

## Impact of Media Usage on Family Dynamics and Social Development of Children: A Home Science and Sociological Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

The impact of media on family dynamics and social development of children is a multifaceted phenomenon that warrants attention from Home Science and Sociological perspectives. This study explores the influence of mass media on children up to the age of 14, focusing on entertainment, cognitive development, behavioral impacts, body image, commercial influences, and more. Through interviews and snowball sampling, data was collected to analyze the evolving media landscape and its implications for young audiences. Ethical considerations were paramount in ensuring participant well-being and confidentiality. The research underscores the importance of parental guidance in managing children's media consumption to maximize positive outcomes and mitigate negative effects. It delves into the role of media in shaping societal norms, values, and behaviors, emphasizing the need for critical media literacy skills among children. By fostering open communication and setting appropriate limits, parents can empower children to make informed choices about media content.

**Keywords:** *Children, Mass Media, Media Literacy, Parental Guidance*

The mass media is an essential aspect of modern society, encompassing a wide range of communication channels that reach large audiences simultaneously. It operates as a powerful medium for the dissemination of information, entertainment, and ideas worldwide. From traditional platforms such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines to continuously evolving digital realms including social media and online news portals, the mass media plays a central role in shaping our beliefs, values, and behaviors. The origins of mass media can be traced back to the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, which revolutionized the spread of knowledge and paved the way for the democratization of information. Since then, with advancements in technology and societal changes, communication mediums have continued to evolve. It has become an integral part of our daily lives, interpreting the world around us and influencing the way we perceive it and shape our collective consciousness. One of the primary functions of mass media is to work

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Received: April 8, 2024; Revision Received: April 27, 2024; Accepted: May 01, 2024

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as watchdogs, holding those in power accountable and informing the public about important events and issues. Through news reporting and investigative journalism, mass media serves as a bridge between governments, institutions, and the public, enabling informed decision-making and citizen engagement. Additionally, mass media holds immense persuasive power. Examples such as advertising, political campaigns, and public service announcements demonstrate how the media can influence public opinion and consumer behavior. However, this influence also raises ethical questions about media manipulation, bias, and the responsible use of media platforms. In recent times, the rise of digital media and the internet has revolutionized the production and consumption of information. Social media, in particular, has changed the way we connect, communicate, and share information. Along with technological advancements come new challenges, such as the spread of misinformation, privacy concerns, and the proliferation of echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs and ideologies. Overall, mass media is a double-edged sword, capable of educating, entertaining, and inspiring, as well as disseminating misinformation, deceiving, and manipulating. Understanding the role of mass media in society is essential for media literacy and critical thinking, empowering individuals to navigate the vast ocean of information with discernment and awareness. As we continue to progress into the digital age, the impact of mass media on society will remain a subject of utmost importance, necessitating ongoing research, analysis, and discussion to address its complexities and harness its capacity for widespread good. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), "Children are influenced by media - they learn by observing, imitating, and making behavior their own" (2001, p. 1224). The influence of media on children has been a subject of increasing concern among parents, educators, and healthcare professionals. This issue becomes particularly apparent when considering the diversity of concerned citizens in the United States, including politicians who typically stand opposed to each other on many issues but unite on this concern. The impact of media on children has continued to grow as new and more sophisticated forms of media have been developed and made available to the American public. The availability, coupled with increased affordability for American families, has provided easier access to media for children. Beneficial effects include rapid learning, educational enrichment, and opportunities to see or participate in discussions on social issues, exposure to arts through music and performances, and entertainment. Harmful effects can arise from making violent behavior sensational, exposure to explicit or subtle sexual content, promoting unrealistic body images, presenting unhealthy habits as desirable practices, and exposure to persuasive advertisements targeting children.

The term "mass media means of communication" refers to communication tools used to inform the general public about a particular subject. They can also be defined as a medium through which ideas, attitudes, and influences are continuously transmitted to people. Mass media are agents of message multiplication. They are the means of dissemination that increase the number of messages, their speed, and the size of the audience.

