

## VALUES EMBEDDED IN CHILDREN LITERATURE: A CASE STUDY OF READERS TAUGHT AT PRIMARY LEVEL IN PAKISTAN

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### **Abstract**

*Children literature is a source for developing self-consciousness and thought in children. It is specifically written for young learners to escalate their imagination and enhance their creativity and supporting development among primary school students. The present case study is based on the content analysis of children literature particularly readers taught at primary level to check the values embedded in the readers taught to children in Pakistani Private and Public schools. The research methodology employed for this study involves mixed method approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods for data analysis. The data taken under study are the readers of primary class students which includes 15 readers ranging from class I –V taught presently at The City School and The Army Public School. Content analysis (Cohen, et al., 2007) is considered as a lens to identify the multiple values and cultural aspects incorporated in the readers. The significance of the study lies in knowing how these readers are shaping minds of young ones through the children literature taught in Pakistani schools. This research will further encourage other researchers to probe into this area of research as much more can be done.*

**Keywords:** *children literature, content analysis, values.*

### **1. Introduction**

The present research deals with the values embedded in children literature taught at primary level in The City School and The Army Public School in Pakistan. Children are the future of any generation so literature they are exposed to is of prime importance. According to Reynolds (2019), children literature is the initial medium a child comes in contact with while their world view is being shaped, she says “Children have the capability to be thoughtful and insightful about the world around them, so their literature should give them a chance to fully experience it”. In general, children literature is an essential part of literature that also needs to be analyzed as children absorb the values which dominate socially, morally and politically in the literature they read as Stolley (2005) in his book said that “... it possesses ... an accumulation of values, of plans and materials which the child could never accumulate alone”. therefore, to keep in check the values integrated in the young minds it is important to analyze the literature students are taught at young age.

From educational perspective, children literature acts as a tool for fulfilling educational goals. Schools use children literature as an effective way to inculcate values and support the development in the child. Nodelman (2008) said that aim of children literature is to delight and teach as “primarily (it is) didactic literature”. Students can internalize the values that they acquire at schools through the literature they read as Reynolds said (2019), “Children do not only get entertained by the stories which they go through but develop a system of attitudes, values, beliefs

and social norms, which in turn help them to construct their perspective of reality". The present study focuses readers which are a part of children literature introduced to students in The City School and The Army Public School. Readers, as other forms of literature, have the attitudes and values portrayed by the characters present in them. This culture based representation of values, are indicated in these children books have the ability to be disseminated in the young minds easily (Court & Rosental, 2007; Adams, et al. 2011; Kenyon & Christoff, 2020).

Values are vital ingredient for projecting the cultural aspect as per Stolley (2005). They are an integral part for personal development and formation of civilized societies; comprising collection of principles that reflect an individual's and a society's vision, choices, relationship, behavior etc (Fidan & Ulu, 2021). According to Court and Rosental (2007): "Societies can examine themselves and their values through examining their literature and the way they use literature in values education" (p.1). This reflects upon the importance of values to be analyzed in order to look into a society's value system and the principles it is passing on to the minds of the future of the nations to be followed in order to prosper in the society. Children having innocent minds are more prone to change; transforming themselves as they get inspired by the values followed by their favorite characters in the literature they go through (Bashir et al. 2022). Educating children regarding values promotes social responsibility and develops their personality; as it helps children feel a sense of belonging and adaptability for the society they are part of (Yeter & Fidan, 2021). This refers to how something that is extrinsic, through socialization becomes internalized by the children. Therefore, to get acquainted with the cultural aspects present in the readers under consideration, it is essential to enlist the values discussed in them. The values discussed are divided into personal and societal values as discussed by Court and Rosental (2007). The present study focuses on analyzing values promoted in an international school and a national school in Pakistan upon the young learners form readers taught to primary class students at 'The Army Public school' and 'The City School'. Content analysis of the readers is conducted to find answer of the research question. The significance of the study lies in the fact that it gives an account regarding cultural values embedded in these readers as innocent minds hold the future and that makes it significant to keep in check the values they are integrated with. Moreover, it paves a way for the curriculum and syllabus designers to work on this area as it highlights a research gap in which more work can be done.

