

Perception of Parental Behaviour and its Impact on Academic Achievement of Visually Impaired

Kanagala Uma

Lecturer (Senior Grade)

Department of Rehabilitation Science

Holy Cross College

Tiruchirapalli

Pin: 620 002

India

Ph: 0091 431 2704343

ukrao2000@Yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

The marked and profound influence parents have on a visually impaired individual's development is indisputable. Perception of parental behaviours is important as what parents think they may be doing may not be what the child perceives. Perceptions may be more important for predicting academic outcomes than the actual behavior of parents. Parental behaviour is perceived differently by children with or without disability within the same family. Perception of these behaviors affects the development of a sense of security which in turn affects the academic achievement of the visually impaired.

Perception of parental behaviours of visually impaired has not been given the necessary attention. Taking this into consideration a pilot study of research was carried out on the perceptions of parental behaviour by visually impaired adolescents and its impact on their academic achievement.

The objectives of the study are two fold:

1. Identification of the visually impaired adolescents' perception of their parental behaviour.
2. Identification of the effect of perceived parental behaviour on the academic achievement of visually impaired.

METHODOLOGY

Design: Descriptive analysis, including random selection of the representative sample.

Subjects: Blind adolescent boys, aged 14 to 20 years old ($M = 17.25$), studying in a residential special school run by the state government in Chennai. The total sample includes 24 blind subjects. This research considers as blind all those who make use of Braille as their primary method of study.

Variables and Instruments:

- Parental Attitudes : Items on the dimensions of loving (10), rejecting (10) and protecting (10) from the Parent Child Relationship Scale {PCRs} devised by Nalini Rao (1989) were translated into Tamil.
- Parenting Styles : Items from the same PCRs were reassigned to the dimensions of permissive (10), authoritarian (10) and authoritative (10) child rearing styles through judges rating and translated into Tamil.
- Parental Involvement : Items (15) were designed in Tamil to obtain data about the involvement of parents in school related events.
- Academic Achievement : The mean of Quarterly and Half Yearly test marks was taken into consideration.
- Personal Data : Information regarding type of family, education, occupation and income of parents was collected through a data sheet.

Procedure:

The students were interviewed individually and their responses were recorded in the questionnaires. A descriptive analysis of the data was carried out.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1

Parental Behaviours

S.No.	Behaviour	Father	Mother	Total
1.	Attitudes			
	Loving	86.98%	90.52%	88.75%
	Rejecting	43.23%	42.81%	43.02%
	Protective	86.46%	88.13%	87.30
2.	Childrearing Style			
	Permissive	56.46%	57.19%	56.83%
	Authoritarian	64.29%	61.98%	63.14
	Authoritative	70.31%	75.41%	72.86
3.	Involvement	49.05%	44.44%	46.75

Most of the parents were perceived as loving and protective, adopting an authoritative child rearing style with low involvement. Mothers were perceived slightly more loving and protecting, more authoritative and less involved than fathers.

Table 2

Parental Education and Occupation

The educational level of the parents was low, most were illiterates, some had primary education. Mothers were less educated than the fathers.

The occupational level of the parents was low, most were daily wage workers and most of the mothers were unemployed.

Table 3

Family Income

S.No.	Total Family Income (Monthly)	
1.	Less than Rs. 1,000/- per month	41.67%

2.	Rs. 1,000 – 2000/- per month	29.17%
3.	Rs. 2,000 – 3000/- per month	8.33%
4.	Rs. 3,000 – 4000/- per month	12.5%
5.	Above Rs. 6000/- per month	8.33%

Most of the families were economically poor with an income of less than Rs.1000 per month.

Table 4

Family Composition

S.No.	Type of Family	
1.	Rural nuclear family	62.5%
2.	Rural joint family	12.5%
3.	Urban nuclear family	16.67%
4.	Urban joint family	8.33 %

Most of the families were rural nuclear families.

Table 5

Academic Achievement

S.No.	Class obtained	
1.	Distinction (70% marks & above)	50%
2.	First Class (60-69% marks)	29.17%
3.	Second Class (50-59% marks)	20.83%

The academic achievement of the visually impaired adolescents was high.

DISCUSSION

The results are interpreted cautiously considering the small size of the sample. However, the general pattern of some of the findings were as expected some were new and can be considered important.

