

Parenting satisfaction of dual earner couples in child rearing stage of family life cycle

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■ **ABSTRACT** : The traditional Indian system is being profoundly shaken and the women life style is being re-written because of numerous forces. Literacy and employment rates have increased significantly for the women. Due to this, more and more women are now seeking employment outside their home and formation of nuclear type family is commonly seen. The parental role is one of the most important roles in adulthood. The present study focused on the comparison of parenting satisfaction in joint and nuclear families in child rearing stage of family life cycle. The sample comprised of 60 dual earner couples (30 couples from joint families and 30 couples from nuclear families) selected randomly from Udaipur district in Rajasthan state. A self-constructed parenting satisfaction inventory was used for collecting the data. Results showed that there was significant difference between parenting satisfaction of dual earner couples in joint and nuclear families. Couples in joint families were highly satisfied with all the aspects of child care such as feeding, bathing, toilet training, dressing, rest and sleep, tasks related with motor skills, socio-emotional behavior of infant and verbal cognitive competence of infant as compared to couples in nuclear families.

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Parenting is a major developmental task associated with adulthood. Becoming a parent is a privilege accompanied with a sense of responsibility. Taking care of a young child is an activity that requires both concentration as well as effort on part of the parents. Having a first child and taking on the parental role is a major developmental milestone in adulthood, as such is accompanied by the opportunities and demands for personal reorganization and growth that characterize such major changes (Erikson, 1968). Modern parenting requires a significant investment of parental time (Snyder,

2007). It is a highly salient role for men and women, a role that makes unremitting and virtually lifelong demands for role performance and role commitment. In this era, most of the parents are very busy but at the same time more parents have started taking their parental duties seriously. Parenthood is an extremely complex and demanding job. To mould the character of an unsocialized human being into a productive member of a society requires a reservoir of time, patience and economic resources. Also, parenting today differs from parenting earlier.

Parenting of infants who are totally dependent requires different skills as compared to the parenting of school-aged children or teenagers. As parents and children begin their lives together as a family, parents embark on a significant new challenge that of promoting their babies healthy growth and development. The care that parents provide for their babies impacts all areas of their early and later development. Parenting satisfaction is important for parents' motivation to care, nurture and interact with their child. Thompson and Walker (2004) also argued that parental satisfaction is the view the gratification from the parenting role. Early experiences particularly those during the first several years of life, set the stage for ongoing development. Studies show that active participation in child care improves mother's closeness with their infants (Svensson *et al.*, 2005) and father's parenting satisfaction (Hudson *et al.*, 2001; Elek *et al.*, 2003; Hildingsson 2007). Parenting is a joyful experience but also can be very challenging.

Infancy is a period of development that begins at birth and ends at about 18 months to 2 years of age. Though it comprises only 2 per cent of life span, it is one of the most remarkable and busiest times of development. It is the period when the foundation for future are laid in one's life and its roots are influenced by their child rearing practices. Probably the most important goal of parenting infants is to endow them with a sense of trust. Erik Erikson theorized that the quality of parent-infant interactions influences whether infants develop a sense of trust or a sense of mistrust. Parents are expected to provide an environment that is conducive to their child's growth and development. Family is the primary social institution in which parenting takes place (Gage *et al.*, 2006). The family constitutes the first world of the child as personality of the child is markedly influenced by the experience he encounters in his early life. It is the most influential socializing agency for the child. The first year is a period of rapid development for motor, language, social, sensory and thinking skills.

With increased employment opportunities, more and more women are entering into the workforce in large numbers (Department of women and child development, Government of India, 2007). This increased labor force participation outside the home among women led to dual earner families trying to balance their work and family responsibilities. With the advent of women into the paid workforce, families have to adjust to the fact that they

no longer have a female caregiver at home to take care of the household and caregiving responsibilities and as a result, support and guidance of older generation is not available as young couples have to stay away from parental homes. As the dual-career life style is on the rise and joint/extended families are being replaced by nuclear families. As a result, a new picture in marital life is emerging. This change has introduced new challenges for most families (Davidson and Burke, 2004) having implications for family structure, responsibilities, child and elderly care and everyday household chores. Therefore, children are abundant of proper care. On one side, time is a limited commodity for dual earner couples and on the other side; infancy is a stage when a child is totally dependent on parents for each and every need.