### 1.1 Research Questions

The present study focuses to seek out the following research question:

1. What are the values represented embedded in primary class readers of the City School and The Army Public School?

### 2. Research Methodology

This research is primarily based on content analysis which is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Content analysis is flexible and can be used with various methods to achieve the answers for the research questions addressed (Schreier, 2012). The rationale for selecting qualitative content analysis is to get deep insight of the readers read by young learners of primary classes by synthesizing overloaded data and carefully opting for important elements of the data. For analyzing the values represented through these readers Stolly's aspects of culture published in his book "The Basics of Sociology" (2005) were taken into consideration to analyze values as a cultural aspect. The data was collected through the readers taught to primary classes at the Army Public School (national institute) and the City School (an international institute) in Sargodha, Pakistan. Total fifteen readers were selected taught from level 1 to level 5, keeping the ratio of

each class readers same from both schools. The criteria for selection of the data included: a) children readers; b) readers taught in Pakistani school both at an international school system and a national school system; c) content written in for teaching English; d) readers of young learners of primary classes; e) content including textual data.

For analyzing the content regarding the cultural aspects of these children readers Cohen's approach of content analysis (2007) from his book "Research Methods in Education" is taken into consideration. By doing conventional content analysis (Berkovic, 2023) codes were created inductively by reading and then re-reading the text of these readers. Sentences and instances were taken as the unit of analysis. While keeping in check the frequency of these units, themes were made to be categorized further defining the main domains that the data projects. The data was further analyzed via statistical analysis, represented through tabular representation, as it is strongly advocated by Cohen (p. 483). The results are synthesized by summarizing the data major themes. The values extracted are also divided into societal and personal values as discussed by Court and Rosental in their article published in 2007. Societal values are the ones which educate children to cope up better in the society and integrate peace in it; whereas, personal values educate the children about the values they need to perform better in life for them and add on meaning to their life.

### **3. Results**

*Table 4.1 Values in readers of Army Public School and The City School*

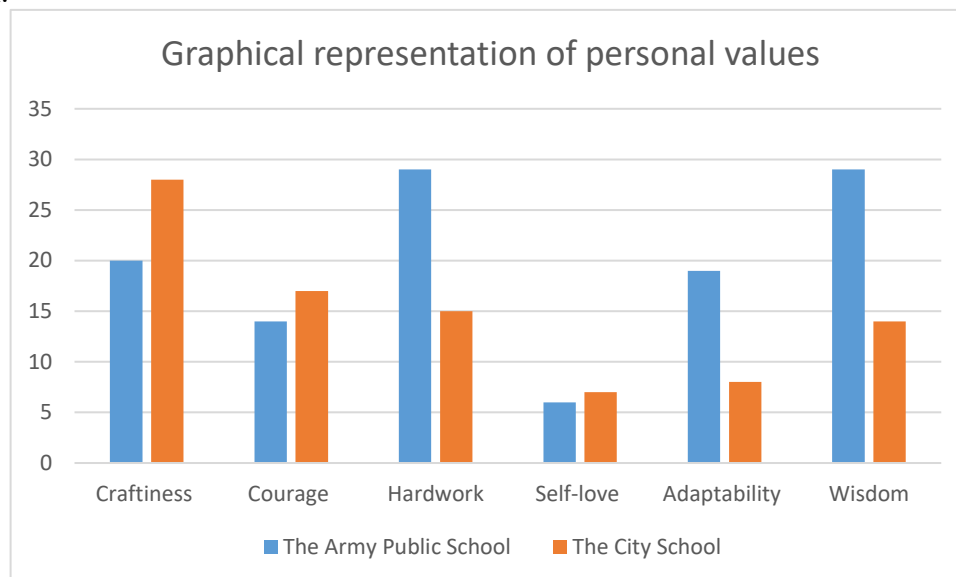
<b>Personal Values</b>	<b>The Army Public School</b>	<b>The City School</b>
Craftiness	20	28
Courage	14	17
Hardwork	29	15
Self-love	6	7
Adaptability	19	8
Wisdom	29	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>89</b>
	<b>57%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Social values</b>		
Respect	24	15
Family unity	51	18
Friendship	31	25
Honesty	30	9
Helpfulness	52	28
Thankfulness	23	19
Empathy	11	14
Forgiveness	7	9
Sharing	25	17
Cleanliness	9	18
Love for nature	21	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>176</b>
	<b>62%</b>	<b>38%</b>

The table represents the result of values found in readers of Army Public School and The City School. Among the personal values grounded in the readers analyzed; readers of The City School

highlight craftiness, whereas readers of Army Public School highlight hardwork and wisdom. While among social values both schools highlight the value helpfulness.

