

## Some Parents' Activities in Educating Children: the Vietnam Case

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**Abstract** Each family is a cell of society. Many families make a society. The good families bring good societies, so any societies pay attention to strengthen families. This is a long - standing and relatively common concept in Vietnam from the past to the present. In the past, in the feudal society, considered roots, families are proposed to be respected as a rule, used as a basic factor to rule society, and responsible for training, perfecting and developing personalities for families members. At present, Vietnam also pay attention to families and requires every family to be responsible for building their own families into cultural ones, raising children with good health and teaching with good personalities in order to provide the country with good citizens. This paper will check the role of parents in educating - socializing children in Vietnamese families.

**Keywords:** parents; Vietnamese; education; families; activity

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### 1. Introduction

The family is a special social institution as families perform basic functions for survival and development of society: economic function, reproductive function, educational function and function of taking care of elderly people. In particular, the educational function is one of the most important functions because it is done in families from we are in the womb to the tomb. According to educator, the families play an important role for the formation and development of human personality, especially at an early age, as Macarenco already said: "What parents do for children before the age of 5 is 90 percent of the result of educating" (Chuong, 2000). Consequently, Vietnamese families especially pay attention to educating - socializing their children when they were young. Based on the result of sociological surveys, the article analyzes some of parents' activities in the implementation of educational function in Vietnamese families nowadays.

### 2. Methods

This paper follows a qualitative research methodology. It depends on the result of a lot of research: 1) Vietnamese rural families during innovation in 2007; 2) Roles of families in educating - socializing children in Vietnamese families. Data from these studies are summarized and the author used to write this article.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Parent Reunion

It is an inevitable activity of parents, showing their deep consideration to their children's studies and conduct training at school. Parent reunion is a constant relationship between families and school.

In Vietnam, there are often three parent reunions in a school year. The first one is held at the beginning of each school - year (by August annually). At the meeting, parents will be noticed the studying plan of their children for the whole school year, the amounts of money to pay such as fees (if yes), money for support the building of infrastructure, parents' fund, etc. Parents also know who their children's form teacher is and who are the teachers of different subjects. In here, a parent committee will be set up, playing the role as

connecting with teachers and school. At the second parent reunion, usually held at the end of the first term (often by January), parents will be notified the children's academic<sup>1</sup> and moral result<sup>2</sup> of the first term. These are very important in educating children at schools in Vietnam. From the children's academic results, parents know which subjects their children are good at or not and then have specific orientation for their children. For example, some ways to help their children with the subjects not good at are to invite tutor, send children to extra classes at school or centers, etc. With the subjects they are good at, parents encourage them to try more and lay orientation for them to take university entrance exam in the future. The third reunion in a school year is the last one (often in May every year). Parents will get exact information about their children's academic result and conduct of the school year. They will also be notified their children's summer plan, extra classes for subjects in summer, remedial classes for weak students, etc. Basing on the school's official announcement, parents draw the specific plan for the children's summer reasonably. With urban families, the children can be arranged to visit grandparents and relatives, or take part in outdoor courses such as guitar, singing, sports (for example football, swimming, etc.) or travel with families. For rural children with the lower living conditions comparing with urban families, their summer activities are not as various as those of urban families. Their main summer activities are traditional games such as flying kite, swimming in nearby rivers, etc. Beside, during summer holiday, the rural children may have to work to support families such as driving buffalos, cutting grass, seeking crabs, catching shellfish, etc. The activities such as joining extra classes, travelling, and taking outdoor courses may be almost impossible to rural children.

