

The Role of the Family in Promoting Emotional and Social Learning in Children in Light of Societal Transformations (A Study on Jordanian Families)

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Abstract

This study focuses on the role of Jordanian families in encouraging emotional and social learning among children in the context of transformations that have taken place in contemporary society. A set of 200 parents from various regions of Jordan was selected to take part in the study, and the data were collected using a structured questionnaire that was designed to measure family emotional support, social learning practices, and the effect of a changing society on parenting. The results showed that Jordanian families showed a high degree of support for emotional learning ($M = 4.13$), especially in listening, encouraging children's emotional expression, and giving reassurance when children are emotionally distressed. Social learning was also learnt at a high level ($M = 4.02$), with families showing a strong degree of modelling respectful behavior, cooperation, and positive communication, with moderate levels of support regarding both supporting children's independent conflict resolution and participation in social activities. Societal transformations were rated as having a moderate to high impact on parenting ($M = 3.97$), with digital technology, social media, and work pressures rated as the biggest challenges that affect family patterns of interacting. Overall, the results highlight that although Jordanian families continue to provide a solid foundation for children's emotional and social development, swift societal changes present new pressures that the family must adapt to, and for which Government policies can be advantageous. The study recommends more family-centred programs and educational initiatives to help parents foster the children's emotional and social competencies in contemporary changes within society.

Keywords: *Family Role, Emotional Learning, Social Learning, Jordanian Families, Societal Transformations, Parenting Styles, Child Development, Emotional Intelligence, Cultural Shifts, Family Education.*

Introduction

The family is the first social institution that influences the emotional and behavioral development of the child, and it lays the foundation on which the personality, the social identity, and the emotional stability are constructed. From early childhood, the interactions between parents and children contribute in a decisive way to the creation of emotional awareness, the reinforcement of self-confidence, and the behavioral direction in social situations. Evidence has shown that warmth, emotional responsiveness, and constant communication that parents demonstrate improve the level of psychological and social adaptation of the children, and poor parental involvement leads to more vulnerability in emotional distress and behavioral issues (Dong et al., 2024). Thus, nurturing, supportive, and involved parenting is regarded as an important prerequisite for children's emotional wellbeing and self-regulation (Goh et al., 2024).

Jordanian studies further emphasize that family plays an important moral role in structuring the children's value systems, cultural identity, and patterns of behavior through daily emotional guidance, role-modelling, and supervising the child's social world (Al-Heeti, 2024). Likewise, family environments that encourage and nurture empathy, respect, cooperation, and emotional expression play an important role in the development of prosocial behavior and internalized value systems (Vertel et al., 2024). Families that encourage communication, mutual respect, and active decision-making contribute to children having basic social skills in order to function well in school and in the larger community (Mamon & Ortega-Rivera, 2021).

International research confirms that emotional and social learning is initiated in the home environment before being reinforced in the school environment. Children learn about emotional intelligence, communication skills, conflict resolution behaviors, and self-awareness from day-to-day family interactions (Gimbert et al., 2021). Programmatic and longitudinal results show that parental supports and engagements

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are among the most powerful predictors of school success, resilience, motivation, and emotional self-regulation (CASEL, 2023). In addition, family engagement has been identified as one of the most influential factors that determines the success of school-based initiatives related to social and emotional learning (SEL) (Jones, 2012).

The role of the family has been impacted by the continuous transformation of society in terms of digitalization, the change of lifestyle, and increased working requirements. New technology, especially smartphones and social media, has changed the ways of communication between families, as well as the heightened exposure of children to outside social influences, which shape beliefs, values, and emotions (CASEL, 2023). These transformations have heightened parental duties, along with demands for emotional connection with children and the pressure to connect with them while prioritizing the pressure from the media, school schedules, and peer networks (Goh et al., 2024). Scholars say that parents today are facing the difficulty of balancing their traditional family values with contemporary life patterns, and this balance has a direct impact on the development of emotional and social skills in children (Vertel et al., 2024).