#### **4. Discussion**

As per Stolley, values are important aspects that define a culture (2005); to get acquainted with the values present in the readers under consideration, it is essential to enlist in them. The values discussed are divided into personal and societal values as discussed by Court and Rosental (2007). Following is the graphical representation of personal and social values along the discussion:



#### **Craftiness:**

According to Cambridge dictionary, craftiness refers to cleverness of behavior that can also slightly combine dishonesty and deceit. Children's minds are innocent and the values they are exposed to are a base for them to grasp the moral and ethical considerations. When children are exposed to values such as craftiness the deception or manipulation of situations erodes their trust. Moreover, it can manifest in children manipulation and cheating for fulfillment of their own means. In readers analyzed, craftiness was used by characters to manipulate state of affairs for their own benefits. In some readers, it was utilized as negative trait where the characters utilized their cleverness for taking advantage of others, whereas in some readers it exhibited to cleverness in behavior of characters against the evil characters they were in fighting. Thus, while exposing children to value such as craftiness, it is important to compare these values with honesty and fairness which can help children understand how manipulation can be disadvantageous to them and impacts their social interactions. While they also can grasp the idea of when to use such behaviors for their objectives that can be collectively beneficial for the people around them. Craftiness is mainly present in readers of The City School as compared to the readers of The Army Public School. Following are the examples from the readers showcasing craftiness:

1. When the wolf saw Little Red Riding Hood, he asked her, "Little girl, Where are you going?" "To see my Grandmother who lives in the cottage on the other side of the forest", replied Little Red Riding Hood. The wolf ran to Grandmother's house, tied her up and hid her under the bed (Little Red Riding Hood, p.12-13).

2. Kipper went up to the man. He gave the man a sweet. “What is that thing?” he asked. “You lock people up in it,” said the man. “You can’t lock people in that,” said Kipper. “You can’t get them in.” “Oh yes you can,” said the man. “Look.” He put in his head and his hands. “Ha!” said Kipper. “You fell for it.” He locked the man in and took away his keys. “Grrr!” said the man. Kipper set them free (Robin Hood, p. 18-21).
3. As Wilma went by, Grimlock said, “Hello, my dear. What are you doing in the forest?” “I can tell an old woman,” Wilma thought. “I’m going to rescue the crystal bell from the evil Grimlock,” she said. Grimlock pointed. “Then go that way,” he said. Wilma went along the path that Grimlock had shown her. Soon the ground became wet and muddy. Wilma’s feet sank into the mud (The Quest, p. 11-12).

### **Courage:**

According to Dent, 1981, “courage is an exhibition of power, strength and force of will and character” (p. 575). It signifies potency, command and power of a person who has exceptional strength of character and being. Teaching children courage as a value carries incredible significance as it helps children to face and overcome challenges in their social, academic or personal life. It helps them take and accept challenges and take risks which are essential for children’s growth. Courage instills in children that they have the ability to face and steer tough situations; supporting their emotional well-being. This also empowers them to take an action against injustice happening with others which supports them becoming decision makers and leaders necessary for the growth of a society. It is represented more in readers of The City School. Following are the examples from the readers showcasing courage:

1. The people were frightened but Kipper went to help the giant (Kipper and the Giant, p. 20).
2. Someone is watching us! She gasped. Chang jumped to his feet and held up a stick (The Willow Pattern, p.17).
3. The barge is on fire! We have to stop it! She jumped onto the barge and Peter and Phyllis followed (The Railway Children, p. 26).