### ***Main Definitions of Mass Media:***

According to George A. Miller, the concept of communication implies the transmission of information from one place to another.

M. E. McQuay and Floret Men's stated that anything related to humanity can only be communicated through words or music, images or print, gestures or physical expressions, or even messages from the homes of birds, reaching everyone's eyes and ears is called communication.

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According to Edward Sills and David M. Wright, communication provides a window to the world. What was not available to the common man through communication is now beginning to be. Communication is a contact that is established between one person and another person in a multiplicative manner.

### *Types of Mass Media Mediums:*

In educational use of communication tools, both hard and soft mediums are utilized:

- **Hard Mediums:** Hard mediums are those through which hard content is used for education or transmission. Examples include television, various types of projectors, printing machines, cameras, chalkboards, bulletin boards, etc.
- **Soft Mediums:** Soft mediums refer to content that is transmitted through mechanized mediums. Examples include tape slides, films, content displayed on bulletin boards, television, etc.

The detailed categorization of hard or mechanized mediums and soft or mechanized mediums is complex. In a narrow sense, it is difficult to differentiate between the two because some educational films, slides, and printed materials can also be considered mechanized mediums.

### *Types of Mass Media:*

- **Television (TV):** Television is one of the most popular and influential forms of mass media. It broadcasts visual and auditory content including news, shows, documentaries, sports, and advertisements. With its extensive reach and diverse programming, television plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and culture.
- **Radio:** Radio is widely accessible, especially in areas with limited internet or television coverage. It broadcasts audio content such as music, news, talk shows, and radio dramas. The portability of radio makes it a convenient source of information and entertainment.
- **Newspapers:** Newspapers are a traditional print medium that provides news, feature stories, editorials, and advertisements. Although their popularity has declined in the digital age, newspapers remain a vital source of information for many readers.
- **Magazines:** Magazines are another print medium that often caters to specific interests or demographics. They cover a wide range of topics including fashion, lifestyle, technology, health, and more.
- **Internet:** The internet has revolutionized communication and information dissemination by providing a vast platform for sharing and discussion. Online media includes news websites, blogs, online forums, social media platforms, and streaming services, which offer diverse content and user-generated discussions.
- **Social Media:** Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn enable users to create and share content with their networks. They have become important sources of news, entertainment, and social interaction, playing a significant role in shaping public discourse.
- **Film:** The film industry produces feature-length motion pictures for theatrical release, home entertainment, and online streaming services. Films have a profound impact on culture and often reflect social values and trends.
- **Advertising:** Advertising is a crucial component of mass media, as it allows businesses and organizations to promote products, services, and ideas to a wide

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audience. It is displayed across various media channels including TV, radio, print, online platforms, and billboards.

- **Books:** Although not traditionally considered mass media, books serve as influential sources of information and entertainment. They provide in-depth knowledge and narratives that can shape cultural perspectives and social beliefs.
- **Outdoor Media:** Outdoor media includes billboards, posters, transit advertising, and other displays that reach people outside their homes. It serves as a powerful tool for branding and communication in public spaces.

These are some of the major types of mass media channels that play essential roles in modern society. As technological advancements continue, there is the possibility of emerging new forms of mass media that will reshape the way information and content are accessed and consumed.

