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## The Role of Grandparents in Child Psychology: A Study of Joint Family Systems in Pakistan

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### Abstract

*In most joint families, grandparents serve as influential figures in nurturing a child's psychological evolution, especially where other relatives are frequently present. Their presence deeply impacts a child's wellbeing and aids in their socialization and mental development. Nevertheless, very few studies are done which explore the gradual process of modern grand parenting in Pakistani joint families. The goal of this study is to assess the psychosocial outcomes of grandparental involvement on children in Pakistani joint families systems with regard to their emotional, social and cognitive development. A qualitative approach was adopted using semi-structured interviews with sample of 30 members of joint families across Pakistan. Thematic analysis was used to evaluate the patterns and themes emerging from the data. A majority of grandparents reported playing a positive role in enhancing children's emotional security, moral understanding, and abilities to resolve conflicts. By providing guidance alongside the provision of cultural, and emotional support to their grandchildren, grandparents help alleviate children's stress. Moreover, through storytelling, problem-solving, and other traditional forms of teaching, grandparents help foster children's resilience as well as enhance their cognitive skills. Nonetheless, intra-generational disagreements and varying approaches to parenting does complicate the caregiving relationship sometimes. This was of course very prominent considering the significance of extended family structures in Pakistan. The contribution of grandparents to children's emotional health, social adjustment, and even cognitive activities is significant. Broader policies that ensure child health and development in Pakistan should consider the cultivation of intergenerational families to enhance the cohesiveness of the family system. There is a need to further study ways of resolving intergenerational tensions while enhancing the advantages of grandparents' care.*

**Keywords:** Grandparents, child psychology, joint family system, intergenerational bonding, Pakistan, emotional development, socialization.

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### 1. Introduction

Having grandparents involved in a child's life presents tremendous advantages, especially in multiple family unit cultures for psychological growth (Jamil et al., 2023). In Pakistan, the joint family system is still a prevailing phenomenon that promotes close family ties such that grandparents do not only act as caregivers, but also as the family's emotional apparatus, wisdom dispensers, and culture bearers, playing important roles for the cognitive and socio-emotional development of the child (Iqbal et al., 2022). The psychological effects of such multi-generational living arrangements are profound, as children raised in joint families seem more emotionally secure and resilient due to the nurturing role of their grandparents

(Hania et al., 2022). The role of grandparents, in this context is vital in understanding the impact of family systems on childhood development (Jamshed & Kamal, 2021; Aziz et al., 2022).

Grandparents can either serve as primary caregivers or supplementary caregivers and they assist in providing a safe emotional environment for families, especially when the parents are absent or upset (Khan & Meher, 2021). Their availability is reassuring and helps children cope with stress and emotional fluctuations. Studies show that positive relationships across generations improve emotional and psychological regulation because children draw from the empathy, patience, and experience of older family members (Shekhani, 2024). Also, the loving relationship between the grandchildren and their grandparents acts as a resistance against external social negative impacts, increasing social adjustment of the child (Hosain et al., 2024). In the absence of nuclear constraints, children from joint families are socialized within an arrangement where they receive attention from diverse parents, which boost their feelings of acceptance and safety necessary for proper mental development (Aslam et al., 2022).

The involvement of grandparents has a profound impact on children's emotional, cognitive, and moral development (Rehman, 2024). Children are told stories, cultural myths, and moral lessons which shape their cognitive and moral development by grandparents, the custodians of tradition and history. This type of learning not only supplements formal education but also promotes one's ability to reason, make decisions, and understand issues within a society (Sindhu et al., 2020). In older family structures, like the joint family system, intergenerational education turns traditional knowledge into modern schooling and blends it with experiential learning, therefore, allowing for greater comprehension of the world (Iqbal et al., 2022). These forms of communication are central to a child's understanding of the world, enabling him to deal with the complexities of contemporary life within the framework of family and culture (Chung, 2023).

Another area is social development, where grandparents are known to have a critical impact (Iqbal et al., 2022). Within extended family arrangements, children are regularly immersed in active multi-generational contexts that allow them to acquire vital social competencies through inter and intra group activities (Hania et al., 2022; Ayaz et al., 2024). Grandparents further teach children the virtues of respect towards older members of the family, compassion, and a sense of communal obligation which are useful in upholding traditional familial values that govern their social conduct (Jamshed & Kamal, 2021). These lessons help to nurture children with a strong sense of morality, and encourage pro-social activities and relationships (Aslam et al., 2022). The family system in question with its distinct focus on child care cooperation and functional specialization aids in nurturing children to be more adaptive and socially aware at the macro level (Khan & Meher, 2021).