### **Hardwork:**

Cambridge business English Dictionary defines hardwork as “putting a lot of effort and care into work”. Hardwork is a value that teaches children the only way they can achieve something or get something done. It helps them know the value of self-discipline and perseverance that can be used by children to realize their long term goals into reality. To make the young readers successful in their lives, it is important for them to learn the fruits hardwork brings for them. The readers of Army Public School emphasize more on hardwork as we see more of the characters in these readers projecting that “striving for success without hardwork is like trying to harvest where you haven’t planted”; said David Bly (Tower, 2008). Following instances in the readers incorporate in children principles of hardwork:

1. The elves stitched and sewed and hammered all night (The Elves and the Shoemaker, p.32).
2. He spent so many hours each day washing, brushing and cleaning it (The Indigo Jackal and other stories, p.26).
3. The children pumped and pumped until the fire glowed hot. It was hard work. (Victorian Adventure, p.9).

### **Self-love:**

Harshad and Ghosh (2022) defined self-love as realization of one’s worth that cannot be obscured and subsequently choosing thoughts and actions which are highly beneficial for one’s own self. Readers expressing this value is of prime significance as it can assist children to



become a whole personality that is healthily selfish and conscious for their own means; which is solely not about being self-centered rather being aware of one's own self, respecting ones boundaries and time. Readers of both the schools show almost the same percentage of self-love in them. Following are some examples referring to self-love:

1. "Now let's sing that song about me again." (Robin Hood, p.22).
2. "I'm the fox, I'm the fox, I'm really sly" (Sly Fox and Red Hen, p.12).
3. I can do anything I want (The Secret Garden, p.32).

### **Adaptability:**

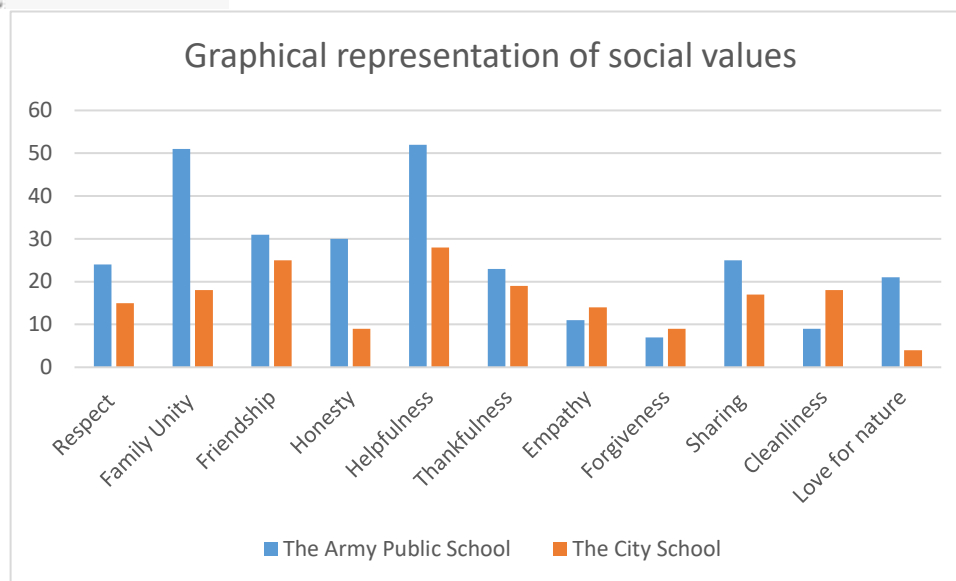
Adaptability is another core value that is taught to the students learning through these readers. It is extremely important to teach this value in this ever changing world where variability is evident in either geopolitical, economic or sociocultural fronts. Martin (2012) defines adaptability as capacity to regulate emotion, cognition and behavior in challenging circumstances. Therefore, one can say that adaptability gives rise to positive trajectory and phenomenon such as achievement and learning as individuals who are adaptive to changing conditions can effectively alter their behavioral repertoires, emotions and thoughts. Readers of The Army Public School reflect utmost percentage of adaptability. Following are the examples referring to adaptability in the readers studied:

1. She liked the trees and flowers, and she liked looking after the goats with Peter (Heidi, p.14).
2. The children were quite sad to leave their home in London, but they were also very excited about their new life in the country (The Railway Children, p.6).
3. "Nobody paid any attention to me. I've come home to change." (The Indigo Jackal and other stories, p. 20).