### *Media history for children*

The 20th century was a time of unprecedented development and growth in new forms of media. At the beginning of the 20th century, film, radio, and newspapers were the primary media forms with which children interacted, although access was limited. However, from the beginning of the 1940s through the end of the century, the expansion of children's media experiences extended to television, recorded music, videotapes, electronic games, interactive computer software, and the internet. During this period, print media such as comic books and children's magazines also expanded, although not as rapidly as electronic media. The commercial introduction of television in 1941 marked the beginning of a new era in media influence. One of the earliest documented examples of the impact of advertising in media is for the toy Mr. Potato Head, created by Hasbro in 1952. In its first year of television advertising, sales exceeded \$4 million. At that time, more than two-thirds of television sets were in households with children under the age of twelve. Educational programming, primarily presented on public television stations, was the next milestone in the early impact of television on children. In the extensive discussion of media influence on children, educational programming emerged as a significant and long-lasting source of positive effects. Leading the way in educational programming was Children's Television Workshop, established in 1968 by Joan Ganz Cooney, Lloyd Morrisett, Gerald Lesser, and others. The creation of a television production company dedicated to children's educational programming was a result of Cooney's study of preschoolers' television viewing habits. The project, developed in collaboration with educators, psychologists, child development specialists, writers, and musicians, resulted in Sesame Street, the first program broadcast on television in 1969. Sesame Street was designed to integrate education with entertainment and target preschool-aged children. The development of Sesame Street ensured that research-driven strategies for the most effective early education through media were implemented. Later, other programs developed by the Children's Television Workshop, such as 3-2-1 Contact, The Best of Families, The Electric Company, and Feeling Good, were included. The programming developed by the Children's Television Workshop was innovative, well-received by the public, and provided young children with effective early learning experiences to prepare them for entry into school, thus serving as a model for other programs in both media and school settings. The positive impact of American children's television workshops was extensive. During the 1980s and 1990s, there was unprecedented growth in computer technology, resulting in increased availability of computers in both homes and schools for children. As a result of better access for children, the influence of media on them expanded, with a new interactive element never before seen in media. During

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this time, there was a shift in media content that featured increasing use of sexual themes and violent behavior. This change was evident in films, television programming, music lyrics, video games, cartoons, and magazines. Parents and concerned adults expressed dissatisfaction with exposing children to age-inappropriate content and were troubled by the potential negative effects of such displays. In an attempt to inform adults monitoring children's media exposure, rating systems were developed to identify content categories and recognize the frequency or intensity of specific events. Rating codes were used to label films, television programs, and music songs. However, rating systems fulfill their purpose of informing the public about their intended goal.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

"Mass Media and Children: A Study of Exposure Habits and Cognitive Effects" by Lotte Bailyn investigates the relationship between mass media exposure and cognitive effects on children. The study, based on a questionnaire administered to over 600 fifth and sixth-grade students in a Boston suburb, explores exposure habits and preferences for various media types, including radio, television, movies, comic books, and more. Bailyn identifies two distinct clusters of media exposure: one comprising radio and books, and the other including pictorial media like movies, comic books, and television. Children heavily exposed to pictorial media show a preference for visual content and exhibit a heightened sense of realism, particularly when certain stories are restricted by parents. The study emphasizes the influence of social factors (parental occupation, education, religion) and psychological characteristics (problems in daily life, rebellious tendencies) on children's media habits and cognitive responses. By analyzing the interplay between exposure levels, social background, and psychological traits, the research provides insights into how mass media exposure shapes children's thought processes, behaviors, and interpretations of media content (Bailyn, 1959).

The evaluation of a mass media campaign aimed to promote parent-child communication about sexual issues among adolescents. The campaign utilized TV and radio public service announcements (PSAs) and billboards to encourage parents to talk to their children about sex. Findings revealed a positive association between exposure to the campaign and parental communication about sexual topics. Parents who recalled the campaign messages were more likely to have discussed sex with their children in the previous months and expressed intentions to continue these conversations in the future. The campaign appeared to serve as a cue for parents who were already inclined to engage in discussions about sex with their children, indicating a successful impact on promoting open communication within families. Factors such as exposure to different types of media messages, parental attitudes towards discussing sexual issues, and demographic characteristics like gender and ethnicity were found to influence the likelihood of parent-child communication about sex (Durant et al., 2004).

