

A Qualitative Study Investigating the Impact of Hostel Life

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ABSTRACT: *This qualitative study employed grounded theory to explore the impacts of hostel life on the behavior, and personality of the students. Sample consisted ten hostel students, five male and five female hostel students, and age range was twenty to twenty-five. Open ended questionnaire was constructed for in-depth interviews. Grounded theory was used to conceptualize the findings. Results revealed that hostels have great importance in the educational journey of Pakistani students. Hostel life expands the social circle of the hostel students, because hostel is a combination of multicultural social group. The personality characteristics associated with the hostel students are such as they are considered to be confident, punctual, social, realistic, compromising, responsible, and sharp in many domains of life. During hostel stay, students learn to live with different types of individuals, and hostel life also increases the students' level of patience. It prepares students to accept challenges in practical life. Individual differences are very common among the hostel roommates. Majority of the male hostel students are affected negatively due to drug use. Result of the study can help to improve quality of hostel services in Pakistan, which may increase student's hostel life satisfaction.*

Key words: *Hostel life, drug use, personality, behavior*

INTRODUCTION

Human personality is shaped by the experiences of life. When a child is born the family provides a protective environment for the child, at the beginning the interactions are limited latter social interactions increase, and the process of socialization starts. Which enable the individuals to become an effective member of a society, Human's lifestyle and personality are affected by his/her surroundings. Therefore the social structure plays a vital role in the development of personality and behavior.

Researches have been conducted to highlight the importance of the home environment, and the role of family members in the development of the children. Differences in child development start with the socioeconomic status of the family, biological endowment, and educational differences. These family differences make enduring changes in the personality of the children. As family members play an important role in the development of children. Therefore a cooperative family environment inculcates confidence in children. Residential area also affects the process of socialization. This in turn limits or expands educational opportunities for children (Fergusson, Horwood, & Boden, 2008, Tucker, Zandvoort, Burke, & Irwin, 2011).

Education is a part of child develop, it started with the birth and lasted till the time of death. It is a process in which an individual learn new skills and information. The main goal of education is to encourage the individual to acquire tasks, knowledge, facts, and traits which previously not obtained. Human society depended to learn, where parents and other members from our society can facilitate the process of learning (Callaway, 1979).

Since Pakistan is an underdeveloped country, very limited budget is reserved for the education department, higher education facilities are only accessible in developing and big cities of Pakistan. Because of that students need to stay in hostel for higher education. So in Pakistan hostels play an important role in the educational journey of

students. Hostels are proving residential opportunities for the students to continue the process of education.

Meaning of Hostel

In some countries the word hostel is specifically used for the accommodation of student and travelers. However in India and Pakistan, the hostel is believed to be a place of residence that a school, colleges or universities has, all hostels are supervised by the hostel wardens and other staff. The hostel generally consists hundreds of students. All of them make a group of students. These students come from different ethical, social, geographical and economical background.

The hostel is a place where students stay for pursuing formal education away from their homes. But the concept of hostel is not only limited to place of residence, hostel is a human practical laboratory. Therefore hostel is not simply a place for living it is a center of education. Students learn as much as from their teachers as well as fellows during hostel stay. It enriches the understanding of the curriculum through analytical discussion among the students living in the hostels, and may contribute to character building as well. Students in hostel not only learn the theoretical material they also learn how to enhance their personal abilities and learn to live independently (Mishra, 1994).

Impact of Hostel Life

Living away from family for a specific period of time leaves some enduring experiences in the life of the students. In this new life style student learns to live independently, and learn how to compromise with the other students and roommates (as cited in Khozaei et al., 2010).

Students living in hostels face many difficulties and hurdles such as financial crises, adjustment issues, personal helplessness, distress, changes in eating and sleep habits, and many other issues. Research suggests that Empathy, altruistic behavior, emotional stability will be more in hostel students. Hostel environment gives an opportunity for socialization among students (Mimrot, 2012).

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While living in hostel students share their personal ideology with other students, and learn many new ideas from their hostel fellows. Hostel life also influences the students' views and perceptions about the religion. Hostel life also makes students more ambitious, those students who have stayed in hostels are more self-reliant and confident than other students. In hostels students learn courage and spirit from other students, and that may help students to face the practical life more confidently (Ahmad, 2006).

It is a common perception that, hostel life has a unique impact on the pattern of students' life. Living in the hostel makes students socially and behaviorally different. Boarding or hostel life is a combination of different cultural backgrounds, in the hostel life students learn to live with different cultural background people (Shah, 2010).

There is a popular quotation "Times change people changes" it is best applicable for the hostel students. Hostel life going to change the way a student is, its effect on the personality behavior, thinking, and dressing as well. In hostel students are surrounded by other students of about the same age as they are, all those students have different characteristics. In hostel life all students have to adjust to the other students stayed in the hostel (Thakkar, 2012).