### **Wisdom:**

Zhang along other researchers defined wisdom as "excellent judgement about human affairs" (2007, p.3). According to them, wisdom is a sociocultural interaction between a situation and a person, within which it occurs. It is an important value that is taught to students as it makes them realize their personal psychology. It is mentioned in all the readers of both schools and mainly in readers of The Army Public School. Following are some extracts that refer how these readers integrate the concept of wisdom in young minds:

1. "And remember to follow the straight path to grandma's house and do not talk to any strangers," her mother said (Little Red Riding Hood, p. 8).
2. "Children need other children," she said to me (The Secret Garden, p.26).
3. "The bear told me never to travel with a friend who runs away when danger is near," replied Mark (The Indigo Jackal and other stories, p. 13).



### **Respect:**

Respect is a value that makes another person feels welcomed and important. Costley and other researchers define respect as “deferential regard or esteem felt or shown towards a person or thing” (p.5). Respect, if mutual, can make the relationship last longer and indicates justness, acceptance and positive attitude. In children, teaching this value is of utmost importance as elders, peers and teacher’s relation with student is based on the principle of respect; as it is a form of recognition for appreciation of differences and similarities with the people we are socially involved with. Findings of the data under study shows that readers of The Army Public School reflect the highest frequency of instances promoting the value of respect among the young readers. Following are the examples that highlight respect in the readers selected:

1. To show respect for him, they became hushed, stood to one side of the path, and bowed their heads low (Akbar and the Crows and other stories, p. 6).
2. People stopped eating and rose to greet him (The Indigo Jackal and other stories, p. 21).
3. The have seen me and they bow! (Akbar and the Crows and other stories, p. 6).

### **Family Unity:**

As per Hier and Davis, family unity is based on several supportive ingredients such as a compelling family vision, values and mission, timely conflict management, positive and engaging activities that promote a healthy momentum, strong level of trust-ability, care, responsibility and fairness among all family members (2018, p.3). In present readers family unity is given prime importance as unity among the family members promote positivity in children and help them perform and make a better society. The Army Public School readers represent highest percentages of family unity in them. Following are some examples referring to family unity:

1. Dear Mr We Do Not Know Your Name. Mother is ill and we need these things at the end of the letter, but we have no money (The Railway Children, p. 14).
2. Biff and Chip were shopping with dad (The Flying Carpet, p.2).
3. She will not give the order to attack because she is afraid the watchman will harm me (The Flying Carpet, p.19).

### **Friendship:**

According to Hohmann and Furman (2023), friendship is a dyadic relationship that endures intimacy, trust and affection between two people. Friendship is a harbinger of peace in one's life as Annis (1987) quotes Epicurus: "of all means ... to ensure happiness throughout the whole life, by far the most important is acquisition of friends". It is another core value upon which many other social values are dependent as it provides a base for them. For instance, it helps us learn and implement on the values of honesty, sharing, trust, empathy and helpfulness etc. It also helps children realize their own self-esteem as they realize that another person wants to be with them, trusts them and believes that they are a person who carries much importance and worth. In readers analyzed friendship as a value was mostly emphasized in the readers of Army Public School but they are also show almost same frequency in readers of The City School. Following are the instances where friends and friendship is emphasized in these readers:

1. Each morning Dicken and Marry took Colin to the secret garden (The Secret Garden, p. 32).
2. Joseph and Mark had been close friends since their childhood (The Indigo Jackal and other stories, p.5).
3. After that, Heidi, Clara and Peter were friends forever (Heidi, p.44).

### **Honesty:**

Honesty is an expensive item to be found in present world. Either academic or social it is requirement of all spheres of life. Sauud and Madjid (2020) defined honesty as "stability of words and behavior, conformity of words to factual events ... These conformities become truth, truth in words and deeds". They refer to three indicators of honesty, which include verbal (conformity with what someone says and actually do); action (sustainability with what someone does with the promises they make and applicable rules); situation (conformity with the intentions when performing an action). To academically promote the value of honesty holds much significance as it helps students become a positive human being exuding trustworthiness and preparing them to be courageous enough to be truthful and honest in every phase of their life. The value of honesty is often cultivated in young readers more through the readers of 'The Army Public School'. Following are the few instances that reflect how the readers promote the value of honesty in the young readers:

1. "I keep secrets all the time" he said (The Secret Garden, p.14).
2. "No," said his wife, "I didn't make those shoes!" (The Elves and the Shoemaker, p. 12).
3. "I am happy here, but I miss my grandfather and Peter" (Heidi, p.30).