The study "Effects of a Mass Media Campaign to Increase Physical Activity among Children: Year-1 Results of the VERB Campaign" evaluates the impact of the VERB campaign on physical activity levels among children aged 9 to 13. Using a longitudinal quasi-experimental design, the research surveyed 3120 parent-child dyads before and after the campaign launch. The VERB campaign, employing commercial marketing strategies, aimed to promote daily physical activity as enjoyable and social for children. Results showed that 74% of children were aware of the campaign after one year, with increased levels of reported physical activity sessions among specific subgroups, including younger

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children, girls, and those with less educated parents. Children with higher campaign awareness engaged in more weekly physical activity sessions, indicating a positive association between campaign exposure and physical activity levels. The findings suggest that child-focused mass media campaigns, like VERB, have the potential to effectively promote physical activity among children, emphasizing the importance of targeted messaging (Huhman et al., 2005).

The impact of media on the body image of children and adolescents is a critical issue, with studies showing a strong correlation between media exposure and body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and the development of eating disorders. Research indicates that idealized body images portrayed in various forms of media contribute to unrealistic beauty standards, particularly emphasizing thinness for girls and muscularity for boys. Exposure to these unrealistic ideals can lead to negative body image perceptions and unhealthy weight control behaviors among young individuals. It is essential for parents, educators, and media creators to promote positive body image messages, realistic representations of diverse body types, and media literacy skills to help children and adolescents develop healthy attitudes towards their bodies and resist harmful media influences. By fostering a supportive environment that encourages body positivity and self-acceptance, we can mitigate the negative impact of media on young people's body image and overall well-being (Lawrie et al., 2007).

The media plays a significant role in the development and exacerbation of eating disorders in children and adolescents. Research has shown that exposure to idealized body images and thinness ideals in media content can contribute to body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and unhealthy weight control behaviors among young individuals. Adolescents, particularly girls, are more susceptible to these influences, with a desire to achieve unrealistic beauty standards portrayed in the media. Studies have highlighted the link between media exposure and the internalization of thin body ideals, leading to disordered eating patterns and negative body image perceptions. It is crucial for healthcare professionals, parents, and educators to address the impact of media on eating disorders by promoting body positivity, self-acceptance, and media literacy skills among children and adolescents. By fostering a supportive environment that challenges unrealistic beauty standards and promotes healthy body image perceptions, we can help mitigate the negative effects of media on the development of eating disorders in young individuals (Morris & Katzman, 2003).

Social marketing campaigns have emerged as a powerful tool to counter the negative impact of media-related commercial marketing on children's health and well-being. By utilizing strategies similar to those employed by traditional marketers, social marketers aim to promote positive behaviours and attitudes towards media use among children and adolescents. These campaigns target not only the young audience but also parents, encouraging them to create a healthy home environment and engage in open communication about media consumption. By leveraging community outreach and mass media components, social marketing messages seek to shift social norms surrounding media use and promote "smart" and limited media consumption. Through tailored messages, relationship-building strategies, and the use of technology and social networking platforms, social marketing campaigns strive to provide appealing alternatives to excessive media use, ultimately fostering a culture of healthful engagement with media and its influences (Evans, 2008).

The landscape of children's media policy is complex and multifaceted, encompassing issues related to content regulation, advertising practices, and parental involvement. Various

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stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, and advocacy groups, are engaged in ongoing discussions and debates surrounding the impact of media on children's development and well-being. Efforts to address these concerns involve initiatives such as rating systems for movies, television shows, and video games, as well as advocacy for commercial-free childhood environments. Additionally, there is a focus on promoting better parent-child communication and fostering a healthy family environment through targeted social marketing campaigns. The evolving nature of media technology and consumption habits presents challenges for policymakers in ensuring the protection of children from potentially harmful content while also respecting freedom of expression. Collaborative efforts between government agencies, industry stakeholders, and advocacy organizations are essential in shaping effective and comprehensive children's media policies that prioritize the well-being and safety of young audiences (Jordan, 2008).

