

Social Institutions for Child Development: Mother's Lap, Family System, School, and Community

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Abstract

Both biological and social factors affect how kids grow and change. These items help people grow in many ways, including emotionally, socially, cognitively, and morally. In India, four main places take care of kids from birth to their teenage years: the mother's lap, the joint family system, school, and the community (neighbours). This study examines how each school contributes to overall growth. The study utilised a validated Likert-scale questionnaire to collect primary data from 120 individuals. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression were used to analyse the data. The results show that all four institutions have a big effect on how children grow and develop. The school is the best predictor, followed by maternal care, support from the entire family, and the community environment. The research connects its findings to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). It requires that institutions work together to help children grow.

Keywords: child development, mother's lap, joint family system, school, community, socialisation

1. Introduction

From birth to adolescence, a child's body, mind, emotions, and morals grow and change. This is called child development. Genetics, biological maturation, and the social environment in which a child is reared significantly impact developmental outcomes. Sociologists and developmental psychologists assert that children develop within structured institutional frameworks that guide behaviour, learning, and value formation (Santrock, 2019).

In traditional Indian society, family, school, and community all work together to help kids learn and grow. The Mother's Lap is the first and most

private location where a kid can acquire love, care, and emotional protection. The Family System is a bigger network that helps people adapt to changing conditions, learn the difference between right and wrong, and keep their culture alive. Schools are places where individuals learn things like how to be disciplined, how to get information, and how to do things. Communities have an impact on social identity, civic ideals, and moral behaviour.

The way people raise their kids has changed due to advances in technology, urbanisation, industry, and shifting family dynamics. Because joint families are becoming less prevalent and parents

are busier, schools and communities are expected to help out more. To make successful policies and actions, you need to know what these four organisations do.

2. Review of the Literature

Studies in developmental psychology demonstrate the significance of early childhood experiences. Bowlby's attachment theory posits that a robust emotional bond between the child and their primary carer, typically the mother, is crucial. This bond lays the framework for emotional stability, trust, and the development of a healthy personality (Bowlby, 1988). Children who get abundant love and attention throughout their formative years are more inclined to exhibit self-confidence, emotional regulation, and resilience in the face of adversity in later life. And Lal's peace begins at home. Emotional intelligence is not enough to help a child grow emotionally; peace is also vital. When people share principles like compassion, forgiveness, respect, and shared responsibility, peace grows (Lal, 2025).

Erikson's psychosocial theory says that the earliest stages of development are about figuring out how to deal with issues such as trust vs mistrust and independence vs shame (Erikson, 1993). The successful resolution of these stages depends on the level of attention and emotional support provided within the family.

Sociological study identifies the joint family system as a crucial institution for socialisation in India. Desai and Andrist (2010) observed that blended families promote the transmission of values, social discipline, and emotional security through intergenerational connection. Grandparents play an important part in teaching morals, sharing stories, and introducing children to different cultures. Elders work together to teach youth how to act.

Sociologists who study education see schools as organised places where people learn to get along with each other. Durkheim (1956) asserted that schools instil discipline and communal values vital for social cohesion. Schools also help kids talk to each other, work together, compete, and become leaders. They help kids learn how to act like adults in society.

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, a child's growth is affected by many levels of their environment. These are the family, school, neighbourhood, and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). People can grow in a

good way when they live in a helpful community. On the other hand, bad things like crime, poverty, and social disorganisation can make people act badly and destroy their goals and dreams.

3. Objectives

- 1) To study how important the mother's lap is for early emotional and mental growth.
- 2) To analyse the Joint Family System's role in fostering moral and social development.
- 3) To assess the role of schools in cognitive and personality development.
- 4) To understand the influence of the community on child socialisation and civic values.
- 5) To analyse how institutional factors affect a child's growth and development.

4. Hypotheses

H1: The mother's lap has a significant influence on a child's emotional development.

H2: The joint family positively influences social adjustment.

H3: School has a significant effect on cognitive development.

H4: The community's atmosphere has a great impact on moral and civic growth.

5. Methodology

The study used a research design that was both descriptive and analytical. We got primary data from 120 respondents by using a structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale that went from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." We used convenience sampling. There were six elements to the questionnaire: demographic profile, Mother's Lap, Joint Family System, School, Community, and child development outcomes. We used Pearson's correlation to find out how the institutions were connected to developmental outcomes. Multiple regression examined how well the four schools can guess how well a child will do in life.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 The Mother's Lap: A Place for Early Cognitive Development and Emotional Safety

Emotional Attachment as the Basis of Development: The child's primary institutional context is the mother's lap, symbolising maternal care, affection, and protection. During infancy, emotional attachment is crucial in shaping future psychological outcomes. According to Bowlby's attachment theory, a strong bond between a baby

and its main provider helps the baby feel stable, confident, and socially skilled (Bowlby, 1988). A child with a strong bond is more likely to confidently explore their environment, creating additional possibilities for cognitive development.