### **Helpfulness:**

According to dictionary, helpfulness is having the property of providing someone help or assistance. It is based on empathy, compassion and sympathy that one may feel for another person. While living in a community it is essential to implement on such values as it promotes sense of fulfillment and cooperation in a society. Despite being a value that enriches a society with positivity, helpfulness equally promotes personal growth of children when they are taught such values through the reading materials they are exposed to. In readers under study, nearly all readers exhibit this value. Mostly, it is mentioned in readers of the 'City School' but readers of the 'Army Public School' represent it more. Following are few examples that highlight the value of helpfulness for the young readers:

1. "Yes dear, I will write some letters and try to help him find his family" said mother (The Railway Children, p.18).



2. The little elves came every night to help the shoemaker and his wife (The Elves and the shoemaker, p.42).
3. "I can help you plant them, where is your garden?" he asked (The Secret Garden, p.14).

#### **Thankfulness:**

Munajjid defined thankfulness in his e-book as "admitting good conduct and promoting it". It must be taught to the students as it not only makes a society better rather it also enables the person practicing it healthier, relaxed and stronger. It enables the young learners improve their self-worth as they can see themselves important for others. It also makes them realize to be grateful to the people making their life better such as their family, friends, teachers etc. Moreover, in English language "Thank-you"; which means show casing gratitude and being thankful is core value that must be practiced in daily life to appreciate what others do for you. In present data, readers of the Army Public School exhibit highest percentage of examples related to thankfulness. Following are some of the examples from the readers under consideration:

1. "Goodbye. Thank you for the party." (Kipper and the Giant, p.23).
2. "Oh, Dickon! Thank you. Your mother is so kind and clever," he said (The Secret Garden, p. 34).
3. "Well, you certainly are heroes. My wife and I thank you very much!" Bill said (The Railway Children, p. 28).

#### **Empathy:**

Empathy defined by Myyry and other researcher is affective response to the emotional state of what another person feels at the moment; through cognitive processing it can turn out to be personal distress or sympathy (2010, p.215). Teaching empathy to young learners is important as it is crucial for promotion of altruism, kindness, emotional resilience and encourages learners to see, adapt and understand different situations through different perspectives. Among other important values that must be inculcated in students, empathy is also taught by the readers to students for making them a benevolent human being promoting helping behavior and cooperation in society. Readers of the City School represent higher percentage of empathy as compared to the readers of The Army Public School. Following are the examples representing empathy from the readers analyzed:

1. "She looks so unhappy," said Biff, "Why is she all alone and why is she crying?" (The Willow Pattern, p.10).
2. The shopkeeper turned to leave, but before he went he said, "If I were you goof fellow, learn some sound sense from me. Go home. You will catch your death of cold on this bridge. ... " (Akbar and The Crows and other stories, p.32).
3. "The poor boy is always in bed. Maybe we could bring him out here to the garden," said Dickon (The Secret Garden, p.22).

#### **Forgiveness:**

According to Kornfield (2011), forgiveness is "the capacity to let go, to release the suffering, the sorrows, the burdens of pains and betrayals of the past, and instead to choose the mystery of love". It is important to make learners recognize this value as it can help them in restoring harmonious relations even with their transgressors; making them an empathetic and generous member of the society. According to McCullough (2001), people who are more forgiving have personality traits such as: agreeableness (as people who tend to agree more involve themselves in less conflicts); emotionally stable (as they adhere being overly emotional so they are less exposed to negativity); spiritual and religious (as they tend to elevate themselves from their

societal matters and depend more on the religious aspects to restore peace through forgiving their transgressors). In readers of Army Public School forgiveness is exhibited more than the readers of The City School. Following are some examples from the extracts taken from readers under consideration:

1. Queen Victoria looked at all the children and smiled (Victorian Adventure, p.29).
2. "That's all right," said Jake's father (Akbar and the Crows and other stories, p. 59).
3. "I forgive you, silly," Peter said, "Now let me rest" (The Railway Children, p. 30).

