

A Survey of the Children's Needs in the Egyptian Republic⁽¹⁾

This survey aims to point out the needs of Egyptian children in the fields of education, guidance, recreation and family relations. Published in 1974, it may serve as a guide to present day researchers and, considering the slow change in the educational conditions of the Arab East, it continues to be of value in 1982.

Absence of Guidance for Children

Proper guidance for children is almost totally absent in both the vocational and the emotional fields.

Fifty percent of teachers said their students lacked adequate preparation for academic study in secondary schools.

Sixty nine percent of technical school teachers said their students needed vocational guidance.

There is a general desire among students to obtain university education, in the proportion of 41-46%. Their main interest is medicine and engineering.

Emotional Problems

There is an equal neglect of guidance regarding the emotional problems of children.

The survey points out the symptoms of worry and fear among children, remorse, feelings of guilt (81%) and fear of failure (57%); the percentage of worry is higher among girls (67%) than among boys (57%), and even higher among children of well-to-do families.

Sex problems seem to be ignored by teachers and parents alike, and questions regarding sex remain unanswered. Adolescents lack information about the causes of changes following puberty, but girls show a higher sex consciousness than boys. Diffidence and difficult expression are a result of repression especially among girls.

Need for Recreational Activities

This need is especially felt in rural areas, where the scarcity of reading books imposes the creation of itinerant libraries.

The survey points out the lack of interest in writing for children. Here it is possible to remark that interest in this field has noticeably increased during the last eight years. New publication houses for children's literature have been created in Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq. A large number of works for children have been produced.

Some recreation is secured through radio, television and sport in the proportion of 18% for boys and 10% for girls.

Boys' participation in house activities is nearly absent: 4% in rural areas, and 5% in urban ones.

Parent-Child Relationship

1. The qualities required of children by parents are: religiosity, obedience, respect of elders and serious effort in school work.

2. Mothers are more influential than fathers in helping children. In general, they are more understanding than fathers.

3. Rural mothers are more indulgent with their boys than with their girls, showing a subconscious belief in male superiority. This attitude is more prevalent among illiterate mothers.

4. Girls are more sensitive than boys and more subject to worry.

5. There is a general lack of understanding between parents and children.

Topics of discussion among parents

1. The future of children; their career; their friends; personal problems of boys.

2. The insistence on boys' education, but little interest in girls' education.

3. More interest is shown in discussion among urban than among rural parents.

4. Sex is a taboo in conversation.

Reward and Punishment

1. Bodily punishment is used at the rate of 49% among urban mothers, and 42% among rural ones.

2. Thirty three percent of rural fathers, 32% of urban fathers resort to bodily punishment in the case of boys; 27% of the former, 26% of the latter in the case of girls.

3. Insult and shouting is common among 17% of urban parents, and 14% of rural parents.

4. Coercion used with boys in early years may diminish as they approach adulthood but with girls it is not diminished.

Attitude Toward Work

1. Children's school work is impeded by: a high absence rate, neglectfulness, simulated sickness, lack of precaution in the use of tools.

2. Low incentive to thoroughness of work due to: interest in promotion more than interest in work; literal execution of orders without regard of change which necessity may require; lack of creativity, lack of persistence, indifference to supervisors' advice.

degradation.

3. The novel is not an authentic representation of male-female relations in today's Algeria, but it stands as a nude and unconventional presentation of reality, a form of liberated masochism.

(1) Abstract of a report published by UNICEF, National Center for Social and Criminal Research, Cairo, 1974.

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overlooking any other qualities they might possess. The hero's morbid attitude toward women is not sufficiently explained or justified. Instead of sympathizing with them, he makes them responsible for their