

Parental views regarding Child rearing Practices: Do they change with Years?

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Abstract

Background: Child rearing practices influence child adolescent behavior.

Aims and objectives: To test if parental views about child rearing over 10 years change

Material and Method: Parents of children studying in grade 1 to 4 in a primary school were surveyed with a 25 item child rearing questionnaire anonymously in 2001 and 2011.

Analysis: Responses of the parents at the two points were compared with x2 test using Epi info online.

Results: On most of the items the parental view about child rearing did not change much. Fewer parents said that we should not give respect to child as he is younger in age. While significantly more parents favored that as children grow up, we should give them more independence.

Implication: Views on child rearing do not change spontaneously; interventions for more adaptive parenting are needed.

(Keywords: child rearing, parenting, India, change)

Introduction

Child rearing practices play a major role in child mental health. When parents are aware about proper parenting style, it will be a major preventive step for those child psychiatric disorders in which maladaptive rearing practices play most important role (i.e. oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, etc). It becomes important to know about rearing practices of parents and find out caveats or deficits in them by which we may trace high risk children having behavioral problems secondary to parenting issues.

Several studies have concluded that harsh discipline and physical abuse are not uncommon.

In a study of seven countries including India, Runyan et al(2010) found that almost all parents used nonviolent discipline and verbal

or psychological punishment. Physical punishment was used in at least 55% of the families. Spanking rates (with open hand on buttocks) ranging from minimum 15% in an educated community in India to maximum of 76% in a Philippine community. Physical and verbal punishments of children were common in high, middle, and low income communities around the world. The forms and rates of punishment vary among countries and among communities within countries. A median of 16% of children experienced harsh or potentially abusive physical discipline in the previous year.¹

In Kerala, 62% of the mothers reported using severe verbal discipline and 50% of mothers reported using severe physical abuse. Results suggest a high prevalence of normative and abusive practices in the community with

mothers playing a prime role in disciplining the child. Nair et al (2009).²

Hunter et al. (2000) study in rural India concluded that nearly half of the mothers reported using severe verbal discipline and 42% reported using severe physical discipline. While common, severe discipline practices occurred less frequently than moderate practices and had different risk factors, notably low maternal education and spousal violence.³ Burnette(2012) mentions that gender moderates influence of parenting- harsh parenting, dysinhibition, emotionality, and peers exert a strong influence on risk for antisocial behavior.⁴ Oza (2002) found differences in child rearing practices as per the religion.⁵ Culture also plays important role - Asians value conformity more and self-direction less than the British, and that this difference was considerably more pronounced in the older than in the younger generation as per study by Stopes-Roe et al.(1990).⁶

Brown and Iyenga(2008) in a study of student achievement and parental style found behavioral control and psychological control to be two inherent features of parental style that have a direct affect on student achievement. Adolescents' perceived level of independence when interacting with their parents also seemed to have a direct relationship on their academic achievement.⁷

We explored changes in the pattern of parental views on child rearing over a decade by assessing various important areas of parenting.

Aims and Objectives

1. To know over all change in knowledge and attitude of parents towards parenting
2. To know areas in which knowledge and attitude changed and in which direction?
3. Relation of attitude with type of family, sex of child, number of sibs, education of parent (mother).

Material and Method

Questionnaire were given to the children in the Gujarati medium school in standard 1st to 4th grade students in a primary school to get it filled by parent from home. And after two days the responses were collected.

This exercise is done first time in December 2001 and again in same school and same division in September 2011.

The Questionnaire was prepared in Gujarati language that comprised of 25 items. Each statement has three options to answer: Agree, Disagree and Neutral. The correct answer for the statement scored one and incorrect answer was assigned score 0. The statements were focusing on different areas of parenting like:

Measure	Items
Love and affection	1,7
Discipline	2,3,4,5,6,8,9, 11, 15 and 25
Quality time	12
Helping child in troublesome situation	13 , 20
Respectful behavior	14,17
Parents marital life	16 , 18
Comparison	23
Promoting independence	10, 19, 21 and 22
Reality orientation	24

The statements were kept in random orders, i.e. Questions related to discipline area are not grouped together.

Analysis:

Epi info online software is used to calculate chi square test to find out difference sex, family type, number of children in the family, mother educational status as well as mother's occupation over 10 years.⁸

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents			
	2001 (n=194)	2011 (n=245)	P value
Sex			X ² =6.42,df=1,p=0.0113
Male	130	135	
Female	64	110	
Family type			X ² =1.25,df=1, p=0.262
Joint	124	169	
Nuclear	70	76	
Number of children			X ² =0.0088,df=1, p=0.925
Only child	72	92	
Two sibs	122	153	
Education of mother			X ² =22.74,df=2, p=0.00001
Upto 12th	37	96	
graduate	129	131	
Post graduate	28	18	
Mother's occupation			X ² =0.047,df=1, p=0.827
Job	34	41	
House wife	160	204	

Women were overrepresented in 2011, and mothers were better educated in 2011 though employment out of home was similar.