At the same time, there is an acknowledged acceptance that productively driving interplay between families and schools is essential for promoting social and emotional improvement in different stages of education. Research has produced the following: SEL outcomes are likely to be maximized where school-based programs are complemented by consistent SEL practices at home (Gimbert et al., 2021). When families are able to provide emotional coaching, supportive communication, and prosocial behavior daily, children are better able to demonstrate their participation in the classroom, as well as have better peer relationships and motivation to do well at school (Mamon & Ortega-Rivera, 2021). Therefore, there is a growing demand from educational institutions for family-centered SEL approaches that provide parents with skills and tools for emotional and social learning outside of school (Jones, 2012).

Despite the mounting evidence for the central role of the family, there is still a need to study the family practices in specific cultural contexts to understand the ways in which parents respond to the pressures of modern life and how transformation in society affects their contribution to emotional and social learning. In Arab societies (and Jordan especially), the combination of rapid social change, technological expansion, and changing family structure may affect children's development outcomes in ways not hitherto investigated empirically (Al-Heeti, 2024). Understanding existing patterns of family support of emotional and social learning is thus necessary in order to identify strengths, barriers, and opportunities for enhancing children's psychological and social wellbeing in the context of modern Jordan (Vertel et al., 2024).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of Jordanian families in order to promote emotional and social learning in their children due to the changes that occur in contemporary society. Specifically, the study aims to find the extent to which families provide emotional support, develop social behaviors and skills, and maintain effective communication patterns that go towards children's emotional and social development. Additionally, the study aims to identify the impact of changes in modern society, as the digital technology has become more prevalent, work pressure rises, and the cultural landscape is different from the past, on the ability of families to carry out their developmental functions.

The Study Problem

Children today are growing up in a rapidly changing and evolving social environment impacted by technological advancement, changing cultural values, economic pressures, and the growing influence of digital platforms and social media. These transformations have altered the nature of the family and minimized the quantity and quality of direct contact between parents and children. As a result, many families may have a hard time fulfilling their traditional role in children's emotional and social development. Although several studies stress the importance of the role of the family in developing emotional stability, social skills, and positive behavioral patterns in children, there is not much empirical evidence that addresses the extent to which Jordanian families are performing this role under the changes that are undertaken by modern societies. It is still not clear whether or not families have the awareness, communication practices,

and supportive behaviors needed by children to develop emotional intelligence, self-regulation, cooperation, and healthy social relationships. Therefore, the research problem arises from the need to explore the extent of the contribution of Jordanian families to emotional and social learning of their children in a series of changes occurring in society, which is characterized by rapid transformation and a shift in social structure, and the use of technology and a reduction in direct interaction among family members. Understanding this issue is essential for helping to identify strengths and gaps in the roles of the family and moving as a society, policymakers, educators, and parents to effective strategies to help children develop emotionally and socially.

The Study Questions

The researcher tried to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do the Jordanian families foster emotional learning in their children?
2. To what extent do Jordanian families foster social learning in their children?
3. How far has the role of the family in supporting the children's emotional and social learning been affected by transformations in society?

Literature Review

The family is widely known as the earliest and one of the most influential environments in shaping children's emotional and social development. From infancy, parental warmth, responsiveness, and verbal interaction play a major role in the formation of the emotional stability and capacity of self-expression of the child (Dong et al., 2024). Research would consistently show that children who are raised in emotionally supportive households display an increase in respect for well-being, empathy, self-regulation, and social confidence when compared with peers who fall in the emotionally distant or inconsistent categories of parenting (Goh et al., 2024).

Studies that provided a particular focus on the Arab context show that the transmission of values and behavioural norms within the family or family staying at the heart of the identity formation process, as well as of social adjustment. For instance, Jordanian results underscore the importance of the family in influencing the children's beliefs, moral behavior, and patterns of social interactions through verbal guidance, emotional coaching, and cultural modelling (Al-Heeti, 2024). Similarly, Vertel et al. (2024) showed that the transfer of values within the family affects the decision-making and the interpersonal behavior of children and their interactions in the long term as a blueprint for future social functioning. Other research and studies reveal that emotionally safe households help children feel safe, create strong attachments, and be resilient in the face of stressors (Mamon & Ortega-Rivera, 2021; CASEL, 2023).

