

Impact of Social Class on the Behavioural Skills of Mentally Challenged Children

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ABSTRACT The present study assessed and compared the adaptive behaviour skills and disturbed behaviour of 150 mentally retarded children from three RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) recognised special schools of Delhi across their social classes. Sample was drawn randomly in equal proportions from two social classes under study viz. LIG and MIG. The adaptive behaviour skills and disturbed behaviour of MR (Mentally Retarded) children were assessed using standardised Behavioural Assessment Scales for Indian Children with Mental Retardation Part A and Part B developed by NIMH. The study revealed that adaptive behavior skills of MR children did not vary significantly with the social class they belonged to viz. LIG or MIG. Whereas, mentally challenged children from LIG, irrespective of their degree of mental challenge, were significantly more violent; showed more temper tantrums; misbehaved with others; reflected higher self-injurious, odd, hyperactive and anti-social behaviour than their counterparts.

INTRODUCTION

Mental challenge is a bio-psychosocial problem. This disorder appears before adulthood, characterized by impaired cognitive functioning and deficits in two or more adaptive behavioural skills. Mental challenge is a new term coined for mental retardation. The American Association of Mental Retardation (2002) defines an individual with mental retardation or mental challenge as someone having substantial, sub-average intellectual and adaptive behavioural functioning with onset before 18 years of age and limitations in at least two of the following areas: (a) communication, (b) home living, (c) social skills, (d) community use, (e) self-direction, (f) safety, (g) functional academics, (h) leisure, or (i) work activities. Intellectual functioning also known as IQ (intelligence quotient), this refers to a person's ability to learn, reason, make decisions, and solve problems.

Mental challenge affects a person's adaptive behavior skills, ability to think and to reason. Adaptive behaviour skills are those skills

that are necessary in day-to-day life to communicate effectively, to interact with others and to take care of oneself. It includes how well the child is able to communicate with and understand others; how well the child can feed or dress himself or herself; and how the child interacts with family, friends and other children of the same age. The adaptive behavior skills such as personal and social competence are weaker in the mentally challenged children and these children have difficulty in adaptation to the requirements of daily living. Life-long adaptation is regarded as an important issue for individuals with mental disability. In general, children with mental challenge have difficulties in adaptation in their life, which disturb their inclusion in the society. Besides low in adaptivity, these children usually characterised by disturbed or abnormal behaviour.

Behaviour disorders are frequent in mentally challenged children, regardless of the underlying etiology. They are often disabling, and can create problems in everyday life and can reveal psychiatric illness. Such behaviours are often chronic and more than one may be present in the same individual (Bélanger 2012). Behaviour disorders are common in children with mental retardation and in addition to the subjective distress they cause the individual, they restrict opportunities to engage in many normal activities (Prakash et al. 2007).

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Many factors can influence the well-being of human, and social status is among one of them. It affects overall human functioning, including our physical and mental health. Children with a disability and their families might be at severe risk for poor health and quality-of-life outcomes whenever their social status affects their disability. Neeley-Barnes et al. (2008) revealed that higher income families were more involved specifically in financial decisions but had low involvement in planning and choosing support workers and received fewer services. However, Baker and Heller (1996) found that socioeconomic status was not related to involvement of parents of mentally retarded and psychiatric disorder and dual diagnostic children.

As parental income rises, parents purchase more child-specific goods and services and that these in turn improve child outcomes. Some researches proved that parental income has a causal influence on children's outcomes. Whereas, others proved that love, care and affection of parents for their child cannot be earned by money. Now, it is quite obvious that the physical health, mental health, child's behaviour, social settings of the child and the child rearing practices may or may not be depends on family's social class.

Therefore, keeping in mind the role and importance of social class in developing different skills and behaviours in child, the present study is an attempt to assess the influence of social class on adaptive skills and disturbed behaviour of MR children with the following objectives:

1. To assess the level of adaptive skills and disturbed behaviour of mentally challenged children across social class of their family.
2. To investigate if the adaptive behaviour skills and disturbed behaviour of mentally challenged children is influenced by the social class of their family.