In summary, parent reunion is usually considered parents' task in working with school to supervise and raise children. This activity shows parents' consideration to educating - socializing children. Almost every parents pay attention to their children's studies because it will affect the prestige and honor of the families. The children who study well, their family is proud, and raises the head up wherever they go to. Conversely, if the children are not good at studying, especially bad children, their parents will be ashamed with neighbors and others and feel uncomfortable whenever and wherever they go. The reason is for the Vietnamese culture. For Vietnamese, when meeting they often ask some questions like: How are you? How's working? How's your family? If someone is married with children, they certainly ask about the children's studies, do they study well? Which school do they go to? That information will be foundations to assess whether the family is happy or not, children are grown up and successful. No Vietnamese people show off the amount of money or the number of flats they own, etc. when meeting but they make boast of their children with good studies, good students, high national entrance exams scores, scholarship to study abroad. Obviously, children's studies play an important role in Vietnamese families. The whole families take care of it, especially parents. Therefore, parents are rarely absent from parent reunions. The in-depth interview results show that parent reunion is essential to parents "...parent reunion must not be ignored, however busy it is, we attend it" (Hoa, 2007). Family reunion is reliable means of communication for them to get their children studies and conduct training. The result of a sociological research shows that mothers (wives) in family are often the most frequent attendees at the parent reunion (34.8%), followed by husbands (fathers) make up 24.2%, even about 8.4% of husband and wife as attendees. In few cases, other family members are attendees (2.8%) (Hoa, 2007). It means that parents directly participate in parent reunion for their children, which is a good signal to show their roles, responsibilities in educating - socializing their own children.

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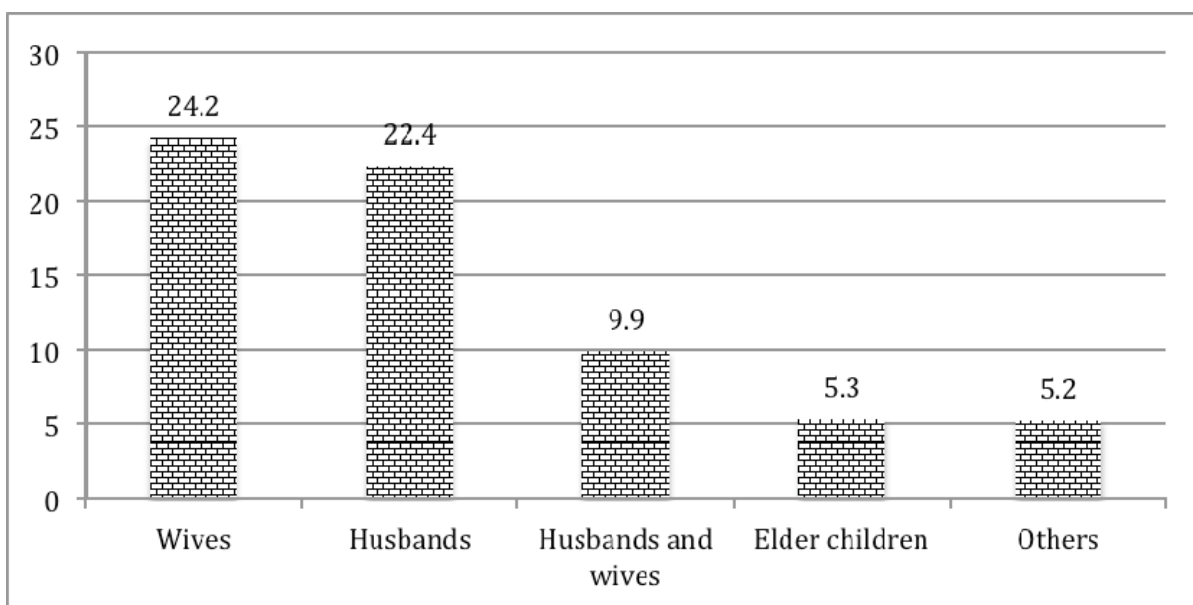
<sup>1</sup> The results of children are calculated base on general basic mean of all subjects. Base on the basis, learning aptitude of children is ranked from highest to lowest, included: excellent, good, fair, mean, feeble, bad. If pupil gets kind of study feeble or bad when school year finish, then the pupil does not move up to the next grade. If any their subject is feeble or bad, then they usually study again the subject in summer holidays (from June to August).