Behavior and Personality

Personality is the combinations of multiple traits which are consistent and enduring. Personality is what a person is. The interaction with others is the expression of the one's personality. Thinking and behaving is the elements of personality, thinking is linked with the emotions. Therefore individual's perception and thinking are related to the thinking process. Life experiences also affect the individual ways of thinking and behaving (Patiently, 2012).

Personality is the characteristics those are persistent in different situation. Personality is the expression of individual's being. Life experiences are shown by the behaviors of individuals. Behaviors vary from individual to individual and also changed by the surrounding environment (Raju et al., 2009).

Social life experiences enable individuals to transfer the knowledge, experiences, and values to the personal abilities. These personal abilities are the sole of the individual personality. So the personality characteristics are shaped by the social exposure and individual's ability of gaining knowledge of the external world. Life skills are the ability that teach individual to behave appropriately to the situation (Yadav & Iqbal, 2009).

Significance of the Study

The study investigated the perceptions of student about their hostel life as well as the impacts of hostel life for students. The study on this subject and especially in this area was still very rare in Pakistan. The study helps the teachers and parents of students to understand the importance of hostel life, and academic performance, moreover the study helps students to overcome problems they face during hostel stay. Results of the study will help to improve hostel services in Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

The aims of the research were as follows,

- To explore the perception of students about hostel life.
- To study gender differences among hostel students.
- To study the psychological and behavioral impacts of hostel life.
- To study the influence of the multicultural peer group.
- To make suitable recommendation for the improvement of hostel facilities in Pakistan.

Research Questions

The present study explored the diversity of experiences of males and females hostel students.

Q1: How does hostel impact on the life of hostel students?

Q2: Which gender affected more during hostel stay?

Q3: How does the adjustment vary among hostel roommates?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A sample of 10 hostel students for in-depth interviews was selected from different university hostels of the Lahore. Convenience purposive sampling was used to select the hostel students. The sample consisted of five male and five female hostel students. For attaining maximum variation in sample, five female hostel students were selected from different cities Khanawal, Patoki, Renalakhurd, Shaikhpora, and Multan. Among female students one student was selected from Lahore College for Women University, two students from Government College University, two students from Comsat University, and one from Queen Mary College Lahore. The reason for selecting these students was that they represent the cultures of their cities and they provide better information about their experience of hostel life. Male hostel students were selected on the bases of different cities and also they belonged to different provinces of Pakistan such as one student from Sindh, and one was from Baluchistan, and three from Punjab province. Male students belong to Punjab province belongs to Hafizabad, Mandi Bahiodin, and Sialkot. One student from Baluchistan and was living in a village named Boleda, and one male student belonged to Sindh province. Male hostel students were selected from different institutions of Lahore such as, one from Punjab university student of LLB third year, two students were selected from the Government college university and two students from Forman Christian College all these students were doing BSc (Honr). The average age range of the sample was 22 to 25 years.

Material

Semi-structured interview was used for data collection. Interview protocol was prepared for semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews are the data gathering source in many qualitative research studies. In this technique face-to-face conversation has done for gathering relevant information. Usually open ended questions are used. Like other interview it is also pre planned to some extent questions are prepared in proceeding further questions (Wengraf, 2004).

Procedure

A pilot study was done on twenty hostel students to identify the significant questions for the semi-structured interview. A questionnaire was constructed it contained thirty three open ended questions these questions were designed to explore the hostel life experiences and impact of hostel life on students' behaviors. Inform consent for audio recording was taken before starting the interviews from all the respondents. Ten in-depth semi-structured interviews of the hostel students were conducted. Interviewees were encouraged to express their experience of hostel life with use of elaborative examples. The duration of all these interviews was 40 to 50 minutes. Each interview was tape recorded, and then each interview was transcribed into written form for the purpose of analysis. The data analysis was started with the reading of the written transcript interviews several times, memo writing was done for a description of the interviews. For data analysis grounded theory was used. Grounded theory analyzed data systematically, this is an inductive approach. It provides opportunity to collect data, and then generate and discover a theory (Cresswell, 2007).

Line by line coding was done in summarizing the finding. Code is a smaller decorative phrase to elaborate and explain the data, each unit of data was assigned with different codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Then the codes were utilized and categories were highlighted. After making the categories the themes were identified from the data. At a later stage these themes were re-ordered and properly arranged in clusters. Finally the tables of organized themes were drawn.

RESULTS

Result of this study reveals that hostel has great importance in education system of Pakistan. Hostel life affects students in different ways, the finding of the study is depicted in the Figure 1.