METHODOLOGY

A multistage purposive cum random sampling technique were used to select the sample. The present research study was carried out exclusively in Delhi. Delhi, was purposively selected as it is one of the nearest region that has considerable number of RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) recognized special schools

meant exclusively for MR children. Out of the nine RCI recognized institutes for MR children in Delhi, three institutes namely NIMH (National Institute for Mentally Handicapped), Manovikas and C.B.S Memorial were randomly selected as research base for the present study. It was observed that in all the three institutes under study, the population of mentally challenged children from high income group (HIG) was extensively low, thus, only those belonging to low income group (LIG) or middle income group (MIG) were considered for the present study. Out of the total population of LIG and MIG mentally challenged children, 75 mentally challenged children were selected from each social class by randomly drawing 25 from each level of mental challenge. Thus, the sample for the present study comprised of 150 mentally challenged children and their families. The Directors of the selected institutions were contacted, who provided all the necessary required details pertaining to the enrolled MR children and their families. The required samples were drawn and then, first common meeting was organized by the researcher with the families of MR children. Assurance was given to the families that the information provided by them will be kept confidential and utilized only for the research purpose. The parents were contacted for data collection on the place of their choice-institute or their home where they were interviewed and observations made by the researcher. Self-designed general questionnaire was used to study the socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents. Adaptive behaviour skills and disturbed behaviour of mentally challenged children were assessed by employing "Behavioural Assessment Scales for Indian Children with Mental Retardation" (BASIC-MR) Part A and Part B developed at NIMH. The scale entails detailed assessment of the skill behaviours and problem behaviours of the children in age range 3 to 16 (or 18) years. The items included in Part A and Part B of the scale helps to assess the current level of adaptive behaviour and disturbed behaviour of the child. The data collected was classified and tabulated in accordance with the objectives to arrive at meaningful and relevant inferences. Analysis was done by taking levels of mental retardation as control. The data was analyzed using statistical techniques like frequency, percentage, mean and t- test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The frequency and percentage distribution of mentally challenged children on adaptive behaviour skills across their family's social class is presented in the Table 1. A cursory look of table reveals that under language, reading writing, number time, domestic social and prevocational money components more proportion of mentally challenged children found to have low level of adaptivity, while in rest of the components proportion varies. Under mild category of mental challenge exactly 52 percent of MR children from LIG and MIG were found high in adaptivity of motor skills and activities of daily living. Whereas, a different kind of pattern was found under language, reading-writing, number-time, domestic-social, prevocational money domains of adaptive behavior skills. It has been seen in the Table 1 that major proportion of MR children irrespective of their social class were found to fall under low level of adaptivity. However, percentage of MR children from LIG were found to be 64 percent, 84 percent, 84 percent, 84 percent and 96 percent respectively under the domains language, reading-writing, number-time, domestic-social, prevocational money, which was comparatively more than MR children from MIG.

Unlike mildly challenged children, under moderate category of child's mental challenge almost all the children irrespective of their social class had low level of adaptivity in reading- writing, number- time, pre vocational money components. In motor skill component 68 percent and 48 percent of children from LIG and MIG were found at moderate level of adaptivity. While, in activities of daily living more proportion of LIG children (60 percent) were found to have low adaptivity. Under the language component, percentage of children who were from LIG and MIG were 68 percent and 64 percent respectively at low level of adaptivity. Moreover, in domestic- social component 88 percent of children from MIG and 92 percent from LIG showed low adaptivity.

Quite different picture was revealed under severe category of child's mental challenge. In motor skills component, it was seen that nearly half of children from LIG and MIG were found at moderate level of adaptivity. However, it was also noted that under activities of daily living more percentage of mentally challenged children from MIG (80 percent) were found to have low

adaptivity. Besides this, almost all the children from LIG and MIG under the components language, reading- writing, number- time, domestic- social, pre vocational money were found to have low level of adaptivity.

It is very clear from the Table 2 that there was no significant difference in adaptive behaviour skills of mentally challenged children across family's social class. Similar results were also reported by Kumari (2009) who depicted no significant relation of family income with the development of skills of mentally challenged children. Likewise, Figen et al. (2008) also reported that family size and average family income did not contribute in the learning of self-help skills. It may be probably because all the families, irrespective of their social class love their child and equally contribute in developing adaptive behaviour skills of their children. It was not the income which influence the adaptive behaviour but it was the learning ability, I.Q of the child and support and positive attitudes of family members that made the child to learn basic adaptive skills that is, motor skills, activities of daily living, language, reading-writing, number-time, domestic social and prevocational money.