The analysis of grandparental bonding through joint family systems reveals that while it has numerous benefits, there are also challenges that must be addressed (Iqbal et al., 2022). Conflicts within families are sometimes brought about by differences in parenting styles, disciplinary attitudes, and overall ideologies across generations (Rehman, 2024). Children unduly relying on their grandparents for emotional and cognitive support may also impede their autonomy development and self-sufficiency. Regardless of all these challenges, grandparents have a significantly positive role in the childhood psychological development within the context of joint family systems (Rasheed et al., 2022; Akram et al., 2024). Within contemporary Pakistan, this modern reality intertwined with the traditional role of grandparents in child care is very important in understanding the development of child psychology (Khan & Meher, 2021).

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

This study explores the researched psychological domain of intergenerational families to understand elder child caring grandparents and their psychology (Hosain et al., 2024). Intensive research has shown that the traditional joint family system in Pakistan has facilitated child growth through active engagement of grandparents in a child's life. Still, the grandparents' psychological impact on a child's emotional, cognitive, and social intelligence within this family structure has not been extensively covered. As the world modernizes and urbanizes, the dynamics of family systems change. The significant shift causes lack of concern towards how the changes in the family structure interjects with a child's development. The purpose of this research is to fill the gaps and discover the influence active elder caregivers have over children psychology in a joint family system.

### **1.2 Significant of the Study**

The examination of the grandparent’s role in child psychology helps to understand and improve the family systems and child outcomes in the context of child development in Pakistan’s joint family system. This study offers important evidence on the impact of grandparental involvement on emotional health, intellectual development, and social participation, which can be used by practitioners, educators, and even formulated for family assistance initiatives. With these results, policymakers and mental health practitioners might be able to formulate simplistic methods to support the positive resources of traditional family systems while diminishing the adverse effects of ongoing social changes. The preceding two paragraphs were pasted without editing the text and contains grammar mistakes. The sentences were unblended and spacing was inserted. Statement on inter parliamentary relations through regional integration: Their goal is to diminish societal shift impact, therefore preserving family values.

### 1.3 Aim of the Study

This study intends to examine the extent of psychological grandparental influence on children’s from both parents side within the joint family structure in Pakistan. The study intends to examine grandparents emotional support and cognitive development activist parents exert on children’s social conduct. Moreover, delineate the difficulties and advantages of grand parenting in contemporary society and their scope in the context of growing social change. This study intends to analyze all of the boundless outcomes.

## 2. Methodology

The work utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of grandparents and their impact on child psychology in Pakistan’s joint family systems. This provided a comprehensive analysis of the emotional, cognitive, and social impact that grandparents had on children through their daily interactions and caregiving practices. The research was carried out in four major cities of Pakistan: Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, and Peshawar. These cities include a blend of urban and semi-urban populations with varying cultural and socioeconomic conditions. They also provided a reproductive sample of the joint family systems of Pakistan, permitting the gathering of data on differences in grandparental involvement in various areas of the country.

The investigation encompassed a sample of 30 active grandparents who were purposefully sampled using a non-probability technique. The use of the G\*Power sample size calculator permitted meaningful qualitative analysis of the given sample. There were criteria for inclusion and exclusion; only joint family setups that had active roles in the psychological development of the grandchildren were included. The collection of data was done through semi-structured interviews with open-ended and close-ended questions that were facilitated via a self-developed survey questionnaire. Furthermore, the demographic sheet contained age, gender, level of education, family structure, and period of co-residence with the grandchildren.

Thematic analysis was performed on NVivo. This provided easiness in undertaking systematic coding and also helped in identification of themes, sub-themes, and patterns from the responses. Ethical protocols were observed to ensure confidentiality of data, voluntary participants, and participants had the right to withdraw during any stage. Data collection was done when approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted and informed consent was acquired. To guarantee credibility and reliability, interviews were conducted in a safe and comfortable environment while data was kept secure to prevent unauthorized access.

