

## Observing Family: A Technique to Teach Organizational Behavior Practically During Pandemic

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### Abstract

*Organizational Behaviour truly depends on the family legacy and the environment provided. This study aims to explore the connection of the students' organizational behavior during the pandemic. A qualitative research was conducted using exploratory design. The archival and diary method of data collection was implied. The secondary data of assignments submitted by the students of BHM from a college in Kathmandu were used. The students submitted their diaries after observing their families for two weeks and recording the observed activities once every two days. The data were analyzed using a content analysis approach. The students presented interesting examples for various OB concepts like perception, attitude, motivation, satisfaction, conflict, and change. The study justifies that the students in family can better foster their organizational behavior than the learning of the theoretical content at college.*

**Keywords:** OB teaching method, educational psychology, management andragogy, pandemic, home assignment

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### 1. Introduction

Organizational behavior (OB) is the study of people's behaviors in the organizational context. Teaching OB to college students with a practical base is a big challenge. Acquiring theoretical knowledge about it is easy because of the availability of textbooks. Teachers may suggest multiple resources whereas the students surely acquire at least one. Moreover, the teachers offer lectures and students listen to them. It is a didactic method in which content materials are provided through directive teaching (Filley et al., 1979). It may be aided by other methods like cases, exercises, field visits, and (term) papers. The schools have been arraigned to be too theoretical and fail to teach actual practicalities of managing people (Nirenberg, 1994).

A lecture method is just an approach to feeding buzzwords or jargon; it may not transform them into real-world skills (Kimber, 1994). Some alternatives to this passive method are longer-term projects, "organizations in the classroom" (Shaw et al., 1999), and the use of feature films (Smith, 2009). The case study method can increase learning satisfaction in students (Dorta-Afonso, 2019). Some student-centered experiential projects like PROBE (Practical Organizational Behavior Education) let students create actual organizations with real financial and emotional risks for them (Nirenberg, 1994) within a school. The practical methods cannot be overestimated; they are always accompanied by some theoretical course in the form of a lecture or else. Still, effective teaching/learning of OB warrants innovations of other management pedagogy/andragogy also. The unequal access of students to resources (Code et al., 2020), especially during the pandemic, adds to the challenges. However, most of the students belong to families that can be used as a resource to learn OB.

A family is a group of individuals living under one roof and usually under one head according to Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Family, n.d.). This definition tells that family is a group; there is a leader/manager; individuals live together (and it can be implied that they have common goals and divide work to achieve those). The family is the

smallest form of organization in society. Sociologists define a family as “a socially recognized group (usually joined by blood, marriage, cohabitation, or adoption) that forms an emotional connection and serves as an economic unit of society” (Introduction to Sociology, 2017). To sum up, the family is a small social organization (Briar, 1964). There are conflicts, there is cooperation, and there are many other things an organization has. Especially, many behavioral aspects can be on a family also in individual, group and organization system level like in any other typical organization.

COVID-19 pandemic made many people homebound and online education was a new norm. Teachers and students both got confused at first and later adapted to the online mode of education. It was stressful to switch from in-person educating or learning e.g., because of the nature of applied disciplines (Al-Baadani & Abbas, 2020). The challenges were to engage students socially and intellectually and to strengthen participation (Scull et al., 2020). Nonetheless, experience, self-efficacy, and technological abilities made them positive about online education (DeCoito & Estaiteyeh, 2022) after some weeks of the pandemic. Teaching skills of adaptation to changes is an aim of education always. The incorporation of the context of the pandemic into the curriculum (Hughes et al., 2020) was useful advice.

This study aims to propose and test a new method of observing family as a way to train theoretical concepts of OB to the students. Students were made aware that the family, of which they are a part, is an organization. They were then made to record in a diary the specific examples of theories and concepts related to OB that they observed in the family. Since such a method has not been tried before, this method is supposed to contribute to the theory and practice of educational psychology in modern times. Pandemic was a big problem but it offered the opportunity to redefine how we teach and learn (Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020) and this study proposes an innovative idea to teach OB concepts to the students.