DISCUSSION

A qualitative research study was conducted to understand the impact of hostels on the life of students such as behavior and personality. In-depth interviews were conducted to collect information about the hostel life experiences. Students spoke about hostel life very elaborately, they indicated that hostels have a great importance in our country as they provide shelter to students, and it also reduces the distance to educational institutions. It provides an opportunity for students to continue the process of education. It provides an ideal environment for study. Female hostel student stated about hostel that

“Hostel is a place where students stay for a limited period, and pay for the accommodation facilities. Most of the educational institutions have hostel. It helps those students who are not able to come daily from their homes to educational institutions.”

Study revealed that hostel and home are interrelated. At home individuals have the support of parents and siblings and in hostel students have to deal with their problems with the help of hostel friends and roommates. Nature of responsibilities changes in hostel. They learn to take care of themselves, become sensitive toward others, and learn to avoid others irritating behaviors. Students independently handle all matters. One of male hostel student reported that

“In hostel students become more responsible because in hostel students live without their parents and they got support from their hostel fellows to complete their works.”

When students come in hostel the first problem they have to face was to adjust with the hostel environment and roommates. Students reported that in starting days they missed their home and family too much and sometime after talking with parents on cell phones they

started to weep for some time and then get control of their emotions. At that time roommate and hostel friends provide helps to adjust in a hostel. One male hostel student stated that

“When I go back to my home after spending some time in hostel at home I treated like a guest. My mother prepared special dishes for me and I really missed my mother’s cooked food in hostel.”

It is difficult for students to adjust in hostel because the hostel life was entirely different from the home, and especially when the roommates have different temperaments. But it becomes as a compulsion for hostel students to adjust with the roommates. Male hostel student of reported that

“I have two roommates their nature was totally different from me. On an occasion one of my roommates violates the hostel rules and in that matter I also suffer with him only because he was my roommate after that event I prefer to live in cubical room.”

For adjusting in hostel students develops friendship with each other that may help students to live in a hostel. Hostel friends and roommates live together like a family member and that facilitate the hostel life.

“I learned that we needed to live with others and for that we have to forget their negative nature and attitudes. My first year was a very difficult period for me because my nature was totally different from my six roommates. I am alone and these six have the same nature, but I spend one year with them. During that period I learn how to avoid others’ undesirable attitudes.”

The main reason to stay in a hostel is the continuation of education. Students prefer to live in hostel as they feel they can better concentrate on studies where alone and solitude environment provided for study. That gives them opportunity to polish their educational abilities. Also study periods are specially arranged and all other activities are prohibited in this period. Thus all these actions lead to improve the educational performance of the hostel students. One of the female hostel students reported that

“I was an average student but after staying in hostel I properly focused on my study and improves my educational results.”

Hostel life also affects the behaviors of students. It helps students to adapt new behaviors. It boosts the confidence level, improves the sense of dressing, students learns to compromise, and it also enhances the management abilities of students. A male student stated that

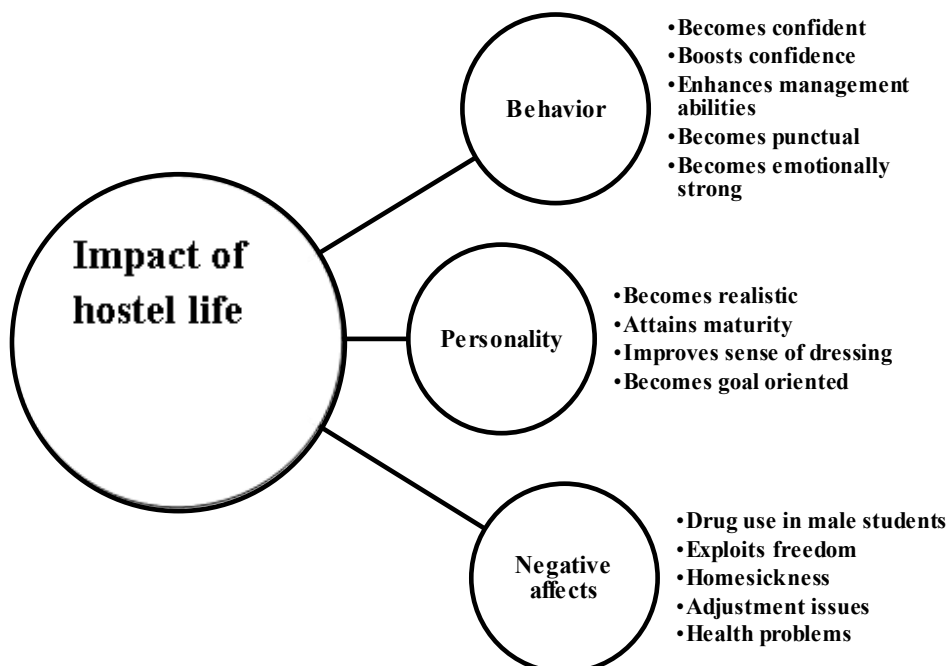


Figure 1. Impact of hostel life on students

“Hostel life made me more confident, it also enhanced my communication style. Before going there I felt hesitant to talk with others but now I can speak on any platform on any topic.”