## 3. Results

Table 1: Demographic Data (N = 30)

Sr	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1	<b>Gender of Child</b>		
	Male	15	50%
	Female	15	50%
2	<b>Age Group of Child</b>		
	3–5 years	8	26.67%

6–8 years	10	33.33%
9–12 years	12	40%
<b>3 Education Level of Child</b>		
Pre-school	8	26.67%
Primary (Grade 1–5)	12	40%
Middle (Grade 6–8)	10	33.33%
<b>4 Living Arrangement</b>		
Joint Family	22	73.33%
Extended Family	8	26.67%
<b>5 Grandparents' Role</b>		
Primary Caregivers	12	40%
Secondary Caregivers	18	60%
<b>6 Grandparents' Age</b>		
50–60 years	9	30%
61–70 years	13	43.33%
71+ years	8	26.67%

This table highlights the demographic data for the 30 children that were part of the study. Children were grouped for volumetric analysis based on participation and age groupings, level of schooling, household arrangement, the status of the grandparents, and the age of the grandparents. From the analysis, it is noted that there is equal participation of both male and female children, and most of them come from joint families with grandparents as secondary caretakers.

Table 2: Nodes for Each Interviewee

Serial No.	Interviewee	Nodes
1	P5-15 P17 – 22 P24 – 30	- Grandparents provide emotional support - Child is more attached to grandmother - Grandparents assist in moral guidance - Influence on daily routine & discipline
2	P1 – 8, P16 – 22, P27 – 30	- Grandparents play a nurturing role - Child shares personal concerns - Emotional security from grandparents - Grandparents involved in academic motivation
3	P6 – 16 P19 – 22 P24 – 28	- Grandparents as storytellers - Role in cultural and religious education - Limited direct discipline role - Grandmother more involved than grandfather
4	P1 – 8, P16 – 22, P27 – 30	- Active participation in childcare - Grandparents mediate between parents and child - Helps in social skill development - Emotional reliance on grandparents
5	P6 – 16 P19 – 22 P24 – 28	- Grandfather as a source of authority - Grandparents reinforce traditional values - Limited involvement in daily academics - Supports physical activities
6	P5-15 P17 – 22 P24 – 30	- Child prefers grandparents for problem-sharing - Grandparents' presence reduces stress in children - Emotional bonding stronger with grandmother - Grandparents influence personality traits

7	P5-15 P17 – 22 P24 – 30	- Grandparents instill patience and resilience - Involvement in schoolwork and life lessons - Grandfather teaches religious ethics - Cultural transmission is a key role
8	P6 – 16 P19 – 22 P24 – 28	- Child spends significant time with grandparents - Grandparents offer unconditional support - Role in discipline is minimal - Supports child's social adaptability
9	P1 – 8, P16 – 22, P27 – 30	- Grandparents shape child's early experiences - Influence on emotional intelligence - Grandparents' role in fostering independence - Storytelling as a learning tool
10	P6 – 16 P19 – 22 P24 – 28	- Grandparents provide life advice - Acts as an emotional stabilizer - Impact on child's self-confidence - Grandparents' guidance in decision-making
11	P2 – 12 P14 – 24 P28	- Grandparents encourage academic performance - Limited discipline enforcement - Helps in stress management - Plays a role in conflict resolution between parents & child
12	P6 – 16 P19 – 22 P24 – 28	- Grandparents involved in social interactions - Grandparents provide wisdom and experience - Influence in shaping personality traits - Child respects and obeys grandparents

Table 2 shows the broad topics obtained from participant transcripts, assigned to particular categories. The different responses of each interviewee shed light on various aspects of the grandparental involvement, such as resources, teaching, raising, and engagement. This is a way of presenting data that captures the essence of important things that occurred in the study.

Table 3: Merging Nodes into Specific Codes

Serial No.	Code Name	CodeMerged Nodes	Total Nodes	Interviewee Identity
1	Grandparents' Emotional Support	C1 Grandparents provide emotional support Grandparents reduce stress Grandparents act as stabilizers	3	P1 – 8, P16 – 22, P27 – 30
2	Grandparents as Caregivers	C2 Grandparents as primary caregivers Grandparents mediate family relationships Grandparents ensure daily routine stability	3	P2 – 12 P14 – 24 P28
3	Grandparents' Role in Academics	C3 Grandparents encourage academic performance Influence on discipline & schoolwork Grandparents as motivators	3	P5-15 P17 – 22 P24 – 29
4	Grandparents in Cultural & Moral Development	C4 Grandparents as religious educators Grandparents reinforce	3	P3 – 13 P7, P9