<sup>2</sup> Ranking pupils' moral exercise is based on very many factors: study awareness of pupil in class at all subjects, awareness of taking part collective activities of the class, school, etc. Through all the indexes, the head teacher will be a person who decides qualities of the pupils, included: excellent, good, fair, mean, feeble, bad. Normally pupils have the qualities are fair or good. The rest qualities win few rates.

#### 4. Helping Children Study at Home

Studying at home is a compulsory task to students, but reminding children to study for parents is like a habit. According to the result of the survey, mothers play a role as being close, reminding and helping children study more than fathers do. However, fathers are always affirmed when sharing the work of helping children study at home.

Fig.1. Who Helps Children Study at Home?



Source: Project of interdisciplinary research "Vietnamese rural families during innovation, 2007"

The figure above shows that the help children with home studies take place with the appearance of new factor - adult members in family. Traditionally, the elder brothers and sisters in families always help parents take care of children when they are small, and when they grow up, elder siblings are responsible for helping children with their studies especially when parents are not home. This cultural tradition should be preserved and developed in Vietnam.

In intellectual families, tutoring and helping children with home studies have more advantages than in others because they have enough knowledge and skills to lecture for their better studies. Nevertheless, this actually happens at primary school. When children study at higher levels, from secondary school, parents play a role as reminding and encouraging them to study but helping and tutoring children are less because parents do not have enough necessary knowledge to help children solve the problems of all subjects. As a result, the solution given is to fetch a tutor, or send to extra classes at teacher's houses, school or centers, etc. However, this solution takes place in urban families - those with financial favor. For the rural families, it rarely takes place. For rural children, parents play a role of reminding children to study, pay attention to lessons in class, do homework on their own. The activities like lecturing, hiring tutor, sending to extra classes, etc. hardly happen.