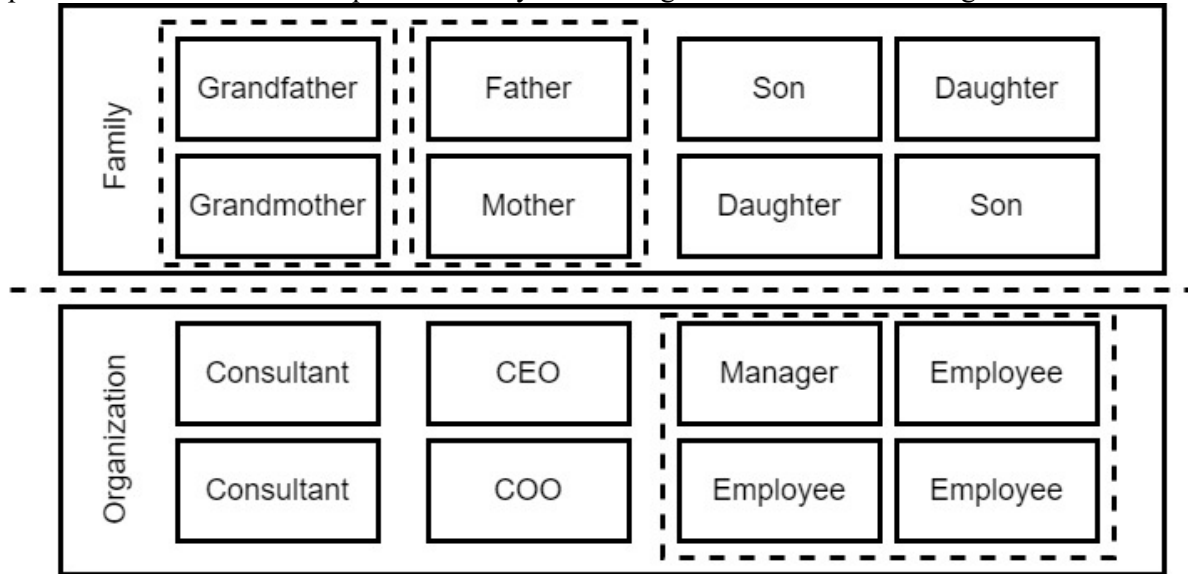
## **2. Methods**

The action research design, using archival and diary methods as tools, was adopted for this qualitative research. Action research is applied, problem-based, interactive, collaborative, and iterative (Skinner, 2017). Generation of knowledge is not enough. Employing it is also necessary. The assignments submitted by the students into a portal of a college in Kathmandu were downloaded. I was the teacher of the subject. The data archived in the portal were downloaded. The archival research method uses “any sort of information, previously collected by others, amenable to systematic study” (Jones, 2010). To do the assignment, the students used the diary method. Educational research can use the diary method (e.g., Arndt & Rose, 2022). Giving a structured format to track subjective experiences of daily life can also be called the experience sampling method (Verhagen et al., 2016) and can be used to research OB (Fisher & To, 2012) The students were given a format for recording their observations followed by an instruction in the diary. The instruction first educated the participants that family is an organization and prompted them to note their observations in family beside each of the seven concepts of OB. The qualitative nature of the research design made the collection of rich data possible. Among 80 students of Bachelor in Hotel Management (BHM, 8th Semester) approached, 60 submitted their diaries. Thirty-three participants submitted their diary in Word file and the rest submitted the pdf file after scanning the diary they worked on paper. There were seven major concepts of OB presented as stimuli. They were attitude towards family members’ behaviors, perception towards food made for the meal, ways family members motivate each other, sources of happiness or satisfaction in family, sources, and nature of conflict in the family, need for changes in the family, and ways they can be achieved. All the data uploaded by students in the portal have been used. There were 34 male and 26 female participants.

The data were analyzed by the deductive approach of thematic analysis. The categories (pertinent to specific examples) related to the preset themes have been sought. Some emergent themes have also been reported.