Research has shown that exposure to media content emphasizing crime and violence can significantly influence children's attitudes and behaviors. Studies have indicated a correlation between exposure to such media and an increased acceptance of aggressive behavior and negative ideologies portrayed in these depictions. This exposure can shape children's perceptions of violence as a normative or acceptable behavior, potentially desensitizing them to real-life violence and its consequences. Conversely, exposure to constructive moral influences has been found to mitigate the negative effects of media violence, highlighting the importance of promoting positive and pro-social content in children's media consumption. These findings underscore the need for parents, educators, and policymakers to be vigilant in monitoring and regulating children's media exposure to minimize the impact of violent and crime-related content on their attitudes and behaviors. Efforts to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills can empower children to navigate media messages responsibly and discern between positive and negative influences (Lovibond, 1967).

Research has identified several key factors that influence children's use of mass media communication. These factors include the mode of communication media, individual characteristics of the child, and the child's grade level. Different modes of media, such as television, internet, and social media, offer varying levels of accessibility and appeal to children based on their preferences and technological literacy. Individual characteristics, such as personality traits, interests, and cognitive abilities, play a role in determining how children engage with media content and platforms. Additionally, a child's grade level can impact their media consumption patterns, with older children often seeking more complex and interactive media experiences compared to younger children. Understanding these factors is crucial for educators, parents, and media professionals in designing age-appropriate and engaging media content that aligns with children's developmental needs and interests. By considering these factors, stakeholders can promote positive media experiences that enhance children's learning, creativity, and social interactions while minimizing potential risks associated with excessive or inappropriate media use (Rush, 1965).

The influence of violence in mass media on children's role expectations has been a subject of concern and research. Studies have shown that exposure to violent themes in media, particularly in television and movies, can have detrimental effects on children's perceptions and behaviors. The prevalence of violent content in the mass media has raised worries about its potential impact on the audience, especially children. Research has indicated that exposure to violent media can shape children's expectations about roles, relationships, and

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conflict resolution in society. This exposure may lead to desensitization towards violence, normalization of aggressive behavior, and distorted views of real-world consequences. Efforts to mitigate these negative effects include promoting media literacy, encouraging critical thinking skills, and fostering open discussions about media content with children. By addressing the influence of violence in mass media on children's role expectations, educators, parents, and policymakers can work towards creating a media environment that supports healthy development and positive social values in young audiences (Siegel,1958).

The relationship between media and children's aggression, fear, and altruism has been a topic of extensive research and debate. Various forms of media, including television, movies, video games, and books, often depict moral dilemmas and portray violence as a solution to problems. Studies have shown that exposure to violent media content can influence children's behavior and attitudes, with a significant percentage of programs containing physical aggression. Children's programming, in particular, tends to be more violent, with superhero and slapstick cartoons frequently featuring violence. Additionally, studies have found that a high proportion of G-rated movies and E-rated video games contain instances of physical violence. This prevalence of violence in media targeted at youth has raised concerns among parents and researchers about its potential impact on children's development. Efforts to address these concerns include promoting media literacy, encouraging critical viewing skills, and fostering discussions about media content with children to help them navigate and interpret messages responsibly. By understanding the influence of media on children's aggression, fear, and altruism, stakeholders can work towards creating a media environment that supports positive social and emotional development in young audiences (Wilson, 2008).

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is based on mix method approach. It includes both qualitative and quantitative data. The existing literature is reviewed to gain overall insight about the research problem. Sample is selected by using snow ball sampling method. The data collection method which is used is structured interview and data collection tool is structured interview guide.

#### ***Research Questions:***

- To understand the study of the rapidly increasing effects of communication media on children up to the age of 14.
- When researching children and media, ethical considerations such as obtaining informed consent, protecting the confidentiality of participants, and ensuring the well-being of children involved are extremely important.

#### ***Research Objectives:***

To study the rapidly increasing influence of mass media on children up to the age of 14.

#### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

The explanation and analysis of the data can be considered the heart of the research. One way to initiate the process of explanation is to understand what the results show, what they mean, their significance, and what the solution to the original problem is. The interpretation of results can be seen as the main component or body of the research. It can be likened to the machinery of the entire research process, without which the specific tasks of data and other materials would not be accomplished. It involves breaking down and simplifying the



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existing complex factors. For the purpose of interpretation, sections have been grouped together in a new arrangement.