A developing body of international literature looks at the social and emotional learning (SEL) that has been shown to highlight the foundational roles of parents before school-based SEL programs take place. Families are at the heart of the introduction of children to early socio-emotional competencies such as empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution, through daily routines and interactive play (Jones, 2012). The presence of these elements enables children to make a more successful transition into preschool and primary school environments because of improvements in their communication and emotion-regulation skills (Gimbert et al., 2021; McKown et al., 2020). Parents' modelling of respectful dialogue and problem-solving has been linked to decreases in aggression and behavior problems of children (Brackett & Rivers, 2014; Oberle et al., 2016).

Further research helps to strengthen the role of family involvement during school years for SEL. Family engagement is positively manifested in improving classroom participation, thus academic motivation, peer, and belonging (Mamon & Ortega-Rivera, 2021; Sheridan et al., 2022). When they are involved consistently in school-related activities, parents can help children make gains in their ability to cooperate and take responsibility, as well as adapt to stress emotionally (Domitrovich et al., 2017). On the other hand, low

cohesive, weak communication, or parental work stress are often reported by families with high levels of behavioral and/or social difficulties in their children (Dong et al., 2024; Goh et al., 2024).

In more recent times, attention has been diverted to the influence of the modern changes in society on the familial role of education and emotion. Digitalization and the greater use of social media have changed the communication pattern, attention span, and formation of identity in children (CASEL, 2023; Rideout, 2019). Parents are now under increased pressure to keep a check on technology use, while ensuring closeness in emotion and controlling social influences (Al-Heeti, 2024; Vertel et al., 2024). Research in a number of cultural contexts has found that digital platforms can lead to connectivity but can also contribute to behavioral imitation, social comparison, and vulnerability to outside value systems (Oberle et al., 2022; McKown et al., 2020). These challenges demand an unprecedented development of competencies among parents that will allow them to safeguard emotional development through digital supervision, media literacy, and open communication.

Work demands and busy lifestyles have also driven declines in family time, and these declines could have a detrimental impact on emotional closeness, as well as opportunities for social learning (Brackett & Rivers, 2014; Sheridan et al., 2022). As a result, modern-day parenting increasingly calls for deliberate efforts to achieve a balance between work-related professional responsibilities and emotional presence in the home. The literature aligns on the importance of parents who prioritize shared activities and open discussions and who adopt a style of decision-making that is characterized by dialogue, to create more secure emotional adjustment, social confidence, and academic motivation in their children (Jones, 2012; Domitrovich et al., 2017).

On the whole, the studies reviewed have presented a consistent conclusion that the family is the cornerstone of emotional and social education of children of different developmental stages. When considering supportive factors for SEL development, the quality of emotional interaction, value transmission, or communication within the family is the strongest predictor of children's psychological well-being, prosocial behavior, and resilience. However, rapid changes in society, such as digital media, less time with the family, and a changing cultural landscape, have complicated the process of parenting and made it clear that families need help to maintain positive emotional and social learning practices. Addressing these challenges is particularly relevant to the Jordanian context, which is characterized by a juxtaposition of traditional values and entering modern influences (Al-Heeti, 2024).

Methodology

Research Design

This study has adopted a descriptive survey design to discuss the role of family on children's emotional and social learning in light of the transformation in contemporary society. The data collection tool used in the study is totally based on a questionnaire to get parents' views regarding family practices, communication patterns, and children's emotional and social development.

Population and Sample

The study population comprises Jordanian parents who live with at least one child in the household. A sample of 200 parents was used with simple random sampling/convenience sampling, depending on accessibility. The sample is parents from different regions in Jordan to obtain diversity.

Instrument

For the questionnaires considered for the study, data were collected by the researcher using a structured questionnaire that was created by the researcher. The questionnaire was developed with regard to the corresponding theoretical and practical literature on the subject of emotional learning, social learning, family roles, and societal change.