**2.1 Context of study**

The pandemic had terrorized the entire country when the students wrote the diary. It was a festival season; the Dashain holidays are a long vacation in Nepalese colleges. The college had given 15 days of the holiday amidst the online classes. The students were taking online classes. They could not come to colleges following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The instruction equated a family with an organization as shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Equating family with an organization structurally

**3. Findings**

The participants or the students of OB reported several specific examples of five preset themes. They reported a mostly positive attitude towards the family behaviors but some negative attitudes towards their behaviors like early waking, overuse of games, gender discrimination in the division of labor, and breaching of COVID norms. The participants mostly perceived the food made for a meal as good but sometimes, they were dissatisfied. They resented throwing the abundant foods away made during festivals. Being together with family and dining together were sources of both motivation and satisfaction/happiness. Learning new recipes or displaying their “chef” talents was an additional source of motivation for them. They wanted to replace new things in the kitchen or toilet as a change in the family/home. They also wished that the pandemic would end soon. The autocratic nature of parents, discrimination in the division of labor, and miscommunication were the causes of conflict.

**3.1 Attitude**

Attitude is one’s evaluation or judgment about any object, person, or event. The students were asked about their attitudes toward their family members’ behaviors. They reported annoyance rarely and joy mostly. They had positive evaluations of their family members when they helped each other out or when there was harmony at home. The other reasons were the festive season, exchanging blessings and partying, care, and watching movies or playing with gadgets. They also had such an attitude because of positive words or their cultural role to be polite. Rarely, when pandemic norms were violated, when they were woken earlier in the morning from sleep, and when they were overburdened with home

chores, they had a negative evaluation. The other reasons were scolding from parents and family-schoolwork imbalance.

I was annoyed because I have to wake up and take a shower early in the morning for the tika [p49, female].

We shared our thoughts on how to celebrate Dashain in this pandemic and we had a really fun talk. All of us were happy. At last, I also offered advice [p42, female]. My attitude toward my family is quite good because I always obey my parents and help them to complete household work [p42, female].

Nothing to complain as we are just happy that we have food on our plates in a difficult situation like nowadays' [p45, male].

### 3.2 Happiness

Likening to job satisfaction, the students had been assigned to write sources of happiness. Happiness is a positive emotion. The students should have reported the positive emotions gathered from evaluation of family activities, events, or behaviors. The reasons for happiness and satisfaction were living and dining together, entertainment (like watching movies, and series, games, and cracking jokes), and spending leisure time near to nature. Playing with pets was another source of joy. Partying with family and friends was the happiest moment for some participants.

I prepared new dishes. My grandmother also loved those. After eating, she was so happy [p29, male].

We are a small family, still, we are building a kitchen this year and it was our source of happiness [p47, male].

Spend time with brothers and sisters and have a party. All of us really enjoyed the party [p42, female].

Decision-making upon everyone's approval is the source of happiness [p45, male].

Good internet and a peaceful environment are the sources of satisfaction [p46, female]

### 3.3 Perception

Perception is the understanding about any event, person, object, or behavior. It is the selection, organization, and interpretation of sensory information gathered from the environment. The participants were asked to report their perception about food for their dinner/lunch. Most of the days, the participants perceived their meal as delicious but rarely as bland. It was a festive season. The participants were conscious about health, so they disliked food for being oily or stale. Otherwise, they were happy about food most of the days. Some participants were sad about excess food being spoiled.

A variety of foods were prepared to offer to God for "nakhtya". They were tasty and delicious [p16, male].

I made pasta for lunch and my parents loved how that tasted. Therefore, I was very happy [p32, female].

Wonderful! There was a special function, we worshiped God and ate varieties of food in kuchi bhoye [p41, female].

Food is always best because homemade foods are always good for health [p52, male].

We had the best Newari cuisine (Samay Baji) made by our grandmother [p42, female].

Today, after the festival was up, we enjoyed normal food as we ate a lot of varieties throughout Dashain [p46, female]

I didn't enjoy the food because it was too oily [p32, female].

### 3.4 Motivation

Motivation is the mental process that initiates, guides, and maintains one's behaviors towards certain goals. The motivation was triggered by each other's support, care, and love. The family members were reminded of a deadline for school work. Being helped by family members was motivating per se. Completing household chores by dividing labor was really motivating. Timely completion of work is a source of motivation. Blessings and Dakshina also motivated some participants.

We motivate each other by helping each other. My father wanted his clothes to be washed, so he helped my mother in the shop instead [p53, male].

Complaining about the foods sparked a minor quarrel [p49, female].

We seek advice from senior members and be thankful; we take nothing for granted [p24, male]

We are a joint family. Grandparents taught us how the work is done. My grandmother taught me to prepare a puja thali for Tika [p13, female].