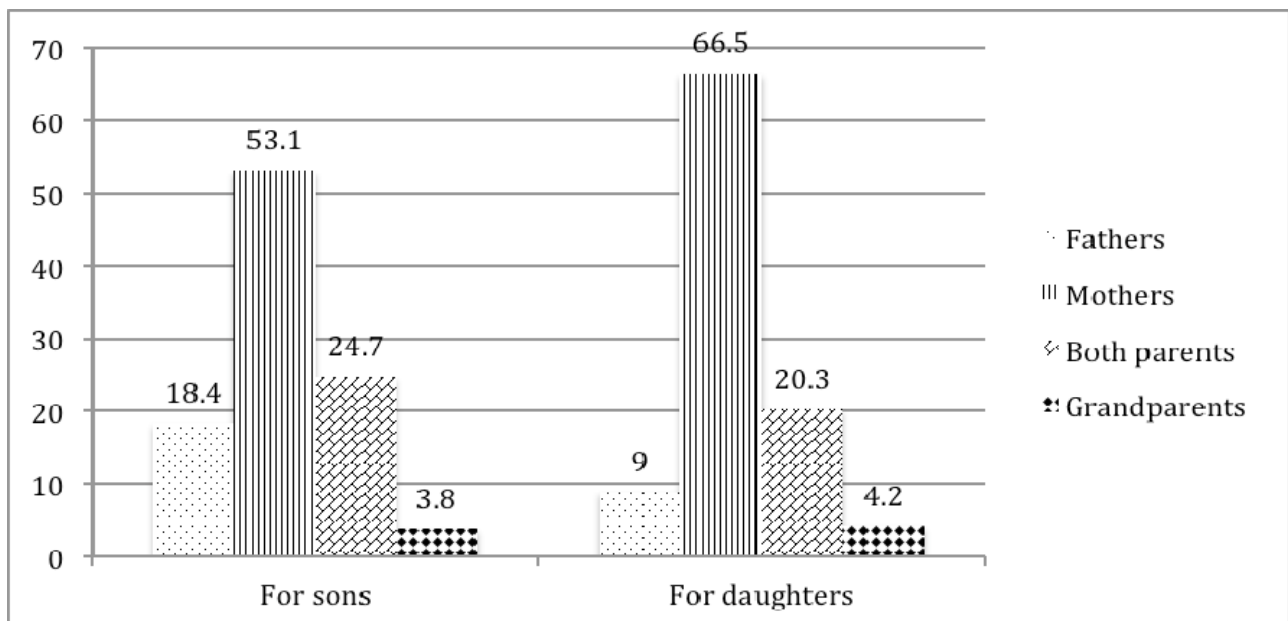
#### 5. Spare Time for Children

This is an activity aiming at educating - socializing children in families. By playing with children, parents can catch their feelings, desire and hobbies, parents are fully aware of their children. The good and bad characters

are shown during the interaction between parents and children at this age. Therefore, parents need to take opportunities to deeply understand their children. It is when sparing time for children that they can evaluate their parents' love for them. In many families, the parents do not spend time taking care of children, playing with them, their children always look bored, and depressed, even commit crimes in some cases. It has been recently shown in the Vietnamese newspapers that in some cases parents have no time to be close to children, and think the best is give them much money. That is the reason why it is until their children commit crimes, they realized that a lot of money is not all, the hereby problem is to spare time for children, take care of them to realize the inadequacy in their personalities and find the suitable solutions to raising them.

The results of recent survey shows that although fathers are considered more important than mothers but the majority admit mothers are in charge of educating children. The duty of earning, breadwinner in families causes fathers to spend little time bringing up children. For both sons and daughters, mothers spare most of their time (53.1% and 66.5% of respondents, respectively) (Minh, Minh, Hoa, Minh, 1998).

Fig. 2. The people spare most time for children (%)



Source: Doan Thi Binh Minh, Nguyen Thi Minh, Phan Thi Hoa, Cao Hong Minh (1998): Roles of families in educating - socializing children.

The result of fig. 2 shows the certain difference in sparing time for children from fathers and mothers. As detailed, fathers spend more time looking after sons than daughters (18.4% compared to 9%), and mothers take more care of daughters than sons (66.5% compared to 53.1%). The main cause is from gender. It is easier for mothers to be close to daughters; similarly, fathers are closer to sons. Children often ask their same sex parent about their wonders, especially those of sex, which leads a general rule in Vietnamese society that sons often talk, learn from fathers but daughters learn from mothers. Therefore, the time for children from parents is different depending on whether the child is a son or a daughter.

A high rate of both fathers and mothers spend time looking after and playing with children. This rate bears little difference between sons and daughters, which proves that nowadays parents pay certain attention to taking care of children when they are at home. This promotes the children entire character development because their parents are always side - by - side to educate children.

In terms of the time family members spare for children, as shown from the result of the survey:

Table 1. The specific time for children (%)

	Almost no	Less than 30 minutes	From 30 minutes to 1 hour	From 1 hour to one and a half	From one and half to 2 hours	Over 2 hours
For 0 to 6 year old sons						
Fathers	8.0	20.5	14.8	11.4	9.1	36.7
Mothers	1.1	0	16.8	3.2	4.2	74.7
Grandparents	44.1	8.8	8.8	5.9	2.9	29.4
Brothers and sisters	71.1	4.8	9.5	9.5	0	4.8
For 0 to 6 year old daughters						
Fathers	10.5	22.4	26.3	9.2	6.6	25.0
Mothers	1.2	1.2	12.8	12.8	10.5	61.6
Grandparents	26.7	26.7	10.0	6.7	3.3	26.7
Brothers and sisters	46.2	15.4	23.1	7.7	7.7	0
For 7 to 15 year old sons						
Fathers	3.7	15.4	21.6	10.5	9.9	38.9
Mothers	2.9	4.1	14.0	16.3	8.1	54.7
Grandparents	47.9	31.3	4.2	0	6.3	10.4
Brothers and sisters	61.5	17.9	15.4	2.6	0	2.6
For 7 to 15 year old daughters						
Fathers	10.3	19.2	22.6	11.0	6.2	30.8
Mothers	1.3	1.9	15.2	12.0	9.5	60.1
Grandparents	44.3	26.2	6.6	4.9	6.6	11.5
Brothers and sisters	79.4	8.8	5.9	2.9	0	2.9

