, horizons, and, ultimately, their decisions for themselves and their children. It has been supported by a few studies (to name a few: Cui, Liu & Zhao, 2019; Carneiro, Meghir, & Parey, 2013; Rindermann & Ceci, 2018; Al-Bahrani et al., 2020) that well-educated families strive to provide a better future for their children by utilising their knowledge and experience. Previous studies conducted by Steinberg (2009) and Rudney (2005) also proved that a positive family climate, such as the involvement, encouragement, and positive reinforcement of parents, influences children’s academic competence. These findings are aligned with the findings in this study.

4.3. Character Building

This study also found the family climate influenced the character building of the millennials. In this study, a few respondents highlighted how the positive family climate influenced their positive character building. They mentioned that:

“Never give up…” (Respondent 4, Female, Chinese)

“Always do my best…” (Respondent 5, Male, Chinese)

“[…] become more enthusiastic” (Respondent 17, Male, Malay)

“[…] More responsible” (Respondent 21, Female, Malay)

“[…] Be more responsible” (Respondent 24, Male, Kadazan)

“Influence from a mental point of view that is always concerned with working hard and looking for opportunities”
(Respondent 27, Male, Malay)

This study’s findings are consistent with previous research (for example: Banstola et al., 2020; Sugiarti et al., 2021; Tulip et al., 2020; Smith-Adcock et al., 2019), which found that the family climate, as mediated by parenting, plays an important role in the development of character in adolescents. Other experts, such as Huang et al. (2021) as well as Lin and Chiao (2020), have argued that family members will display diverse personalities influenced by their parents at home, which will be strengthened as they
grow older. Hart et al. (2019) also stated that this influence will grow as their social circle expands, regardless of whether they choose peace, value variety, or demonstrate self-awareness of the social context. Children will mimic a positive family climate, such as parents who practise positive parenting (Green et al., 2018; Thoma et al., 2021).

4.4. Religious Belief

In addition to influencing ideology, education, and character building, respondents in this study stated that their family climate influences their religious beliefs. One of the respondents explained that:

“My parents definitely aspire me to be a good individual and muslim, both in this world and hereafter. My husband supported me all the way from my study and in everything I do... so i’m thankful to have wonderful people in my life as they shaped me to become grateful and positive in life” (Respondent 26, Female, Malay)

Besides social practises, conventions, and structures, Truong et al. (2022) highlighted that religious belief is powerful and influential in influencing the lives of many individuals and societies. The family is the setting for the transmission of religious beliefs and practises from one generation to the next and is therefore vital to the survival and continuance of religious traditions and communities. It is more likely that children will follow in their parents' religious footsteps if the family has a religious atmosphere. The term “religious footsteps” refers to a variety of aspects, including the parents' religious importance; religious instruction; religious attendance; and the discussion and practise of religion at home.

Positive parent-child relationships characterised by parental support and control, often called authoritative parenting, or adopting an authoritative parenting style, aid religion transfer from parents to children. This indicates that parents are aware of their child’s activities and locations, as well as being responsive and affectionate toward them. As a result, parents cultivate an environment favourable to religious transmission within the family. If authoritative parenting promotes a culture of mutual compliance and collaboration between parents and children, the latter will be more willing to adopt family (religious) ideas.

4.5. Political Belief

The respondents in this study also highlighted on the influence of family climate to their political belief. In this study, the respondents mentioned that:

“A lot... in terms of my character, personality, perspective (ideology), and political beliefs. Half of myself has been influenced by my family [...]” (Respondent 30, Female, Malay)

Hannon and Ridder (2020) refer to political belief as the beliefs that concern, on the one hand, descriptive facts about the workings and development of political systems at various levels (from international to local) and, on the other, normative beliefs about the right course for politics, ranging from very general beliefs about what a just society would look like, to more specific beliefs about what policy proposals would be good to implement, what laws would need to be passed, how best to realize one's political vision,
and what candidates to vote for. According to the model of party identification, Turan and Tiras (2017) explained that individual’s interest in politics begins before they reach voting age, and this inclination is greatly influenced by their social surroundings.

Identification with the party occurs within the family at an early age, and children of parents who are highly involved in politics have higher psychological allegiances to a certain party. Turan and Tiras (2017) also consider the formation of individuals’ political attitudes and behaviours, the effects of these attitudes and behaviours on the individual’s political participation activities, and the "family" factor, which is thought to have a significant impact on the individual's political attitudes and behaviours. These findings are aligned with the findings in this study.

5. Limitations and Suggestion for Future Studies

As mentioned earlier, this study utilised Google Forms (Docs) as a tool to facilitate web-based written interviews during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, this study believes the implementation of qualitative data collection through verbal communication will give more added value to the wealth or richness of the data. Therefore, this study suggests a future study to consider this option.

6. Conclusion

As a conclusion, while the findings of this study proved the influence of the family climate on individuals’ self-concepts in terms of their ideology, education, character building, and both religious and political beliefs, the family members, particularly parents, should strive to instil a positive climate in their family. Indeed, a positive family climate involves the household’s constructive responses to worry, stress, toxic situations, and social problems. This circumstance centres around the parents’ realistic and good family beliefs. Therefore, this social context should be implemented at home for the benefit of all family members and the development of a positive self-concept in all aspects, including but not limited to ideology, education, character building, religious belief and political belief.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this study.
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