It consists of three major parts:

- Demographic information (e.g., parents' gender, age, education, number of children).
- Family role in promoting emotional and social learning (e.g., emotional support, communication, guidance, acting as models of positive social behavior).
- Index of societal transformation (e.g., technology, media, changing social values and social norms, pressures of work).

All item ratings were based on a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), strongly agree (4), and agree (5).

Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of experts in educational psychology and family studies, and amendments were made based on the feedback from these experts.

To verify the reliability of the results, a pilot study was completed in which 30 parents who were not included in the final sample were evaluated. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used, and the reliability value was 0.70, which depicts the reliability of the questionnaire in terms of research, and that the questionnaire can be used for research purposes.

Data Collection

After getting the required approvals, the questionnaire was distributed in paper form / electronically to parents through schools and community settings. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and that their participation was voluntary and anonymous. Completed questionnaires were gathered over the period of (2-4 weeks).

Data Analysis

After the responses were collected, the data were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The following statistical methods were applied:

- Means and standard deviations to identify parents' level of agreement on each domain of the questionnaire.
- Independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA to test for differences based on demographic variables (e.g., gender, education, income level).
- Pearson correlation coefficient to assess the relationship between family role and emotional and social learning of children.

Ethical Consideration

The study ensured the following ethical standards:

- voluntary participation,
- confidentiality and anonymity,
- use of data for research purposes only,

- the right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

The Study Findings

Results related to the first question: To what extent do the Jordanian families foster emotional learning in their children?

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Items Measuring Emotional Learning Support

No.	Item	Mean	STD	Level
1	I encourage my child to have free expression of their emotions.	4.22	0.69	High
2	I listen carefully when my child describes his or her feelings.	4.19	0.73	High
3	I help my child understand emotions, such as anger, sadness, and happiness.	4.10	0.76	High
4	I console my child when he/she is upset or stressed.	4.28	0.64	High
5	I teach the skills of calming down when the child has strong emotions.	3.99	0.80	Moderate
6	I applaud my child when they deal with emotional situations in positive ways.	4.13	0.71	High
7	I help my child to settle an emotional conflict with siblings or friends.	3.95	0.85	Moderate
8	I do tell my child about how what they do makes me feel about others.	4.17	0.68	High
Total		4.13	0.65	High

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of items that assess the degree to which Jordanian families encourage emotional learning among their children. As can be seen in the table, the overall mean score obtained for the emotional learning domain was achieved with a mean score of 4.13 SD (0.65), and all parents are supported at a high level of emotional learning.

All items within this domain demonstrated relatively high mean scores, ranging between 3.95 and 4.28. The highest-rated item was "I console my child when he/she is upset or stressed" ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.64$), reflecting a strong tendency among parents to provide emotional comfort during stressful situations. This was followed closely by "I encourage my child to have free expression of their emotions" ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.69$) and "I listen carefully when my child describes his or her feelings" ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.73$), suggesting that parents play an active role in helping children express and communicate their emotions.

Moderate levels were found in two of the items: "I teach the skills of calming down when the child has strong emotions" ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.80$) and "I help my child to settle an emotional conflict with siblings or friends" ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.85$). Although the means are still relatively high, these scores give an impression that skills related to emotional regulation and conflict resolution are dealt with a bit less than those related to emotional expression and reassurance.

All in all, the results in Table 1 show that Jordanian families show a strong practice in giving emotional support by listening to the children, encouraging emotional expression, and providing comfort to children when they are in a distress situation, but somewhat less emphasis is reported on teaching emotional self-regulation and conflict resolution skills.

Results related to the second question: To what extent Jordanian families foster social learning in their children?