The frequency and percentage distribution of mentally challenged children on disturbed behaviour across social class is presented in Table 3. It was interestingly to note that majority of MR children showed low level of disturbed behaviour, whereas variations were seen only in few components. In the component temper tantrums, variations were noted, in which mildly challenged children who were from LIG were observed to be slightly more (88%) as compare to MIG's children (84%) at low level. Although moderately challenged children irrespective of their economic strata occupied equal proportion (92%) at low level. Whereas, severely challenged children from MIG (92%) and 88 percent from LIG were also observed at low level of temper tantrums. Quite different picture was observed in the component hyperactive behaviour, in which slightly more proportion of mildly challenged children from LIG (88%) as compare to MIG (84%) reported low level of disturbed behaviour. While under the child's moderate level of mental challenge 96 percent of children from MIG and 84 percent from LIG showed low hyperactive behaviour. However, under severe level of child's mental challenge 84 percent and 80 percent of children who were from MIG

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of mentally challenged children on the type and level of adaptive behaviour skills across social class

Domains of adaptive behaviour skills	Levels of adaptive behaviour skills	Score range	Mildly challenged children ($n_1=50$)						Moderately challenged children ($n_2=50$)						Severely challenged children ($n_3=50$)					
			Low income families ($n_{1a}=25$)			Middle income families ($n_{1b}=25$)			Low income families ($n_{2a}=25$)			Middle income families ($n_{2b}=25$)			Low income families ($n_{3a}=25$)			Middle income families ($n_{3b}=25$)		
			n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Motor</i>	Low	0-66	3	12.0	5	20.0	3	12.0	3	12.0	3	12.0	7	28.0	9	36.0				
	Moderate	67-133	9	36.0	7	28.0	17	68.0	12	48.0	12	48.0	13	52.0	13	52.0				
	High	134-200	13	52.0	13	52.0	5	20.0	10	40.0	6	24.0	3	12.0	3	12.0				
<i>Activities of Daily Living</i>	Low	0-66	11	44.0	8	32.0	15	60.0	7	28.0	15	60.0	20	80.0	20	80.0				
	Moderate	67-133	1	4.0	4	16.0	3	12.0	7	28.0	2	8.0	2	8.0	2	8.0				
	High	134-200	13	52.0	13	52.0	7	28.0	11	44.0	8	32.0	3	12.0	3	12.0				
<i>Language</i>	Low	0-66	16	64.0	13	52.0	17	68.0	16	64.0	23	92.0	23	92.0	23	92.0				
	Moderate	67-133	8	32.0	9	36.0	8	32.0	9	36.0	2	8.0	2	8.0	2	8.0				
	High	134-200	1	4.0	3	12.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0				
<i>Reading-Writing</i>	Low	0-66	21	84.0	20	80.0	24	96.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0				
	Moderate	67-133	3	12.0	3	12.0	1	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0				
	High	134-200	1	4.0	2	8.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0				
<i>Number- Time</i>	Low	0-66	21	84.0	20	80.0	23	92.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0				
	Moderate	67-133	4	16.0	5	20.0	2	8.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0				
	High	134-200	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0				
<i>Domestic Social</i>	Low	0-66	21	84.0	19	76.0	23	92.0	22	88.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0				
	Moderate	67-133	4	16.0	5	20.0	2	8.0	3	12.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0				
	High	134-200	0	0.0	1	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0				
<i>Pre-vocational Money</i>	Low	0-66	24	96.0	22	88.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0				
	Moderate	67-133	1	4.0	2	8.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0				
	High	134-200	0	0.0	1	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0				

Table 2: Mean differences in the adaptive behaviour skills of mentally challenged children across social class