The best motivator in my family, no doubt, is my mother who always teaches us to do hard work and makes us involved in most of the household work [p40, female].

### 3.5 Conflict

Conflict is a strong disagreement about something important according to Collins Cobuild English Dictionary. It can be functional and dysfunctional. Differing food values (vegetarian vs non-vegetarian) were a source of disagreement. Scarcity of resources (like having a single pair of shades) was another source. Miscommunication and misunderstanding were the commonest cause of conflict. Lack of empathy, gender discrimination in the division of labor, and some family members sticking to gadgets and avoiding home chores prompted conflicts. Children disobeying parents and parents not understanding the children's perspective triggered disagreements. There were task, process, and relationship conflicts on various occasions.

Improper handling of the cleaning equipment created a bit of conflict [p51, male].

My mother prepared only non-veg items. The reason behind the conflict was that my elder sister is a vegetarian [p49, female].

I went to a friend's party and returned home late. Father started shouting without listening. Then the fight started [p42, female].

Carelessness and not following safety measures by family members got each other fighting [p03, female]

### 3.6 Changes in Family

Change is making things different. The participants reported two things on this theme: things they wanted to be different in the family, and the ways they could acquire wanted changes. Some participants wanted things to be added into or removed from the kitchen or washroom. They wanted to have a speedier internet connection as the existing ones were laggard. The internet speed was a real headache for all users during the lockdown. The consumers felt cheated by their internet service providers (ISPs). Some participants wished that the pandemic went away and they could roam around freely or visit their friends and relatives. Some of them wished that all family members (including those who emigrated to foreign countries) were together during those difficult times. They also wanted fewer conflicts or disputes to occur in the family. Some participants, especially females, wished that their parents would be more open in thinking and stopped caring about what society thought. They wanted to have an environment where more listening was done rather than talking and different viewpoints were valued. They also wished that extravagant cultural practices were cut-off given the difficult economic situations.

If everybody was punctual for dinner, the work would be finished on time [p49, female].

A strong internet connection would be better for communication and entertainment [p48, male].

Maybe we can go out and enjoy ourselves just like we used to do before the pandemic situation [p60, male].

I want to spend more time with my mother and father because they are always busy with their work [p18, male].

**Table 1** Categories of specific examples related to preset themes

SN	Preset Theme	Categories
1	Attitude	Positive (owing to support, love, and bond), negative (owing to early waking, assignment of many tasks)
2	Perception	Good food, bland food
3	Motivation	Appreciation of food made, teaching skills (like flying kites), monetary promise, helping each other, reminders, setting goals together, blessing
4	Happiness/ Satisfaction	Festivities, special food, family fun time, mutual respect, family reunion, care, love, social support, gaming, dining together
5	Sources of Conflict	Alcohol use, breaking COVID-related norms, miscommunication, heedless gadgets use, clash of feeding values (vegetarian vs. omnivorous), fatigue, limited resources, pet (as it pees anywhere, e.g.), lack of cleanliness
6	Need for Change	Lack of open communication, gender discrimination in division of labor, crowding of guests, health challenges posed by leftovers, laggard internet, replacing things in kitchen, toilet or elsewhere, increasing income, overprotection of children
7	Ideas for Change	Less time in internet and gadgets, new management techniques (like shopping by different member in different days, inviting guests during different times of day), talking to each other freely

**3.7 Emergent themes**

Some emergent themes also have been uncovered. They are reported here.

**3.7.1 Value: homemade food is wholesome**

The participants were all related to the field of hotel management and the time of data collection was the pandemic of COVID-19. Some of the participants asserted that homemade food is better and wholesome. They were conscious of the relationship between food and health.

Nothing to complain about the food! It is always best because homemade foods are always good for health [p52, male].

**3.7.2 Diversity in feeding values**

Even in a small family, there were family members with different food preferences. Son was omnivorous while the mother was vegetarian. One sister was vegetarian but the other was non-vegetarian. In some families, this diversity was respected but in other families, this diversity created conflict.