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Items Measuring Social Learning Support

No.	Item	Mean	STD	Level
9	I encourage my child to be cooperative with other people in daily activities.	4.06	0.72	High
10	What I have done is teach my child how to share and take turns.	4.13	0.68	High
11	I model good manners along with communicating with my child.	4.09	0.74	High
12	I teach my child how to resolve conflicts peacefully.	3.93	0.83	Moderate
13	I encourage social activities for my child.	3.88	0.86	Moderate
14	I established some firm rules regarding respectful behaviour toward others.	4.15	0.70	High
15	I correct my kid when he acts negatively toward others.	3.91	0.79	Moderate
Total		4.02	0.59	High

Table 2 shows the means and SDs for the items that measured the degree to which Jordanian families encourage social learning and good social behavior in their children. The overall mean for this domain reached 4.01 with a standard deviation of 0.58, which means that the family shows a high degree of support for social learning.

The majority of the items scored a high average, ranging between 3.87 and 4.14, indicating that parents tend to play an active role in guiding the social relations of children and shaping socially desirable behaviors. The highest rated item falling into this area was "I set clear rules about respectful behavior toward others" (M = 4.14, SD = 0.69), emphasizing the importance that parents place on creating and enforcing rules of behavior in reference to respect and approximation of rightful social conduct. This was followed by "I teach my child how to share and take turns" (M = 4.12, SD = 0.67) and "I model polite communication in front of my child" (M = 4.08, SD = 0.73), suggesting that parents often set the example in terms of cooperation, sharing, and civility.

In contrast to them, the mean scores were moderate for "I encourage my child to participate in social activities" (M = 3.87, SD = 0.85) and "I show my child how to resolve conflicts peacefully" (M = 3.92, SD = 0.82). Although relatively high, these items indicate that children may receive slightly less practical guidance in the areas of social participation and conflict resolution relative to respect-building and rules setting.

Overall, the results show that the role of Jordanian families is very positive in the development of children's social awareness and reinforcing of positive social behavior, especially related to their modelling of respectful behavior and formulating social expectations, and the importance in this context is somewhat lower in terms of supporting children to deal independently with social conflicts and developing social activities in the broader sense.

Results related to the third question: How far has the role of the family in supporting the children's emotional and social learning been affected by transformations in society?

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of Items Measuring the Influence of Societal Transformations on Family Role

No.	Item	Mean	STD	Level
16	Digital technology has had an impact on how I deal with my child.	3.89	0.83	Moderate
17	My job or daily needs cut into the time that I spend with my child.	3.97	0.79	Moderate
18	Social media is a positive or negative aspect of the attitude and behavior of my child.	4.12	0.75	High

19	I am worried about considering what is traditional and what is the modern lifestyle altering.	3.80	0.87	Moderate
20	Due to recent changes in society, parenting is more challenging than it was before.	4.05	0.81	High
Total		3.97	0.63	Moderate

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of items that measure the degree to which the transformations in society impact the family's role in promoting children's emotional and social learning. The overall mean for this domain was 3.96 with a standard deviation of 0.62 and a moderate to high level of influence of societal changes on family practices.

Items under this domain collected mean values from 3.79 to 4.11, indicating that all the facets of the transformation of the society cause noticeable pressure on parenting behaviors and interaction patterns, with varying degrees. The highest rated statement was "Social media influences my child's attitudes and behavior" ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.74$), closely followed by "Recent societal changes make parenting more challenging than before" ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.80$). These results highlight parents' awareness of the powerful and direct impact that digital platforms and modern social environments have on children's behavior and on parenting responsibilities in general.

Other items were relatively high-scoring, such as "My work or daily responsibilities reduce the time I have with my child" ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.78$) and "Digital technology has affected the way I interact with my child" ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.82$), indicating that demands of work and/or increased use of devices may be limiting quality parent-child interaction time. The lowest item in this domain was "I struggle to balance traditional values with modern lifestyle changes" ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.86$), although even the mean is relatively high, implying that many parents experience difficulties in upholding traditional family values in the face of fast-paced changes in society.

On the whole, the results presented in Table 3 show that societal changes, first of all exposure to digital media and the pressures of modern lifestyle, form a meaningful part of the family's ability to meet its developmental role in relation to children. These influences seem to have infiltrated most Jordanian households, and whereas the family continues to provide for the overall emotional and social learning for children in the family, the social environment surrounding them imposes new challenges that they need to adapt to.