Erikson's psychosocial theory states that "trust versus distrust" begins in infancy, and that consistent care helps foster trust and hope (Erikson, 1993). When providers respond to an infant's needs with care, the child feels emotionally secure, which is the foundation for future intellectual exploration.

Cognitive Development in Early Childhood: Cognitive development begins in infancy through sensory experiences and social interaction. Piaget (1952) claimed that the sensorimotor stage, which lasts from birth to two years, is when babies learn by actively investigating the world around them. Mothers enhance cognitive development by encouraging sensory stimulation, object exploration, imitation, and the development of emerging symbolic cognition.

Learning a language is one of the most significant things that happens to your brain when you are young. Talking to your child helps them acquire new words, recognise sounds, and recall things (Santrock, 2019). Telling stories, singing lullabies, identifying things, and having conversations that respond to what someone else says are all activities that assist establish the brain's language and thinking circuits. New studies on development show that early stimulation alters the brain's flexibility. The brain connections that form throughout infancy enable subsequent executive tasks such as problem-solving, attention regulation, and working memory.

Moral and Social Foundations: Mothers show their children important moral lessons by being nice, understanding, and working together. Having emotional intelligence at a young age helps you get along with others and do well in school later on. Kids who get a lot of love and attention are better at paying attention in class and managing themselves.

So, the Mother's Lap is the best place for youngsters to feel comfortable and get their brains working, which helps them do well in school and in life.

6.2 The Family System: Structured Socialisation and Guided Learning

Family as the Primary Social Institution: Following initial maternal care, the extended family structure plays a crucial role in development. The family, whether it is a nuclear family or a joint family, provides structure, discipline, and moral guidance. In traditional Indian families, joint families help different generations connect with each other, which makes children's social experiences better. Family is more than just a refuge to remain protected from the weather or the world around you. It is a living, breathing place that is safe, serene, and full of love. To understand serenity that originates at home, one must first perceive the home as a sanctuary (Lal, 2025).

According to Desai and Andrist (2010), living with extended family helps people pass on their values and feel responsible for others. Grandparents often contribute to cultural narratives, religious traditions, and moral education, thereby reinforcing societal norms.

Sociocultural Scaffolding of Cognitive Skills: Vygotsky's sociocultural theory says that cognitive growth happens when people interact in a systematic way within a cultural framework (Vygotsky, 1978). The "Zone of Proximal Development" explains the gap between what a youngster can do on their own and what they can do with support from those who know more than they do.

Family members give youngsters support by helping them with their homework, encouraging them to ask questions and think about things, explaining social events, and teaching them how to deal with challenges in real life. These interactions improve higher-level cognitive skills like logical reasoning, analytical thinking, and reflective judgement.

Moral Reasoning and Ethical Development: Kohlberg's theory says that kids go through stages of moral reasoning that are moulded by social discourse and ethical deliberations (Kohlberg, 1984). These kinds of conversations generally happen in families. Parents teach their kids about being honest, fair, and responsible by correcting them, explaining things to them, and offering them examples.

When kids spend time with cousins and older relatives in the same environment, they learn how to work together and solve problems. The Family System functions as a secondary, structured institution that facilitates cognitive development, moral reasoning, and social

adaptation.

6.3 School: Formal Intellectual and Skill Development

School as a location for Formal Socialisation: School is the best location for kids to learn and grow in a structured way. Durkheim (1956) said that schools teach people the values that are important for keeping a community together. Schools do more than teach kids right from wrong; they also give them systematic intellectual instruction.

Development of Cognitive Competencies: School programs encourage higher-level cognitive skills like abstract reasoning, solving arithmetic problems, doing scientific research, critical thinking, and writing analytically.

Teachers give youngsters structured lessons to help them learn how to read and write. Santrock (2019) states that learning in the classroom helps with memory, focus, and thinking about how you learn. Assessment and feedback systems assist people in improving their cognitive skills by having them think about how well they are doing and how they can do better.

Peer Interaction and Social Cognition: Peer relationships in educational environments are essential for the advancement of social cognition. People learn how to talk to each other and see things from other people’s points of view when they work on group projects, fight, and learn together. Being around people who think differently from you makes you more understanding and better at thinking critically.

Extracurricular Development: Kids who play sports, do arts and crafts, and take on leadership roles get better at being creative, following rules, and solving issues. People mostly improve their minds and shape their personalities at school.