Table 2: Composition of study sample as per grade		
	2001 N=194	2011 N=245
1 st standard	45	54
2 nd standard	42	64
3 rd standard	59	65
4 th standard	48	62

Table 3: Comparison of the Questionnaire scores between parents in 2001 and 2011 groups						
	Sample size	Mean	Std. Dev.			
2001	194	18.3763	2.59486			
2011	245	18.4694	2.86944			
Result	t statistics	df	p-value¹	Mean Dif-ference	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Equal vari- ance	-0.35207	437	0.725	-0.0931	-0.61283	0.426633
Unequal variance	-0.3562	429	0.7219	-0.0931	-0.60683	0.420628

Table 4: Comparison of Parental Views regarding Child Rearing in 2001 and 2011

Item		Correct Response	2001 N(%)	2011 N(%)	probability
Love and affection					
1	Parental love should be unconditional	Yes	181(93.3)	233(95.1)	X ² =0.66 df-1 P=0.418
7.	Child should know how loving parents are.	Yes	164(84.5)	217(88.6)	X ² =1.54 df-1 P=0.214
Discipline					
2.	There is no need to teach social norms and rules to the Child, he will learn by himself.	No	180(92.8)	235(95.9)	X ² =2.06 df-1 P=0.151
3.	If you wish that child should do particular task, there is no need for him to know the rationale , the child has to do it.	No	164(84.5)	219(89.4)	X ² =2.29 df-1 P=0.130
4.	Parents should immediately follow statements or promises made by them.	Yes	144(74.2)	166(67.7)	X ² =7.32 df-1 P=0.0068
5.	Rules will be effective despite there is no uniformity among parents.	No	118(60.8)	125(51)	X ² =4.21 df-1 P=0.040
6.	Discipline in right direction is only taught by repeated statement like, 'Don't do this', 'Don't do that'.	No	150(77.3)	170(69.4)	X ² =3.45 df-1 P=0.063
8.	Children should know rules made for them in advance.	Yes	118(60.8)	162(66.1)	X ² =1.32 df-1 P=0.251
9.	Pampering / Threatening is effective method to make child do work and it is always successful.	No	141(72.7)	181(73.9)	X ² =0.08 df-1 P=0.778
11.	Little physical punishment may be necessary if required.	Yes	151(77.8)	183(74.7)	X ² =0.59 df-1 P=0.443
15.	Punishment in presence of other is more effective.	No	184(94.8)	229(93.5)	X ² =0.37 df-1 P=0.544

Item		Correct Response	2001 N(%)	2011 N(%)	probability
25.	During adolescence, relaxation in rules lead to behavioral disturbance, so we should be stricter during this phase.	No	138(71.1)	167(68.2)	$X^2=0.45$ df-1 P=0.50
Quality time					
12.	We should spend maximum quality time with children.	Yes	179(92.3)	236(96.3)	$X^2=3.45$ df-1 P=0.063
Parental Marital Life					
16.	Parent should sacrifice their own needs and dedicate their life for child rearing.	No	32(16.5)	36(14.7)	$X^2=0.27$ df-1 P=0.600
18.	When child is kept at the centre of family, the distance between parents increases rather than reducing.	Yes	113(58.2)	131(53.5)	$X^2=1.00$ df-1 P=0.317
Help in Difficult situation					
13.	In difficult situation, we should not help child despite he accepts his mistake.	No	163(84)	208(84.9)	$X^2=0.06$ df-1 P=0.800
20.	When child is in trouble, best way to help him is to take decision for him and give direct solution.	No	75(38.6)	113(46.1)	$X^2=2.46$ df-1 P=0.116
Respect					
14.	We should not give respect to child as he is younger in age (i.e. saying 'thank you', 'sorry').	No	136(70.1)	200(81.6)	$X^2=8.01$ df-1 P=0.0046
17.	Parent should expect respectful behavior from children.	Yes	184(94.8)	226(92.2)	$X^2=1.19$ df-1 P=0.276
Comparison					
23.	Comparing children with other children in areas, in which they are weak, will be beneficiary to children.	No	119(61.3)	187(76.3)	$X^2=11.51$ df-1 P=0.00069