Domain of adaptive behaviour skills	Mildly challenged children ($n_1=50$)				Moderately challenged children($n_2=50$)				Severely challenged children ($n_3=50$)						
	Low income families ($n_{1a}=25$)		Middle income families ($n_{1b}=25$)		t	Low income families ($n_{2a}=25$)		Middle income families ($n_{2b}=25$)		t	Low income families ($n_{3a}=25$)		Middle income families ($n_{3b}=25$)		t
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Motor	125.04	53.58	121.28	54.70	0.25 ^{NS}	110.2	43.82	119.24	43.71	0.73 ^{NS}	88.44	44.98	77.68	40.37	0.89 ^{NS}
Activities of daily living	127.84	65.67	117.44	65.4	0.56 ^{NS}	93.32	53.22	111.28	53.42	1.19 ^{NS}	57.96	58.24	62.64	42.94	0.32 ^{NS}
Language	60.76	50.47	63.80	51.82	0.21 ^{NS}	41.28	32.49	55.96	41.36	1.40 ^{NS}	27.48	27.72	27.44	26.78	0.52 ^{NS}
Reading-writing	32.76	45.24	28.60	50.43	0.31 ^{NS}	12.84	27.52	9.68	14.78	0.51 ^{NS}	3.00	9.37	2.28	6.89	0.31 ^{NS}
Number- time	23.76	35.28	22.20	38.49	0.15 ^{NS}	7.00	17.07	5.48	7.69	0.41 ^{NS}	2.96	11.68	0.88	2.15	0.88 ^{NS}
Domestic social	43.64	41.51	44.08	38.46	0.39 ^{NS}	29.64	27.13	38.16	20.44	1.25 ^{NS}	21.48	20.87	16.16	16.19	1.01 ^{NS}
Pre-vocational money	26.12	24.42	27.08	32.20	0.12 ^{NS}	12.88	17.84	18.36	16.82	1.11 ^{NS}	8.68	12.08	3.60	8.72	1.70 ^{NS}

Note: NS indicates non-significant at $p<0.05$

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of the mentally challenged children on their disturbed behavior across social class

Domains of disturbed behaviour	Level of disturbed behaviour	Score range	Mildly challenged children ($n_1=50$)				Moderately challenged children ($n_2=50$)				Severely challenged children ($n_3=50$)			
			$LIG(n_{1a}=25)$		$MIG(n_{1b}=25)$		$LIG(n_{2a}=25)$		$MIG(n_{2b}=25)$		$LIG(n_{3a}=25)$		$MIG(n_{3b}=25)$	
			n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Violent Behaviour	Low	0-10	25	100.0	25	100.0	23	92.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0
	Moderate	11-21	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	8.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	High	22-32	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Temper Tantrums	Low	0-2	22	88.0	21	84.0	23	92.0	23	92.0	22	88.0	23	92.0
	Moderate	3-5	3	12.0	4	16.0	2	8.0	2	8.0	3	12.0	2	8.0
	High	6-8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Misbehaves with Others	Low	0-4	25	100.0	24	96.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0
	Moderate	5-9	0	0.0	1	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	High	10-15	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Self-injurious Behaviour	Low	0-6	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0
	Moderate	7-13	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	High	14-20	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Repetitive Behaviour	Low	0-5	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0
	Moderate	6-11	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	High	12-17	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Odd Behaviour	Low	0-5	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0
	Moderate	6-11	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	High	12-17	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Hyperactive Behaviour	Low	0-1	22	88.0	21	84.0	21	84.0	24	96.0	20	80.0	21	84.0
	Moderate	2-3	3	12.0	3	12.0	2	8.0	0	0.0	5	20.0	3	12.0
	High	4-6	0	0.0	1	4.0	2	8.0	1	4.0	0	0.0	1	4.0
Rebellious Behaviour	Low	0-3	25	100.0	24	96.0	23	92.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0
	Moderate	4-7	0	0.0	1	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	High	8-12	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	8.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Antisocial Behaviour	Low	0-5	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0
	Moderate	6-11	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	High	12-18	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Fear	Low	0-2	25	100.0	25	100.0	24	96.0	23	92.0	25	100.0	25	100.0
	Moderate	3-5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	High	6-8	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.0	2	8.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

and LIG were observed at low level of hyperactive behaviour.

Table 4 clearly reveals that mentally challenged children from LIG irrespective of their degree of mental challenge were found to have more violent behaviour, temper tantrums, misbehaves with others, self-injurious behaviour, odd behaviour, hyperactive behaviour and anti-social behaviour. This finding in accordance with that of Koskentausta et al. (2007) who identified risk factors for psychiatric disturbance in children with intellectual disability. These factors significantly increased among low socio-economic status family. It might be probably due to the reason that middle income families were comparatively more aware regarding child's situation and more educated which resulted in their more vigilance over the disturbed behaviour of the mentally challenged child. Education helps parents in understanding the sentiments and psychology of children, hence parents from middle income families had more understanding over how their child's disturbed behaviour hinders in his/her development. Therefore, gradually put more efforts in controlling the undesirable behaviours.