6.4 Community Environment: Broader Social and Civic Learning

Community as an Ecological Context: Children interact with the broader community alongside family and educational institutions. Bronfenbrenner (1979) says that social networks, cultural institutions, and communities all have an effect on how people grow up.

Informal Cognitive Enrichment: Community services like libraries, clubs, and cultural centres give people chances to learn new things outside of school. Being in real-life situations helps you learn via experience and think critically.

Civic and Moral Development: Volunteering

teaches students about civic duty, how to be a leader, and how to participate in democracy. Kohlberg (1984) asserts that moral reasoning evolves as individuals are exposed to diverse ethical perspectives throughout society. So, being active in the community makes people more conscious of their civic duties and better at making decisions on the spot.

These four schools work together to make each other stronger. The Mother’s Lap gives you emotional safety and a little bit of mental stimulation. The Family System helps with moral discipline and guided learning. The school makes it official that students are learning. The Community makes learning via experience and understanding of civic issues broader.

The ecological model proposed by Bronfenbrenner supports the notion that these systems function optimally in collaboration (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the warm, often unpredictable circumstances of our homes, emotional intelligence is not simply a psychological theory; it is also a very crucial method to engage with and understand other people. It is the delicate art of identifying, comprehending, and controlling not only our own emotions but also those of our intimate family members (Lal, 2025).

6.5 Demographic Information Regarding the Respondents

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents (n = 120)

Sl. No	Indicator	Frequency	Total & Percentage
1	Gender	Male	62(51.7)
		Female	58(48.3)
2	Age Group	Below 20	18(15.0)
		21–30	34(28.3)
		31–40	29(24.2)
		41–50	24(20.0)
		Above 50	15(12.5)
3	Family Type	Nuclear	68(56.7)
		Joint	52(43.3)
4	Residence	Rural	54(45.0)
		Urban	66(55.0)

Table 1 shows that the persons who took the poll were evenly split between men and women,

young and old, and families and residences of varied types. Including members from both nuclear and combined households offers insight into the impact of varied family environments on child development.

6.6 Likert Scale Outcomes

Table 2. Average Scores for Schools and Child Development Outcomes

Mother’s Lap	4.38	0.64	Very High
Joint Family System	4.24	0.66	High
School	4.42	0.60	Very High
Community	4.21	0.68	High
Overall Child Development	4.33	0.63	Very High

Table 2 demonstrates that the high mean values indicate that all four institutions are very important for the development of babies. It also means that everyone who answered the question agrees.

6.7 Study of Correlation

Table 3. Pearson’s Correlation Results

Variables	r	Significance
Mother’s Lap × Emotional Development	0.72	p < 0.01
Joint Family × Social Adjustment	0.65	p < 0.01
School × Cognitive Development	0.78	p < 0.01
Community × Moral–Civic Values	0.60	p < 0.01

All the relationships in Table 3 are positive and statistically significant, which supports the stated hypotheses.

6.8 Regression Analysis

Table 4. Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
0.84	0.71	0.69

Table 5. Regression Coefficients

Predictor	β	Sig.
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Mother’s Lap	0.42	0.000
Joint Family System	0.31	0.000
School	0.46	0.000
Community	0.28	0.000

Table 5 shows that the regression model explains 71% of the differences in overall child development. Of the four institutions, the school has the highest statistical effect on child development, making it the most essential. “Mother’s Lap” is the next thing. It illustrates how crucial it is for mothers to take care of their babies early on. The community environment and support from the whole family also have substantial effects, but they are not as big as the other two. All four institutions, whether working alone or together, let us make educated guesses about how a child’s growth will go.

7. Discussion

The results demonstrate that a variety of major institutions affect how children grow up. School is the best predictor, indicating how crucial a solid education is for mental and personality development. Mother’s Lap has a significant impact, underscoring the importance of caring for kids’ feelings from a young age. People learn how to live in society and what is right and wrong by living in a mixed family. Community environments help people learn about their civic responsibilities and social values.

Sociological theories positing that child development arises from institutional interconnection rather than solely human effort are substantiated by the acceptance of all hypotheses.

7.1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Child Growth

The study aligns with the UN’s global development goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Early childhood care supports SDG 4.2, quality schooling supports SDG 4.1 and 4.4, and family and community institutions that promote social cohesion and civic involvement support SDG 16 (Kim-2024).

8. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Families, schools, and communities all help kids grow and learn. A child’s emotional, social, cognitive, and moral growth is influenced by their mother’s lap, the united family system, school, and the community. It is necessary to

work together to enhance these institutions so that they can help develop responsible, capable, and moral citizens.

Create programs that help parents and kids get stronger. Get families from different generations to talk to each other. Make education a better place for everyone. Make neighbourhoods safe and welcoming for kids, and make it easier for families, schools, and communities to work together.

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