Item		Correct Response	2001 N(%)	2011 N(%)	probability
Independence					
10.	Allowing children to take small decisions in day to day life may lead them to take wrong decisions in future.	No	142(73.2)	172(70.2)	X ² =0.48 df-1 P=0.490
19.	Children should be given task and responsibilities as per his age.	Yes	193(99.5)	235(95.9)	Fisher's exact test, 2 tailed P=0.0268
21.	The best way give guidance is to impose our own thoughts, likes and dislikes on children.	No	161(83)	206(84.1)	X ² =0.69 df-1 P=0.76
22.	As child grownup, we should give more independence.	Yes	189(77.1)	164(84.5)	X ² =3.76 df-1 P=0.052
Reality Orientation					
24.	The sole responsibility of mother is of child rearing and father's is to look for disciplinary issues.	No	71(36.6)	99(40.4)	X ² =0.66 df-1 P=0.41

Results

Table 1 shows details regarding sex, family type, number of children in the family, mothers' educational status as well as mother's occupation.

Women were over represented in 2011 subjects, the educational level of the later, was also higher.

Table 3 shows that the questionnaire scores were almost similar in 2001 and 2011 (mean score 18.37 vs 18.46). There was no significant difference between the responses collected during 2001 and 2011 which shows there was no change in the overall pattern of parent's attitude on different areas of parenting.

Discussion

Response of parents in areas of expression of love, quality time, parent's marital life, helping child in troublesome situation, reality orientation were almost similar. No statistically significant changes were found in these areas. Responses in some areas of discipline and promoting independence were also similar to that of previous responses. These results are consistent with cultural beliefs in India.

However, there is stereotype of highly prevalent gender specific role in parenting: majority of people still believe that mother is solely responsible for child rearing and father's role in child bearing is limited to disciplinary areas as endorsed by two third of parents.

Most parents agreed that with increasing age child should be given more independence (77.1% vs 84.5%). This change was statistically significant and indicated changing trends in attitude of parents over issues of providing children the autonomy and independence.

Similarly more number of parents disagreed that comparison helps children (61.3% vs 76.1%). Lesser number of parents now believed that irrespective of lack of uniformity and consistency, rules will help in teaching discipline to the children (60.8% vs 51%).

It is also interesting to know the relationship between a variety of parenting discipline behaviours (i.e. praise, positive nonverbal response, reprimand, negative nonverbal response) and child compliance. In this context, forty-one studies of children ranging in age from 1½ to 11 years were reviewed. Reprimand and negative nonverbal responses consistently resulted in greater compliance. Praise and positive nonverbal responses resulted in mixed child outcomes. (Owen et al. 2012).⁹

Majority of Parents were of opinion that we should give respect to child in spite of the fact that he is younger in age (i.e. Saying 'thank you', 'sorry'). (70.1% vs 81.6%) and also lesser number of parents now insisted on child being always respectful towards parents (94.8% vs 92.2%) encouraging friendly interactions.

More than 85% parents believe that they should consider child's care as priority rather than their own satisfaction.

Though most parents would endorse helping child in difficult situation indicating no statistically significant difference in attitudes over this area. Yet taking decision on behalf of child and giving direct solution was disagreed upon by comparatively more number of parents as compared to back in 2001 (38.6% vs 46.1%). Both of these indicate a slow drift in parental attitudes in favourable direction.

Parents should immediately follow statements

or promises made by them was agreed upon by lesser number of parents (74.2% vs 67.7%)

Negative change in area of providing freedom for decision making to young children and giving them independence supports current trend of Child Centered behavior and over-involvement of parents in their children (73.2% vs 70.2%). However more number of parents agreed on giving independence and freedom to older children (77.1 vs 84.5). This is a welcome response as it shows increases amount of trust shown by parents on the older children.

In other words, parents are overprotective or overindulgent; use many times excessive and inappropriate authority and less concern for development of individuation and hence indicate no major change in overall attitudes in child rearing practices.

Previous studies support the importance of sociocultural beliefs and parental emotions and cognitive characters. According to Sorkhabi (2012) cultural differences in socialization values and goals of parents, parental emotional and cognitive characteristics associated with parenting styles, and adolescents' interpretations or evaluations of their parents' parenting styles ultimately decides the outcome.¹⁰

Implications

On most child rearing practices, parental views did not change over a decade. However there are areas that definitely need to be addressed. The attitudes regarding provision of independence and autonomy to the children need to be improved and overinvolvement of parents and their overprotective approach should be changed. Traditional view that women should be sole contributor in child rearing practices also needs to be changed according to the changing socio cultural trends in the country. These changes can only be brought by educating parents about the proper child rearing practices, and creating awareness about

long term consequences of improper child rearing practices and benefits of behavioral modification. Prevention of various child and adolescent psychiatric disorders can be achieved through these interventions thereby reducing the burden on health resources and economy. Mental health professionals as psychiatrists, psychologists can be of immense help in bringing out the desired outcome.

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