Source: Doan Thi Binh Minh, Nguyen Thi Minh, Phan Thi Hoa, Cao Hong Minh (1998): Roles of families in educating - socializing children.

As shown in the result from table 1, the majority of mothers and fathers spare time playing with their children. A minority of fathers spends no time playing with their children, so do only a few mothers.

However, some fathers spend too little time for children everyday (below half an hour account 15.4% to 22.4%). Beside, many fathers spend over two hours for their children every day. Mothers spending over two hours for children everyday account for the highest rate of the respondents. This proves that parents are aware of the necessity of closing to children in educating children. Fathers often spare more time for sons than daughters at both ages from 0 to 6 years old and from 7 to 15 years old. Brothers and sisters do not spend much time looking after and playing with children, either. If yes, the rate is not much and often less than one hour. Similarly, the role of grandparents in family is not clearly shown in spending time playing with children. Grandparents spend more time for children when they are small. The pressure of market economy and stress of earning have controlled time and energy of many families, which causes them to forget their responsibility. Therefore, families need to raise their responsibility in spending time taking care of children and mobilizing all members to take part in raising and educating children, educating - socializing will certainly get better results.

## 6. Career Orientation for Children

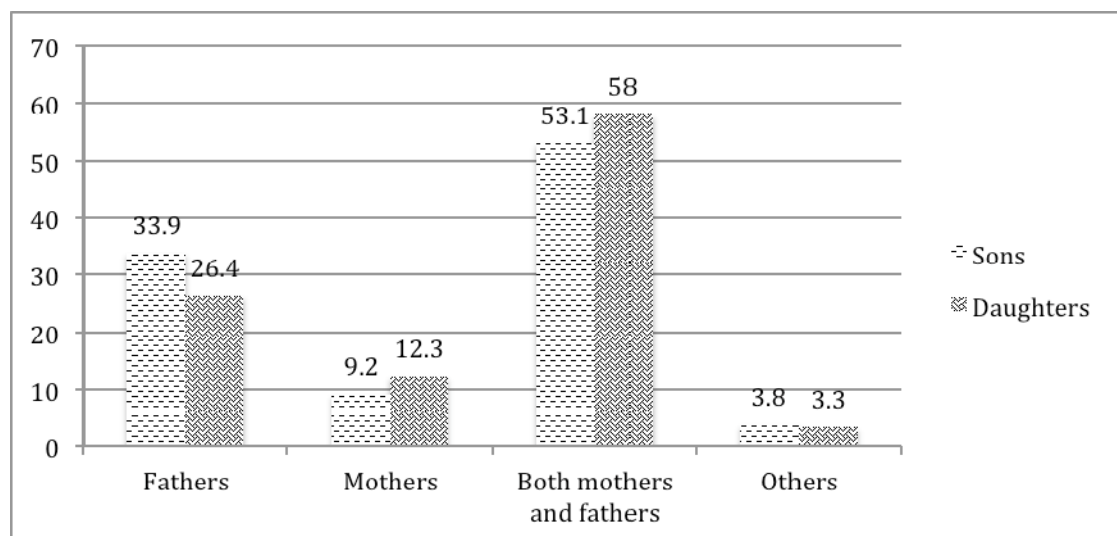
It is a very important task and parents' responsibility to help children grow up with stable job and have their own career by themselves. That whether their future is good or bad is influenced by their career afterwards.

Therefore, parents always consider carefully when orienting career for children.

