

Maternal Beliefs of Dogra Mothers of Jammu and Their Child's Perceived Competence in Pre-school

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INTRODUCTION

Parental beliefs and attitudes are regarded as filters through which the behavior of the infant is channeled and the thoughts and ideas of the parents are mutually regulated with the infant (Miller, 1998). Parents are architects of nations future "*The Children*". They shape the future generations thereby causing some to lead, some to revolt, some to accept and follow and subjugate (Sharma, 1999). It is through his parents eyes that the child sees the world and these eyes need to have a clear vision or the child's worldview will be blurred. Parents and parenting are important part of the child's ecology.

Child rearing practices shape the development niche of the child. Super and Harkness (1986) in their article "*Parental Ethno theories in action*" gave three factors which form the developmental niche, namely:

- The physical and social setting in which the child lives;
- Culturally regulated customs of child-care and child-rearing; and
- The psychology of the care-takers.

Research on family influence has consistently shown that parent-child relation is a central factor in children's social development (Demo et al., 1987; Geccas and Schwalbe, 1986; MacDonald and Parke, 1984). In a non-western study, Cheung and Lau (1985) have shown that a good relationship with parents is associated most noticeably with higher self-esteem in Chinese adolescents. In contrast, children who have relatively poor relations with their parents show more maladjusted and delinquent development (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Rollins and Thomas, 1979). The relationship with the primary care-giver may serve as a major source of support or stress in a pre-school year (Dumas et al., 1993).

In terms of time spent with the child, the mother has more opportunities than the father to influence her offsprings psychological growth and behavior. Tradition also favors the mother's influence since child rearing in Indian culture is generally recognized as primarily the mother's privilege and responsibility. The present research

focuses on maternal beliefs of Dogra mother's of Jammu and their child's perceived competence in pre-school. The relationship between the mother and the child is an important factor, which determines the personality traits of the child in the later years, and it also affects the mental health of the child.

The objectives of the present research are: (i) to study beliefs of mothers of preschoolers regarding: (a) spoiling the child/warmth and affection (b) floor freedom (c) discipline and control (d) organization of the environment (ii) to know about the child's perceived competence in preschool (iii) to find out the relation between the maternal beliefs and child's perceived competence in preschool.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Selection: The sample for the present study comprises of 30 preschool children and their mothers from the urban areas of Jammu city of the Jammu and Kashmir State. Purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of the sample. The mothers were approached through the schools in which their wards study.

Tools Used: Tools used for the study were:

- Modified Parental Belief Survey.
- Rating Scale to measure child's perceived competence

Table 1: Background information

1. Age Range	27-36 years	
2. Educational Qualification	Graduate 19	Post Graduate 11
3. Socio-Economic Status	Middle	
4. Employment Status	Working 9	Non Working 21

Modified Parental Belief Survey: This scale was used to explore parental beliefs regarding effective and appropriate child-rearing practices. The scale used by Singh (1992), Department of Human Development, at Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana, was adapted to suit the setting for the study. The 3- point scale is divided

into four sub-scales as follows.

Beliefs Regarding Spoiling the Child/Warmth and Affection: It includes questions which unfolds the beliefs of mothers about emotional stimulation of the child.

Beliefs Regarding Floor Freedom: It includes statement which reveal as to what amount of floor freedom do mothers believe is good for their child for better development.

Beliefs Regarding Discipline and Control: It includes statements which show how much of discipline and control do mothers employ to control their child.

Beliefs Regarding Organization of the Environment: It includes questions regarding organization of the physical and temporal environment.

Rating Scale To Measure Child's Perceived Competence: This scale was used to measure the child's competence at school. The scale used by Dhillon (1997), at Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana was adapted. The scale has total 60 items (which include both positive and negative traits). The child was marked accordingly for each trait by the teacher on the 3-point scale-Always, Sometimes, Never. Higher Scores indicate more competence at school.

Procedure: For the collection of the data; each mother from the sample group was contacted individually, and provided with the Rating Scale and was asked to mark one of the options provided on the Rating Scale. The teachers in the schools were asked to rate each child on the Scale for assessing the child's competence in school. The raw data thus obtained was consolidated through coding and tabulation. The statistical analysis was done for the rating scales; the means and percentages of the scores were calculated, for each exhaustive category. The scores on the parental belief survey were correlated with the scores on the child's perceived competence scale. Content analysis was done for the interview schedule and observation.

Correlation: The correlation of scores obtained by the children on the Rating Scale for child's perceived competence"with each of the category of the Modified parental belief survey" showed a negative correlation with each of the category and a negative correlation with overall scores of the mothers on the Modified parental belief survey". The correlation between the mother's beliefs and child's competence was found to be somewhat significant for discipline control"and overall

scores of the modified parental belief survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The content of parent's mind and the beliefs they hold about the child rearing is the focus of the discussion. Research on family influence has consistently shown that parent-child relations are a central factor in children's social development (Demo et al., 1987; Geccas and Schwalbe, 1986; MacDonald and Parke, 1984).