Parental attitudes as loving, rejection and protection were considered. The subjects perceived their parents as loving 88.75% and protecting 87.30%. This contradicts the findings of Mittal (2003) which indicated that blind males perceived their parents as rejecting them. Wright (1983) stated that parents of children with disabilities tend to be more overprotective than parents of non disabled children as they are usually more concerned with their children's safety.

Mothers were perceived slightly more loving 90.52% and protecting 88.13% than fathers. Dote-Kwan (1995) and Behl,Akers,Boyce and Taylor (1996) stated that mothers of visually impaired children can display appropriate affection. Adolescents tend to link more emotional attributes to mothers and more rigid and formal attributes to fathers (Pipp, Shaver, Jennings, Lamborn, and Fischer (1985).

The respondents lived in a hostel from their early childhood and went home only during the vacations. This limited short contact may be a reason for the parents' love and protection towards their blind child and the perception of positive parental attitudes by the visually impaired children.

Baumrind's (1971) three parenting styles of child rearing - authoritative (high demandingness and high responsiveness), authoritarian (high demandingness and low responsiveness) and permissive (low demandingness and high responsiveness) were considered for this study.

A majority of the respondents perceived their parents adopting an authoritative 72.86% or democratic style followed by an authoritarian style 63.14%. Baumrind (1991) contended that to become competent individuals, adolescents require both the freedom to explore and experiment and protection from experiences that are clearly dangerous.

The subjects perceived their mothers 75.41% as authoritative (more demanding and more responsive) and fathers 64.29% as authoritarian (more demandingness and less responsive). These results are not surprising given the contentions that mothers are seen as more involved in parenting than fathers. Similar finding is reported by Cardinali and D'Allura (2001) in their study with visually impaired young adults. Dote-Kwan (1995) and Behl,Akers,Boyce and Taylor (1996) noted that mothers of visually impaired children may be more directive and can still display appropriate responsivity.

Youniss & Smollar (1985) found that adolescents perceived their mothers as a combination of authority and equality, intimacy, and conflict while fathers were

perceived as authority figures who provided advice on practical matters and guidelines for behavior.

Less than half of the respondents perceived their parents 46.75% as being involved in their school activities. Mothers 44.44% were reported to have less involvement than fathers 49.05%. Due to common negative stereotypes regarding the blind there is a systematic reduction in expectations of parents about the blind person particularly in their education and occupation. Parents generally believe that the blind child will not be a productive member and hence a liability to the family. Parents believe they cannot influence their child's education hence their low involvement. Dalal and Pandey (1999) reported external dependence in families with disabled children.

These results find support in the study of Paulson and Sputa (1996) which reported adolescents perceived lower levels of parental involvement in school work/ homework and in maternal involvement in school functions. Parents decrease their level of involvement in school activities between elementary and high school (Epstein,1987) and this decline continues through the high school years.

The educational level of the parents was low, most of them were either illiterates 35.42% or had primary education 37.5%, the mothers 50% were illiterate which accounts for their low involvement in the school activities of their children. A majority of the parents of the respondents were daily wage earners 46.667% and unemployed 29.67% with a family income of less than Rs.1000 per month, hailing from rural areas 41.67% with nuclear families 62.5%. Poor parents often do not have the financial, human and other resources and time to get involved in their children's school activities. Parents from the low economic classes are willing to educate their visually impaired child only if everything is provided free with little or no effort on their part.

The academic achievement of the visually impaired adolescents was high with 50% of them securing above 70% marks followed by 29.17% securing marks between 60-70%. Perception of parental love and protection had a positive impact on the academic achievement of the visually impaired adolescents. Although adolescents need more independence they need guidance and support of caring adults at home is very important during this time in their lives (Sanders and Epstein,2000).

Perception of authoritative and authoritarian styles of child rearing had a positive effect which led to high academic achievement of the visually impaired adolescents. Authoritative parenting is more related to higher levels of academic success (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg et al., 1989) than other parenting styles. Positive relations of control (demandingness) with school achievement have been reported (Paulson, 1994; Steinberg et al.,1989).

Parents lack of involvement did not have an impact on the academic achievement of the blind adolescent boys. Mattingly (2002) found little empirical support for the connection between parent involvement and school achievement.

Low economic status did not affect the academic achievement of the visually impaired adolescents. Several studies reported that student outcomes were largely unaffected by socioeconomic status (Griffith,1996: Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, and Bloom 1993).

Academic achievement of blind adolescent boys is influenced by positive parental attitudes and child rearing practices rather than parental involvement.