Some members being vegetarian and some members being non-vegetarian can fire up the quarrel. May all family members be vegetarian! [p15, female]

**3.7.3 Economic pressure**

The pandemic brought about economic pressure on many families. The business spiraled down or the jobholder parents were laid off. The paychecks were cut down by the employers. So, the economic pressure was built on and the expenses had to be reduced.

The budget is tight in the family now. It is caused by lockdown and the pandemic of Covid [male, p52].

#### **4. Discussion**

The participants reported enough instances of conflict, attitude, perception, change, and satisfaction. Many students reported the instances without enough details. Many others reported them detailly. The context of the pandemic made life difficult but the participants had learned to adapt and entertain as seen in the previous research (Adhikari, 2020). They found happiness in the time together with their family. They tried new recipes and made new food items. They helped their family members out and acquired help in turn. The intrusion into sleep time was a source of annoyance and the breach of COVID norms was a source of conflict. They saw gender discrimination in the division of labor. The help and support from family members were motivating. The research participants reported about their celebrations during the Dashain pandemic. The festive season was more demanding but the joy of celebration compensated for the demand. The pandemic put economic pressure on some families. There was a clash of values in some others.

This action research, conducted by a teacher to improve his practice of teaching, shows a direction to teach OB practically especially during the pandemic. Moreover, the OB teachers can also use this technique in ordinary times when learning OB practically (like by going to the organization or creating classroom organizations) is not prioritized by the related academic institutions. This technique is especially useful in colleges or universities that have loads of theoretical content in the syllabus and students do not have spare time to go to real organizations and observe the impact of individuals, groups, and organizational structure on behaviors of individuals or groups. This method can be better than the case study method because the case study method allows for an analysis of second-hand experience but it offers first-hand experience. The learners can be active rather than passive agents to achieve the end of acquiring OB knowledge. To reinforce applications in OB, real-world examples are needed in andragogy (Luthans, 2011, p. ix) and this study was an attempt to provide learners the first-hand experience of real-world examples.

#### **5. Conclusion**

During pandemics, the students can be let observe their own family as an organization to teach them about various OB concepts. This study was limited to letting the students observe and report the specific examples of OB concepts in response to the concepts presented to them as stimuli but there was a shortcoming: not letting them connect their examples to the concepts of OB back. The following research can try this second step also. This will truly assess (or more validly evaluate) if the observations they made in the family really taught them OB concepts. Doing so will let students “experience, understand, practice, reflect, and apply” (Whetten & Clark, 1996) and they can learn the intended concepts better. Whetten and Clark suggest thinking and doing, and learning and applying should get equal priority.

#### **6. Limitations and Future Research**

This study did not let students/participants state what components they reported about their family helped them learn what construct of OB. In other words, this study was about deductive learning. Inductive learning is also equally important. Many students had no motivation or competence to do the assignment. They had completed the assignment just to avoid punishment from college (like lowering grades). Some of them had duplicated their classmates' entries. The format of the diary had limited the students to report the phenomena and events in the family. This study lacks the evaluation of how students connected their observations in their families with concepts of OB as shown in figure 2. Future research can look at how students connect their familial observations with the theories or concepts they studied during OB in an evaluative style. In doing so, the action research becomes more

participatory. In the future, the educational and psychological benefits, and costs of integrating the online and offline modes of education can be studied.

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## Appendix

BHM (8th) | Assignment for Organizational Behavior | 2020

Name of Student:

Living in: \_\_\_\_\_ (place/district)

No. of family members:

Head of family: Father/Mother/Other \_\_\_\_\_

Family is an informal organization. There is a head of the family who you can consider a manager. Sometimes, your father/mother makes the decision alone. Sometimes father and mother decide together. On the days' family members work together, happiness spreads all over. Sometimes, there are quarrels (or conflicts) in the house. Notice how 'organizational behavior' is at play in your family.

Once every two days, fill out the following form (in English or Nepali). Sit in a peaceful place and remember, "What happened in the last two days?" Start writing then. Word limit: at least 210 words per table.

Date:		
SN	OB factor	Examples/Description
1	Your attitude towards family members' behaviors	
2	Your perception about food made for lunch/dinner	
3	Ways family members motivate each other to get something done	
4	Sources of satisfaction (happiness) in family	
5	Sources/nature of conflict in family	
6	Things you want to be different in your family	
7	Ways things can be made different in the family (your imagination)	