Hostel students revealed that hostel life affects the student's way of living. Hostel makes students more punctual, independent, confident, social, realistic, disciplined, and also sharp. They also learn to live independently. They learn to solve their own problems by themselves without the parental guidance and support that may enhance their problem solving skills.

Hostel life is the combination of different individuals where all students live like a social group. During hostel life the confidence level of students increased the reason is that they learn to preserve themselves, and acknowledge their self-worth. Hostel life also makes students' self-dependent. A female hostel student reported that

“In hostel I learned to depend on myself because no one provides help. Other people and even parents provide limited help.”

It was revealed that hostel life experiences make students more realistic. During hostel stay students are directly exposed to the external world of reality, and that experience makes them mentally mature. A student or individual who stays at home has less opportunity to learn about the external world as compared to those students staying in a hostel. In hostel students have the opportunity to gain knowledge from other hostel fellows. One of the male hostel students stated that

“Hostel life definitely changed the personality of the students. Hostel was a new place for me where I learnt to fight with the life problems and also learn to utilize my energies.”

While staying in hostel students learn how to move in society, it also provides opportunity to learn about society, individuals, and world. Meanwhile by observing others they improve their social skills such as communication, relating with others, management and leadership qualities. It indicated by the statement of a male student

“I was very reserved at home, but now because of hostel life I became social and expressive.”

While living with different students, each individual has the opportunity to decide about their life goals. Students become aware of what is right and what is wrong for them. Hostel life also contains the message of mutual cooperation and healthy competition. As roommates and hostel fellows also motivate students each other, and facilitate in making future plans. A male hostel student stated that

“Before staying in the hostel I never thought about my future, when I came to the hostel I saw others talking about their life goals, that leads to think and plan about my future.”

All students reported very clearly that hostel life made them responsible, boosts their levels of confidence, increases sociability, and made them punctual. During the extended duration of hostel stay students learn to tolerate, accommodate, and compromise with others.

Hostel students learn to handle and organized their finances. They became aware how to deposit money. This ability helps students in their practical life. Become mentally mature especially students learn in hostel how to handle the complicated situations by themselves without parental support. A female hostel student stated that

“In hostel sometimes you confront with any serious problem and learn to handle them on your own.”

The negative effects of hostel life are such as it makes students lazy, in hostel due to no parental check students showed careless attitude toward their studies which results in low educational performance. Students waste their time with hostel friends. Especially male hostel students use different kinds of drugs and the friends force each other to indulge in drug addiction. A male hostel student reported that

“In hostels the trend of drugs considered as the symbol of fashion students start taking drugs as a fashion and then becomes addicted of these drugs.”

To sum up the findings of the study hostel is a best place to learn about personal worth. Students also develop some emotional affiliation with each other. Hostel students stated that hostel life is memorable period of their lives.

Suggestions Given by Hostel Students to Improve Hostel Life

- Expenditures of hostels should be reduced.
- Attached washrooms should be provided.
- Hygienic and healthy food should be given to hostel students.
- Cooperative hostel staff should be provided.
- Tutors facility should be given to students for conceptual understanding.
- Generator facility should be provided in all hostels.
- Level of hostel security should be increased.

CONCLUSION

The study explored the impact of hostel life on hostel students. It highlighted the experiences, behavioral changes, and personality characteristics of the hostel students. It also studies the gender differences among the roommates. Results show that male hostel students are more prone to affect negatively during hostel stay as most of them indulge in drug addiction. Female hostel students adjust in hostel more easily than male students. Positive behavioral changes involved character building and preparing students for future practical life. The negative behavioral adaptations included students become lazy, show careless attitude toward studies, wasting time with friends, smoking and drug addiction in male students. Personality characteristics related with hostel students are as such they considered to be realistic, punctual, disciplined, independent, compromising, and well organized.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

- In this study the interview was conducted in Urdu language and then translated into English which may change the original meanings to some extent.
- In Pakistan, the qualitative research is still not a common research method. It is needed that qualitative research should be promoted in our country.
- The results of this qualitative research study cannot be generalized because of the small sample size.
- A very limited number of studies were done in our country on this topic consequently very limited literature existed on this topic.
- The sample in this study was only collected from the Lahore city that may restrict the findings. The sample might be extended to other provinces of the country for gathering rich information about of the experiences of hostel students.

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