5	Influence on Personality & Social Skills	C5	traditional values Storytelling as a cultural tool Grandparents shape personality Influence on emotional intelligence Supports independence and resilience	3	P6 – 16 P19 – 22 P24 – 28
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The table integrates the like nodes into broader codes representing the important features captured about grandparental care. The codes that have been established include emotional support, caregiving, academic, cultural and moral socialization, and socialized skills. The remaining questions were directed towards selected grandparents in the study, so that their participation, so important for child development, could be fully analyzed.

Table 4: Codes, Hierarchy of Word Frequency, Themes, and Explanations

Code Name	Code	Nodes	Hierarchy of Word Frequency	Theme	Sub-Theme	Explanation
Grandparents' Emotional Support	C1	- Grandparents provide emotional support - Grandparents act as stabilizers - Reduces stress in children	Family: 6 (2.07%)	Family Influence	Emotional Stability	Highlights the emotional reliance of children on grandparents, reducing stress and promoting security.
Grandparents as Caregivers	C2	- Grandparents mediate family relationships - Grandparents provide daily routine stability - Ensure emotional security	Caregiver: 5 (1.80%)	Family Influence	Daily Stability	Grandparents serve as mediators in family conflicts and maintain daily child routines.
Grandparents' Role in Academics	C3	- Encourages school performance - Influence on discipline & studies - Grandparents as motivators	Academic: 4 (1.55%)	Educational Influence	Academic Guidance	Grandparents positively affect children's academic motivation and discipline.
Grandparents in Cultural & Moral Development	C4	- Storytelling as a cultural tool - Reinforces traditional values - Grandparents as religious educators	Culture: 6 (2.12%)	Cultural Transmission	Moral Development	Grandparents play a significant role in teaching moral values, religion, and cultural traditions.
Influence on Personality &	C5	- Shaping personality	Personality: 5 (1.85%)	Child Development	Personality Growth	Grandparents influence

Social Skills	traits - Emotional intelligence - Supports independence & resilience	personality development, resilience, and emotional intelligence in children.
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In Table 4, the arrangement of the most commonly mentioned words during the interviews is displayed and integrated within the established codes and themes. This classification indicates how grandparental participation is felt in terms of emotional support, caregiving, academic impact, cultural parenting, and even personality formation, which further corroborates their central role in parenting children.

Table 5: Analytical Themes, Sub-Themes, and Descriptive Themes

Analytical Theme	Analytical Sub-Theme	Descriptive Theme
<b>Grandparents as Emotional Anchors</b>	Emotional Security & Stability	Grandparents provide emotional reassurance and stability, reducing children's anxiety and fostering secure attachments.
	Stress Reduction in Children	Their presence helps children manage stress, offering a sense of security in times of distress.
<b>Grandparents as Caregivers</b>	Daily Routine & Structured Living	They ensure discipline and stability in daily routines, reinforcing family structure.
	Conflict Mediation	Grandparents mediate family disputes, creating a peaceful home environment.
<b>Educational Influence of Grandparents</b>	Academic Guidance & Encouragement	They motivate children academically, instilling the importance of education.
	Influence on Discipline	Grandparents help children develop self-discipline and responsibility in schoolwork.
<b>Cultural &amp; Moral Development</b>	Transmission of Cultural Values	They pass down traditions, religious values, and family customs to the younger generation.
	Storytelling & Informal Learning	Grandparents use storytelling as a tool for moral and ethical education.
<b>Social &amp; Personality Development</b>	Social Skill Building	Interaction with grandparents enhances children's communication and social adaptability.
	Emotional Intelligence & Resilience	Grandparents help shape personality traits, teaching patience, empathy, and resilience.

This table collates the results of the study by analytical themes, sub-themes and descriptive themes. It shows analysis of how grandparents attend to the emotion, education, culture and socialization of the children. Such categorization equally demonstrates different aspects of children's psychological wellbeing that stem from the activities of grandparents in a joint family system.