**Table 1** *The duration of media used by children up to 14 years old*

Duration of media use (in years)	Respondents	
	Number	Percentage
One Year	6	12
Two years	9	18
Three years	18	36
Four years and above	17	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table illustrates the duration of media usage by individuals up to the age of 14. Out of 50 children, the majority (36%) had been using media for the past three years, followed by (34%) who were four years and older, and the minimum (12%) had been using media for the past year.

**Table 2** *Children up to the age of 14 spend hours using media*

Hours spent using media	Up to the age of 14	
	Number	Percentage
0-2 Hours	22	44
2- 4 Hours	23	46
4- 6 Hours	4	8
6- 8 Hours	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table sheds light on the hours spent by individuals up to the age of 14 using media. Out of 50 children, the majority (46%) spent 2-4 hours using media, followed by (44%) spending less than two hours, and the minimum (2%) spent 6-8 hours using media.

**Table 3** *Types of media most used by children up to the age of 14*

Types of Media	Respondents(N)	Respondents(P)
YouTube	12	24
Sport/Cartoon	30	60
Television	8	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table illustrates the types of media most used by children up to the age of 14. Out of 50 children, the majority (60%) use games/cartoons the most, followed by (24%) YouTube, and the minimum (16%) use television the most.

**Table 4** *The opinion of children up to the age of 14 regarding the best month for media usage*

Optimal Mass Media	Respondents(N)	Respondents(P)
Television	12	24
Mobile	16	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>44</b>

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The opinion of children up to the age of 14 regarding the best media is given in the above table. Out of 50 children, the majority (44%) believed that both media are the best, followed by (32%) mobile, (24%) television considered as the best media.

### CONCLUSION

Television, movies, internet, video games, and social media, collectively referred to as mass media, can have both positive and negative impacts on children up to the age of 14.

*Here are some major impacts:*

- **Educational and informational content:** Mass media can provide educational programs, documentaries, and informational content that can enhance children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Educational shows can promote learning in areas such as language, science, and history.
- **Social and emotional development:** Media can play a role in helping children develop social skills and emotional intelligence. Programs that depict positive social interactions and emotional expressions can be beneficial in this regard.
- **Entertainment and relaxation:** Media provides children with a source of entertainment and relaxation, giving them opportunities to unwind and relieve stress.
- **Language and cognitive development:** Exposure to media can influence language development and cognitive skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking, depending on the content consumed.
- **Negative behavioral impacts:** Excessive exposure to violent or inappropriate content can lead to aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, and imitation of harmful behaviors.
- **Body image and self-esteem:** Mass media often portrays unrealistic physical ideals, which can negatively impact children's body image and self-esteem, especially during adolescence.
- **Commercial influences:** Media use is often targeted towards advertising of products, leading to materialistic viewpoints and unhealthy consumption habits.
- **Sleep and physical health:** Excessive media use, especially before bedtime, can disrupt sleep patterns and contribute to physical health issues in children.
- **Exposure to risky behaviors:** Some media content may expose children to substance use, unsafe stunts, or other risky behaviors.
- **Attention and cognitive issues:** Prolonged exposure to certain media formats can lead to attention-related problems and decreased engagement in other important activities such as schoolwork and outdoor play. To maximize positive impacts and minimize negative effects, parents and caregivers play a crucial role in managing children's media consumption. Setting appropriate limits, monitoring content, and discussing media messages with children can help develop critical media literacy skills and empower them to make informed choices about what they consume. Balancing media use with other healthy activities is essential for children's overall well-being and development.

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### ***Acknowledgment***

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

***How to cite this article:*** Sharma, P., Chaudhary, A. & Jangra, K. (2024). Impact of Media Usage on Family Dynamics and Social Development of Children: A Home Science and Sociological Perspective. *International Journal of Social Impact, 9(2), 1-11.* DIP: 18.02.001/20240902, DOI: 10.25215/2455/0902001