Today, career orientation for children is different from it used to. If in subsidized time, the only aim is to become officials, and state workers, in present market economy, there are different ways for children. The variedly - developed market economy with well-paid jobs is so attractive that people find that it is not necessary to become state employee. Children can become businessmen, good technician, skilled workers, etc. in any producing industries and have many chances of showing their talent at competition. It is the market economy that creates a bigger place for career orientation for children.

Many parents have already paid attention to explore and understood the demands of the market economy to make a choice, orient, early invest and help children access to the fields, industries which the market demands for in terms of labor, intelligence and especially high income such as information, technology, foreign languages, law, economics and transportation, etc. Some of the well-conditioned families have endlessly invested energy and money in training children with knowledge, intensive profession and numerous career promotions. It is more favorable for intellectual families with information and deep understanding career orienting to children than others. Similarly, urban families easily access to information sources, so their career orientation for children is easier than rural ones. Normally, parents orient children basing on their strengths and high school academic abilities<sup>3</sup>. Patents also orient children with traditional jobs of the families, for example, with business fathers; children are often oriented to take exam in economics or finance, etc. Teacher fathers or mothers also orient their children to become a teacher. Notably, children's gender will be influenced in career orientation. As traditional culture in Vietnam, daughters are often oriented to follow the courses with tenderness qualities and harmonizing with their character for example teaching, social sciences, languages, etc. Meanwhile the sons are guided to study technology, economics, etc.

Fig.3. Determiners of career orientation for children (%)



Source: Doan Thi Binh Minh, Nguyen Thi Minh, Phan Thi Hoa, Cao Hong Minh (1998): *Roles of families in educating - socializing children*.

<sup>3</sup> After 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Vietnamese students will experience a tough university entrance exam to be a university student. They are allowed one of four main exam groups: Group A (Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry), Group B (Mathematics, Chemistry and Biology), Group C (Literature, History, Geography), Group D (Literature, Mathematics and Foreign Languages). Group A and B are for candidates who sit for the exam of natural sciences, technology, medical and pharmacy, etc. Group C is for the jobs related to social and human sciences. Group D is for those who sit for language, international relation, etc. Besides, some specialized majors require examinees to sit for talent exam such as pre - school teaching, music and art, etc.

As shown from fig. 3, both fathers and mothers will career orienteers for children make up the highest percent. Obviously, children future career depends so much on their parents' orientation. Therefore any parents worry and think about choosing the suitable industry for their children.

Fathers' role in career orientation is higher than mothers' (33.9% of fathers orient career for sons and 26.4% for daughters while mothers account only 9.2% for sons and 12.3% for daughters). As a result, fathers play a more important role in career orientation for children in families.

The percentage of fathers taking part in career orientation for sons is higher than that for daughters. While mothers take part in career orientation for daughters more than for sons. The main reason may be the gender closeness and intimacy lead the control of career orientation for children in families.

Other member families such as grandparents, brothers and sisters or relatives make up a small percentage in career orientation for children (for son and daughter with 3.8% and 3.3% respectively).

## 7. Marriage Career for Children

In Vietnamese present society, parents almost hardly arrange marriage for children as in traditional society. However, parents still have certain marriage orientation for children. For example, during love time, parents give some advice about whether children should choose him or her as spouse or not basing on some factors such as personalities, present job, family origin, age, etc. because parents have certain experience in this aspect; additionally they have experienced marriage, so they can help their children succeed in that marriage. Both fathers and mothers playing a role in marriage orientation rank the first (accounting for 71% of respondents), followed by the role of fathers (13.8%), and next is mothers (9%). Others have no significant role in marriage orientation for children (5.3%) (Minh, Minh, Hoa, Minh, 1998).

## 8. Conclusion

Families play an important role in educating - socializing children, which is shown by parents' specific activities for children. The most frequent activities showing parent's care for children are the ones aiming at educating - socializing children, helping them with good future orientation, they are: parent reunion, helping children with home studies, spare time for children, job orientation and marriage orientation.

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