### 3. Discussion

The analysis delves into the different aspects of grandparents in relation to child psychology especially in the context of Pakistan's joint family system. The results underline the significant role grandparents play in providing emotional security and stability to children which in return, augments psychological well-being. Earlier studies have pointed out the significance of secure attachments with caregivers in childhood development and have reported that children from multi-generational households have a higher self-reported emotional regulation and resilience (Tara & Rauf, 2024). This research also adds to this body of knowledge suggesting grandparents as emotional buffers who can help lower stress and anxiety in children by offering love and support. This kind of emotional support is especially critical in multi-generational households, where children tend to be cared for by different caregivers and experience the nurture they need during their sensitive years.

In addition to providing emotional support, the study highlights the pivotal role that grandparents play in

providing care that shapes children's daily activities and routines of discipline. Their participation in guiding activities and mediating disputes contributes to a wholesome life. Previous studies have claimed that care given by more than one generation improves children's discipline and sense of responsibility due to the reinforcement of family values (Ramzan et al., 2023). The study advances such claims by demonstrating the manner in which grandparents actively manage the routines of children to avoid chaos, thus complementing parents who have issues balancing work responsibilities with caregiving. Through acting as mediators during family disagreements, grandparents help sustain a peaceful family setting, which enhances the social and emotional wellbeing of children.

In terms of schooling, it is noted that grandparents help younger learners focus and motivate them through disciplined approaches. The current research demonstrates how grandparents assist students with homework and also motivate them through storytelling and other life experiences that are beneficial to education. According to Malik et al. (2022), grandparents are said to be informal educators as they give out knowledge and wisdom through everyday encounters. Hence, the study confirms those results that showed that grandparents are direct providers of academic support as well as providers of learning situations to children in societies that show a strong regard for education. Their part in shaping a child's attitude towards learning is important in Pakistani joint families whereby learning becomes a collective mindset across generations.

This research also highlights and analyses the psychological and social growth of children. The grandparents act as the most important carriers of culture, religion, and moral values, which are very important in fostering one's identity. Earlier studies show that storytelling and shared narratives between generation's aids in cultural transmission and moral development (Sultana, 2024). In extended families, which tend to emphasize family, this study reveals that grandparents significantly influence how children comprehend respect, love, and the value of family dignity. They are taught in a manner that transcends listening; they are instructed through practices, customs, and experiences that enable the child to assimilate the religion and culture.

Ultimately, the research highlights the major role grandparents have on children's socialization and personality development. In joint families, children receive a greater social exposure which enhances their emotional intelligence, empathy, and social adaptability. According to social learning theory, children learn behaviors and attitudes through observation and interaction (Rahat et al., 2023). This is indeed the case in the current study where children adopt the values and behaviors of their grandparents. Through engaging in meaningful discourse, participating in family decisions, and receiving emotional guidance," the children become inter personally competent and develop a sense of higher affiliation. The results of this study indicate that the role of a grandparent in Pakistani joint families is not only that of a caregiver; rather, it is much broader as grandparents are found to actively mold children as competent, emotionally strong members of the family who would ensure the family heritage is protected.

### **3.1 Limitation**

Due to the nature of the study, the findings may not be applicable to other circumstances because the sample size was relatively small (N = 30). The focus of the study was on joint family systems in Pakistan which may not be relevant to nuclear families or other societies where grandparents do/don't play a role. The study was also conducted using qualitative data which is self-reported and open to bias. Future studies should include a larger sample and a mixed-method approach for better results that can be generalized.

### **4. Conclusion**

The most important finding of this study is the contribution of grandparents to child psychological well-being in joint families in Pakistan. The grandparents enhance emotional security, discipline, education, culture, and socialization. In addition to these findings, the study also raised questions that supported the literature on intergenerational care. It fosters resilience, moral development, and strong family bonds. Most importantly, the changing family structures of today's society makes it clear that grandparents have an invaluable role in child rearing, making it crucial for us to sustain it. Grandparents can still help in their upbringing, offering wisdom and the stability children require. Children can benefit from the support of their grandparents and strengthen family bonds through the right interventions.



#### 4.1 Recommendation

Further investigation should be carried out to understand the long-term psychological effects of grandparents' involvement in different family structures as well as cultural settings. Studies focused on comparing joint and nuclear families should focus on caregiving patterns and development of the children. There is also a need for policy and social change at the community level to promote intergenerational bonding where active engagement by grandparents in child care and education is encouraged. Children will learn more when concepts used in instruction are built around grandparents' experiences, through storytelling and mentorship in formal education, to capture the attention of children.

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