In the present study it was found that 60% of the mothers believed that too much responsiveness and affectionate behavior could spoil the child. 70% mothers favor giving floor freedom and employed less discipline to control the behavior of their child. They believed that the child should explore his surroundings, develop an understanding of his culture and should not be controlled with strict discipline. In their study McLeod et al. (1994) explained the effect of structural conditions on children's anti-social behavior and said that black authoritarian parents may believe that strict parenting will better prepare their children for harsh realities of life in a racist society than would permissive parenting. 90% mothers in the present study believe in having more organised and stimulating environment for their children. They believe that the child should be given freedom to interact and

Table 2: Analysis of modified parental belief survey

S.No.	Number of mothers	% of mothers
1. Spoiling the Child/Warmth and Affection		
a Will not spoil the child	2	7
b Average	10	33
c Will spoil the child	18	60
2. Floor Freedom		
a Floor freedom should not be given	-	-
b Less freedom should be given	8	27
c Floor freedom should be given	22	73
3. Discipline and Control		
a Less discipline	16	53
b Average	12	40
c Strict discipline	2	7
4. Organization of Environment		
a Less organized	-	-
b Average	3	10
c More organized	27	90

form healthy relationship with the other members of the family and society. The children are supposed to gain independence from adult supervision and explore their environment, of which home environment is an important constituent. This exploration if allowed by parents results in autonomy and gain of control, and if disallowed or inhibited leads to lack of self-confidence in the child. Parents design the child's home environment; hence the beliefs they hold exert significant influence (Sharma, 1999). Brody et al. (1999) traced the links among family financial resources adequacy, maternal child-rearing efficiency beliefs, developmental goals, parenting practices, and children's academic and psychological competence. Efficiency beliefs were linked with parenting practices indirectly through developmental goals. Competences promoting parenting practices were indirectly linked with children's academic and psychosocial competence, through their association with children self-regulation.

Results from several studies show that the children having positive relations with parents tend to be better in school (Kurdek and Sinclair, 1988; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Estards, 1987; Rollins and Thomans, 1979). Quoting other researchers and from the perspective of ecological and system theories, the relational aspect of family and school environment are especially important to development (Moos, 1976; Sameroff, 1983). Teachers' perceptions are also culturally marked. In the present research obedience and intelligence are desired from a competent child. An intelligent child should be good in studies but never argue or raise objections to teacher's discourse.

Child-rearing practices are consistently related to child's self-esteem and competence. Nurturant parents who are secure in standards they hold for their children provide models of caring concern as well as confident, assertive behavior. They are also more effective reinforcing agents, praising children for striving to meet their expectations and making good use of disapproval, which works best when applied by an adult who has been warm and caring. As a result, high self-esteem and mature, independent behavior are fostered (Kuczynski et al., 1987).

In the present study, it was found that 70% of children are in the average competence category and 20% in high and 10% in the low competence categories. The mothers score on modified parental belief survey was found in the average

category as shown in table 3. The children in the average category were found to show characteristics such as obedience, sharing, happy, alert, cooperative etc. the children in the high competence category were likeable by the teacher, very obedient, caring, cooperative and sharing. They were found to be alert and active excelled in academics and teachers reported their parents to be very cooperative with them and their child. The children in low competence category were found to the having some or the other physical problems, due to which mothers were found to be overprotective and this lead to difficulties in

Table 3: Child's perceived competence

S. No.	Category (Range of score)	Number of children	% of children
1.	Less competence (0-40 score)	3	10
2.	Average competence (40-80 score)	21	70
3.	High competence (80-120 score)	6	20

adjustment of the child in school. The children had lack of compatibility in their home and school environment as was reported by the teacher. The results conform with other studies carried out in Jammu (Sharma, N., 1999; Sharma, S., 1996).

The results of the present study reveal that there is a negative correlation between the mother's beliefs and the child's competence in the preschool. Though most of the children were found to be in the average category very few number of children were found to be in the "high competence" and "low competence" category (Table 4). This variation in the scores of the children with the scores of the mothers may be due to a number of reasons like some children were facing some physical problems due to which the mothers were over protective and thus the child had problem adjusting to the new environment at school. A few mothers were employed and thus their time spent with the child was limited. Here influence of the beliefs of the caretaker (grand parents, hired helper, etc.) also had significant impact on the development of the child. Even the absence of the mother for such a long time and lack of quality care in the absence has a significant influence on the temperament of the child. The quality of care-giving can be fully understood only in terms of the larger social environment in which the child lives. Due to the

Table 4: Correlations

Correlation with different categories					
Scores of the child on perceived competence Scale.	Spoiling the child warmth and affection	Floor freedom	Discipline and control	Organization of environment	Overall scores
	-0.1	-0.3	-0.4	-0.2	-0.4

limitations of time all the factors could not be taken into account.

KEYWORDS Parental Beliefs. Competence. Social Development. Pre-school.

ABSTRACT The aim of the present research was to study the Maternal beliefs of Dogra mothers and their child's perceived competence in pre-school. The sample of the study comprised of 30 mothers and their 30 preschool children in the age group of 3 to 6 years, residing in the urban areas of Jammu city. The data was collected using rating scales namely, a) Modified parental belief survey and b) Rating scale to measure child's perceived competence. Results of the study revealed that the mothers beliefs varied with most of them favoring an organized environment for the children. Competence rating revealed that most children were of average competence, good mannered and obedient. Study also showed that maternal beliefs vary with regard to education, economic status, and career determination which effects their children's development.

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