#### **Sharing:**

Sharing is another instrumental value that holds much significance (Drew, 2023). Sharing is a societal value that must be inculcated in the young minds as they are the harbinger of hope for the better future and society. It holds ample importance as it not only teaches children social skills rather helps them build strong and positive relations too. It encourages empathy, generosity and compassion in them. Moreover, it prepares them for teamwork, collaboration required for them to function well in cultural and social context. In readers of Army Public School emphasize more on the value of sharing. Following are the extracts from the readers that refer to the value of sharing:

1. She bought some bread with the penny and gave some to Biff, Chip and Kipper (Victorian Adventure, p. 11).
2. Then, Peter gave Heidi some goat's milk to drink (Heidi, p.12).
3. Wilma's dad spread out a rug and everyone sat down (The Litter Queen, p.2).

#### **Cleanliness:**

According to Naragatti & Vadiraj, cleanliness has an essential role in promotion of societal harmony and maintenance of healthy environment. It plays a pivotal role in fostering mental and social well-being in a society. The readers do profoundly mention the value of cleanliness and it is necessary to teach students awareness regarding cleanliness because it can make young readers responsible citizens that are concerned about their surrounding environment and can contribute in making their society harmonious. Readers of the 'City School' represent higher percentage of instances mentioning cleanliness in them. Following are some examples referring to it:

1. "This place would look terrible if everyone left cans and packets behind." (The Litter Queen, p.5).
2. "Make the rats leave the town!" cried a little girl (The Pied Piper of Hamelin, p.12).
3. I don't want to throw litter all over the countryside (The Litter Queen, p.22).

#### **Love for nature:**

Just like cleanliness, for promoting a positive and aesthetic environment, it is essential to inculcate in students love of nature too. In a world moving towards industrialization and people having less time to enjoy nature, it is important that students learn to value the nature from the literature they are exposed to. In present readers, reader of 'The Army Public School' have maximum percentage of extracts referring to love for nature in the characters and appreciation of nature around them. Following are a few examples of it:

1. "There are so many beautiful trees and flowers in the mountains," Heidi told her (Heidi, p.16).
2. "I don't want to," said Chip, "I don't want to throw litter all over the countryside." (The Litter Queen, p.22).
3. Inside the mountain, there was a beautiful land full of trees and flowers and friends (The Pied Piper of Hamelin, p.36).

The findings regarding personal values reflect that The Army Public School readers are best among the ones of The City School as most of the personal values such as courage, adaptability, wisdom and hardwork are projected more in them whereas self-love is almost equally represented by readers of both the schools and mainly in the readers of City School only craftiness is present at a higher percentage. On the other hand, in perspective of social values respect, family unity, friendship, helpfulness, honesty, thankfulness, sharing and love for nature are mainly present in readers of The Army Public School; whereas The City School readers take lead in empathy, forgiveness and cleanliness. Thus, through our findings we can say that the readers of Army Public School exhibit more of both the personal and social values in their readers.

## **5. Conclusion**

Concluding it we can enlist the values that are embedded in the readers taught in Pakistani schools readers. Among many social and personal values, these readers taken under consideration exhibit personal values such as craftiness, courage, hard work, self-love, adaptability and wisdom; and social values such as respect, family unity, friendship, honesty, helpfulness, thankfulness, empathy, forgiveness, sharing, cleanliness and love for sharing. Moreover, the results represent that both personal and social values are represented in higher percentage in 'Army Public School' readers which is a national level school as compared to The City School readers; even though it is an international school. This shows that The Army Public School readers stress more over values that ensures a positive character building of the innocent minds. The results signify that how values integrated in the readers are important to analyze as they refer to the values that are being promoted in the minds of youth of Pakistan.

### **5.1 Future recommendations**

Following are the recommendations for the future researchers in this area:

- They can explore readers taught in other schools from various perspectives
- They can even analyze the present research by using different frameworks
- They can contribute further in examining readers taught at secondary level at these schools.

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