SUGGESTIONS :

On completion of their high school the visually impaired boys will return to their homes and parents involvement in their further education and employment becomes inevitable. Meaningful involvement of parents is critical for furthering academic achievement of the blind adolescents.

1. Professional and in-service training for teachers on how to work with parents is needed so that teachers can through guidance and counseling orient parents to have optimistic view of their child.
2. Parents need to be helped to accept the responsibility for their child and to have realistic expectations from the school and their children.
3. Most schools view parental involvement as an interference, especially when the parent cannot contribute directly in the educational progress of the child. These attitudes of teachers must be overcome for effective home-school partnerships.
4. Different levels of involvement must be identified, each with different tasks and degrees of responsibilities for parents in which they can play “meaningful roles” in the school “with clear direction and purpose”.
5. Most government run schools require parents to conform to school practices and do not accommodate to the needs of parents or incorporate their views. This mindset of school authorities has to undergo a radical change.
6. Parent involvement requires effort on the part of teachers and parents who do not have regularly scheduled time in their daily routines. Saturdays or days when parents are do not have work can be utilized for this purpose.

7. Alternative models of ensuring parental involvement need to be worked out. Networking with training institutes, NGOs involved in CBR programs is needed through which trainees and field workers can be used to orient parents in their own homes or work place.
8. An effective home/school/community support team needs to be established to build mutual respect and interdependence of home, school, and community.
9. Parents need to be connected with other related social agencies to increase their self-sufficiency.

REFERENCES :

1. Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology Monograph*, 4(1, part 2), 1-103.
2. Baumrind, D (1991) The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 11, 56-94.
3. Behl, D.D., Akers, J.F., Boyce, G.C. & Taylor, M.J. (1996) Do mothers interact differently with children who are visually impaired ? *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 90, 501-511.
4. Cardinali, G. & D'Allura, T. (2001) Parenting styles and self esteem: a study of young adults with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 95, 261-271.
5. Dalal A.K., & Pandey, N.(1999) *Cultural Beliefs and Family Care of the Children with Disability*. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 11, 55-75.
6. Dornbusch, S.M., Ritter, P.L., Leiderman, P.H., Roberts, D.F., & Fraleigh, M.J. (1987) The relation of parenting style to adolescent school performance. *Child Development*, 58, 1244-1257.
7. Dote-Kwan, J. (1995) Impact of mothers' interactions on the development of their young visually impaired children. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 89, 46-58.
8. Epstein, J.L. (1987) Parent involvement: What research says to administrators. *Education and Urban Society*, 19, 119-136.
9. Griffith, J. (1996) Relation of parental involvement, empowerment, and school traits to student academic performance. *Journal of Educational Research*, 90, 33-41.

10. Kellaghan, T., Sloane, K., Alvarez, B., & Bloom, B. S. (1993) Involving parents in home processes and learning. In *The home environment and school learning: Promoting parental involvement in the education of children*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass,144-153.
11. Mattingly, D., Prislin, R., et al. (2002) Evaluating evaluations: The case of parent involvement program. *Review of Educational Research*, 72, 549-576.
12. Mittal, S.R. (2003) Personality traits of the blind. New Delhi: Rajat Publications, 83-86.
13. Paulson, S.E. (1994) Relations of parenting style and paternal involvement with ninth grade students' achievement. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 14, 250-267.
14. Paulson, S. E., & Sputa, C. L. (1996) Patterns of parenting during adolescence: Perceptions of adolescents and parents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 31 (122),369-381.
15. Pipp, S., Shaver, P., Jennings, S., Lamborn, S., & Fischer, K. W. (1985) Adolescents' theories about the development of their relationships with parents. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48(4), 991-1001.
16. Sanders, M.G., & Epstein, J. L. (2000) The impact of parent/family involvement on student outcomes: An annotated bibliography of research from the past decade. In *The Impact of Parent/Family Involvement on Student Outcomes: An Annotated Bibliography of Research from the Past Decade*. Susanne Carter (2002) CADRE.
17. Steinberg, L., Elmen, J., & Mounts, N. (1989) Authoritative parenting, psychosocial maturity, and academic success among adolescents. *Child Development*, 60, 1424-1436.
18. Wright (1983). *Physical disability: A psychosocial approach*. NewYork: Harper & Row.
19. Youniss, J., & Smollar, J. (1985) *Adolescent relations with mothers, fathers and friends*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.