CONCLUSION

It has been obtained from the study that social class had no impact on the adaptive behaviour skills of mentally challenged children. Children irrespective of their degree of mental challenge from LIG and MIG were not seen to be significantly different in motor skills, activities of daily living, language, reading-writing, number-time, domestic social and prevocational money. In contrary with this, economic class was found to be one of the contributing factor of disturbed behaviour of the mentally challenged children. Mentally challenged children who were from LIG were seen to be more prominent in violent behaviour, temper tantrums, misbehaves with others, self-injurious behaviour, odd behaviour, hyperactive behaviour and anti-social behaviour than that of children from MIG. On the whole it can be concluded that whether the mentally challenged children from low income class or middle income class it's not their level of family's income that makes difference in their adaptive behaviour skills. It is child's learning ability, I.Q, support and positive attitudes of family members that made the child to learn basic adaptive skills.

On the other hand MR children from LIG showed more disturbed behaviour. It was found because of the low educational level of their parents. Low income hurts children not because poor families have less money to invest and less educated, but because low income reduces parents' ability to be "good" parents. Poor parenting, in turn, hurts the social and emotional development of children, which limits their educational and social opportunities, and thereby diminishes parents' ability to be supportive, consistent, and involved with their children, which promotes their child's disturbed behaviour. Institutes like Manovikas, C.B.S memorial and NIMH proved very much helpful in gradually decreasing the disturbed behaviour of MR children. They provide a healthy and motivational environment to the disabled child, in which child irrespective of their social class can acquire adaptive skills and gain knowledge. So, this is an opportunity for LIG families to get enrolled their child in such institutes for their upliftment. Although parents' from both social class gives equal love and care to their MR child but if positive environment is to be made at home, proper motivation is to given to the families then, the child's condition can be improved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Emphasis should be given to strengthen the child's learning ability and in making positive and healthy environment at home which finally build a strong bond between family and the child, thereby leads to improvement in child's condition.
2. Efforts to be made by parents to increase their education level which make them more aware regarding the child's situation, and thereby make them to put more efforts in controlling the undesirable behaviours of their child.
3. New innovative techniques should be used by parents to make learning more easy and entertaining for the child.

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Table 4: Mean differences in the disturbed behaviour of mentally challenged children across social class

Components of disturbed behaviour	Mildly challenged children ($n_1=50$)				Moderately challenged children ($n_2=50$)				Severely challenged children ($n_3=50$)			
	Low income families ($n_{1a}=25$)		Middle income families ($n_{1b}=25$)		Low income families ($n_{2a}=25$)		Middle income families ($n_{2b}=25$)		Low income families ($n_{3a}=25$)		Middle income families ($n_{3b}=25$)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Violent behaviour	1.44	1.71	0.24	0.60	2.20*	2.85	3.22	1.04	1.02	1.78	1.97	2.26
Temper tantrums	2.12	0.88	0.88	1.45	4.68*	3.85	1.46	2.37	1.11	2.58*	3.68	1.97
Misbehaves with others	1.80	1.00	0.20	1.00	2.78*	3.56	0.87	2.05	1.72	2.89*	3.78	0.44
Self- injurious behaviour	3.18	0.85	0.98	1.21	7.09*	3.95	1.95	2.15	0.85	2.24*	4.75	0.82
Repetitive behaviour	0.12	0.33	0.08	0.28	0.34	0.46	0.96	0.32	0.75	0.65	1.01	0.82
Odd behaviour	1.76	1.39	0.24	1.01	2.88*	2.01	0.92	0.48	0.82	4.88*	2.17	1.12
Hyperactive behaviour	1.72	1.31	0.56	1.45	2.98*	3.68	1.46	2.12	0.83	2.78*	5.75	1.34
Rebellious behaviour	1.16	1.18	0.95	1.14	0.50	2.35	1.96	2.15	0.37	0.47	3.56	1.08
Antisocial behaviour	1.28	1.46	0.12	0.44	3.33*	2.78	3.09	1.50	0.87	2.89*	3.94	2.78
Fear	0.52	0.77	0.40	0.65	0.32	0.52	0.87	0.48	1.66	0.36	0.92	0.95

Note: 1. * indicates significant at 0.05 level of significance

2. Higher the score, higher the disturbed behaviour

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