

Child-Rearing Practices in Urban Middle-Class Families of Jammu

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KEY WORDS Jammu, Urban, Nuclear Family, Joint Family, Child-rearing.

ABSTRACT The study was conducted in 50 joint and 50 nuclear families from middle socio-economic status and purposive sampling method was followed for collection of data. The results indicate that the age, educational qualification and occupation of the parents play an important role in the upbringing of the child. Fathers are actively participating in the upbringing of the child and it was observed that the child-rearing practices were governed by the level of awareness of parents and in-laws, regardless of the type of the family to which they belong.

INTRODUCTION

A family is universally recognized as the basic unit of society and the theme of the family is pivotal to a broad spectrum of social policy and developmental issues. Family, be it Nuclear or Joint as a living, evolving social institution, faces enormous challenges and in the long run plays an important role in the development of the children. It is observed that the patterns of child care vitally affect, what the child is to grow as an adult. Yet, even in this scientific age, people take care of, and train the child, more by folklore, than by current scientific knowledge. Various studies have been conducted on the role of the families—the size, type (Joint/Nuclear), the care takers and their impact on the development of the child. (Bhatty and Bhatty, 1971; Olsen, 1974). The present study was undertaken with the objective of studying the role of the family ecology on the child-rearing.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The sample was selected by using purposive sampling method in urban areas of Jammu. 50 Joint and 50 Nuclear families were surveyed. The families belonged to the middle socio-economic status. All the respondents were mothers.

Structured interview schedule and participant observation were used as tools. The final interview schedule consisted of 60 items with multiple responses. The respondents were interviewed at home. The data were subjected to content analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results show that the age, educational qualification and occupation of the parents play an important role in the child care. According to Bhatty and Bhatty (1971), the family size, parental work and educational qualification affect on the type of childcare. The results of the present study show that 54% of the respondents were graduates, 16% post graduates/professionals in Joint families and 44% graduates, 22% post graduates/professional in Nuclear families. The women preferred to stay in the Joint families if given a chance because of the number of care-takers and helpers easily available to them. The families, regardless of being joint or nuclear were educated and aware, so were keen to discard the traditional rituals/ceremonies like 'Reetanh' Puja of 'Devta's' performed during the third trimester. They used to accede to the pressure from the elders but they were aware of the redundancy of these rituals due to better level of the exposure.

Involvement in Child-care : By Husbands/In-laws : In the Asian setting, the sharing of child-care responsibilities between husband and wife is not widely accepted, because of the prevalent notion that domestic chores, including child-care are primarily the women's responsibility. Some changes, however are taking place in this age-old notion. The Madras study (1970) has revealed that the husbands in the middle-class families participate in household tasks, including child-care. The results of the present study revealed that fathers play a considerable role in

the upbringing of the child, be it the Nuclear or Joint families. Children grow up in an accepting atmosphere and the parents contribute their role by rational consideration. The activities involve grooming, feeding and taking the child out (Table 1). Even the studies conducted by Dreyer (1975), Khanna and Sharma (1992) showed that even in the absence of the father in the Joint families their role as care-takers is taken over by the grand parents. In the Joint families, mothers-in-law were involved in child care; whereas in the Nuclear families mothers themselves are the 'Main Figures' in child care.

In nuclear families, on an average there is an *ayahs* or a paid servant whereas there are at least two persons, involved in child care in the

Table 1: Child-care help provided by the husband and in-laws in the families (in per cent)

Work load shared	Joint families		Nuclear families
	Husband	In-laws	Husband
Feeding	44	80	62
Bathing	40	86	54
Putting them to sleep	52	86	74
Taking them to toilet	22	76	40
Any other (playing, outing)	52	42	58

Joint families who are the family members. It is observed that, when the domestic assistance is involved in child care, there is the risk and danger of lowering the level of the care given to the child, as the educated mother is replaced by uneducated assistants. Apart from this, the child may develop a strong emotional ties to the substitute, and this in turn, may cause a psychological barrier between the mother and the child.

Disciplining Agent : Since the children were young, many respondents did not expect them to obey immediately. Table 2 depicts the variety of disciplining methods. The educated mothers tend to have patience, where as the less

educated mothers used verbal and physical punishment. There was interference by the in-laws, in 66% cases of joint families. It was observed that in Joint families aggression or anger of the mother was displaced mostly upon the child. A study conducted by Pandey (1977) focuses on values, disciplining behaviour in child rearing

Table 2 : Disciplining methods (in per cent)

S.No.	Methods used for disciplining	Joint families	Nuclear families
a.	Patience	64	52
b.	Physical punishment	24	26
c.	Verbal punishment	34	36
d.	Scolding	36	40

as an aspect of individual modernity and traditionalism.

Times have changed now. In the urban upper middle class group, from which the sample was drawn for this study, the child care practices are mostly governed by the level of awareness of parents and in-laws, regardless of the type of family to which they belong.

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