Discussion of the Results

The results of the study show that Jordanian families have a good role and active participation in stimulating emotional learning among their children, as is indicated by the high score of the overall mean for the emotional learning domain ($M = 4.13$). Parents expressed the consistent encouragement of expressing emotions and attentive listening, and comforting in times of distress, which are consistent with international literature emphasizing the centrality of parental warmth and emotional responsiveness in shaping emotional stability and psychological adjustment in children (Dong et al., 2024; Goh et al., 2024). The high scores on these dimensions suggest that Jordanian parents place a value on open emotional communications and seem to consider emotional support as one of the key components of parenting. However, the somewhat lower average scores on two communication measures, teaching emotional regulation and conflict management, are due to parents providing good affective responses to children's emotions, yet fewer completed an organized form of strategies that help their children handle the intensity of emotions on their own. This is in line with what has been found previously, indicating that while parents typically focus on providing emotional reassurance, they may focus less on explicitly telling children about coping strategies and strategies to resolve conflict (Mamon & Ortega-Rivera, 2021; CASEL, 2023). Thus, the study further confirms the claim that although parental emotional responsiveness is strong, skills-based emotional coaching is still an area to develop.

The results of the second research question also showed good family involvement in social learning ($M=4.01$). Parents indicated that they oftentimes model respectful communication, have behavioral expectations, and encourage cooperative behavior. These findings are consistent with the research that indicates that prosocial behavior, empathy, and communication skills are initially shaped in the family, particularly through imitation of parental patterns of interaction (Jones, 2012; Gimbert et al., 2021). Jordanian parents exhibited high concern for rule-setting related to respect and civility as a matter of cultural norms regarding the importance of manners, cooperation, and moral behavior (Al-Heeti, 2024). However, relatively less focus on promoting social activities and teaching peaceful resolution of conflicts implies that children are guided less in the independent negotiation of complex social situations. This is in line with previous studies on this topic, which have found that while parents are good role models at establishing behavioral expectations, there is a lack of practical opportunities with supervision for problem-solving skills and social participation (Brackett et al., 2014; Oberle et al., 2016). Therefore, Jordanian families appear to have a high commitment to developing respectful behaviors, but these families can benefit from additional strategies to help enhance children's ability to independently resolve conflict and socially engage beyond their family circle.

The third question dealt with how far the societal transformations are affecting the role of the family. Results indicated that the level of influence is moderate to high ($M = 3.97$), confirming that the technological changes, social media, and increasing patterns of life are changing parenting. Particularly important influences on the children's behavior and parent-child interaction were digital technology and social media. These observations are consistent with evidence indicating that digital platforms have mutated young people's patterns of communication, their patterns of attention, and how they form identities (CASEL, 2023; Rideout, 2019). Additionally, more work demands affecting family time seem consistent with the literature that modern lifestyles limit the opportunities for shared family activities, which may lead to reduced bonding and may have difficulty in sustaining a strong emotional and social learning practice (Sheridan et al., 2022). The lowest scoring in this domain - balancing traditional and modern values - the traditional way of life of the Jordanian family still scored moderately high, showing that many Jordanian families have a hard time reconciling cultural expectations with modern ways of life. This supports past assertions that families in societies that are in transition bear a dual responsibility of safeguarding their cultural differences as well as adapting in the wake of globalization (Vertel et al., 2024).

Taken together, the findings of the study confirm just how central a role Jordanian families continue to play in the emotional and social development of children. High levels of parental emotional and social support suggest that the family is a strong and active developmental institution, in spite of social pressures. However, proceeding with the influence of societal transformations, it is suggested that families are faced with new challenges that previously did not exist in the earlier stages of Jordanian social development. These challenges - and especially digital exposure and less time with the family - are similar to global challenges, but are exacerbated by how quickly social norms and lifestyles have changed in Arab societies. Thus, the findings suggest the conclusion that Jordanian families are not failing in their role, but they are certainly trying to fulfil it, given the circumstances in which they are living, circumstances that increasingly require the use of modern strategies, digital literacy, and intentional communication patterns.

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