A lot of interest is generated in understanding the changing roles of parents in industrialized societies. The relationship between dual earner couples in joint and nuclear families, their parenting of infants and parental satisfaction has not been the subject of rigorous study. The rise in the number of dual-earner couples has fueled interest in the area of work-family studies. The struggle faced by dual-earner couples has also spurred interest in this field. Working couples have difficulty maintaining the home, nurturing relationships within the family and caring for children and ageing family members. The issue of parental satisfaction is one of the central importance to the family and to those individuals who invest adult lifetimes in parenting. Keeping this in view the present study focuses on family structure and parenting satisfaction regarding few important aspects of child care.

The variables which have been taken in present study are parenting satisfaction, dual earner couples, joint family and nuclear family.

Parenting satisfaction:

It is defined as the sense of pleasure and gratification gained from the parenting role. This includes satisfaction from carrying out infant care tasks, from learning to know the infant and from meeting self-expectations regarding one's role as a parent.

Dual earner couples:

Dual earner couples are those couples where both the spouses are gainfully employed on full time basis *i.e.* those couples putting in at least 7-8 working hours for job.

Joint family:

Joint family for this study means the index child; his or her parents and grandparents are staying under same roof and sharing the same hearth.

Nuclear family:

For the present studynuclear familyis one which consists of husband, wife and their child.

RESEARCH METHODS**Locale :**

The present study was conducted in Udaipur city of Rajasthan

Sample selection:

Total sample consisted of 60 dual earner couples selected randomly from nuclear and joint families (30 couples from nuclear families and 30 couples from joint families) in which both the parents were employed and living together. Those couples were selected who were having their first born child between the age group of 0-30 months.

Tools and its description:

A self-constructed parenting satisfaction inventory was used for collecting the data. The inventory consisted of items related to - Personal care of the infant, health care of the infant, socio-emotional behavior of the infant, verbal cognitive behavior of the infant and motor behavior of the infant. Each statement had five alternative responses *i.e.* highly satisfied, moderately satisfied, satisfied, partially satisfied and dissatisfied, which were scored as 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively.

Procedure :

The respondents were randomly approached and

purpose of the study was made clear to them. They were requested to give honest responses and were assured that their identity would be kept confidential and information provided by them would be used exclusively for the purpose of research work. Each respondent was given the questionnaire individually and was asked to fill out the questionnaire under the supervision of the researcher.

Method of analysis :

Percentage distribution and T-testwas used to analyze the data statistically.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to compare the parenting satisfaction of dual earner couples in joint and nuclear families. Results showed that there was significant difference between parenting satisfaction of joint and nuclear families in child rearing stage of family life cycle regarding all the aspects of child care. Perusal of the above Tables 1, 2 and 3 clearly show that couples in joint families were more satisfied with their parenting in all the aspects of child care such as personal care, health care, socio-emotional behavior, verbal cognitive behavior and motor behavior of the infant as compare with the couples in nuclear families.

In joint families, couples were highly satisfied with their parenting regarding all the aspects related to the personal care of the infant as compare to nuclear family couples. Joint family couples were highly (36.47%)and moderately satisfied (24.2%)with the feeding of the infant. Whereas majority of the nuclear family couples were partially satisfied (33.9%) and dissatisfied (42%) with feeding of the infant. Majority of the joint family couples were highly (31.1%) and moderately satisfied (22.55%) with toileting, bathing and dressing up of the

Table 1 : Percentage distribution of satisfaction level for different aspects of joint family couples

Sr. No.	Aspects	Level of satisfaction				
		Highly satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Satisfied	Partially satisfied	Dissatisfied
1.	Personal care of infant					
	Feeding	36.47	24.2	20.06	15.14	4.03
	Toileting, bathing and dressing	31.1	22.55	24.27	11.4	10.5
	Rest and sleep	35.4	25.8	18.75	19.57	0.47
	Miscellaneous task	32	36.7	20.51	6.90	3.89
2.	Health care of the infant	47.3	32.49	15.8	3.3	1.09
3.	Socio-emotional behaviour of the infant	33.77	32.69	26.35	-	7.1
4.	Verbal cognitive competence of the infant	37.49	34.36	24.39	-	3.75
5.	Motor behaviour of the infant	35.76	33.1	27.1	-	4.04

infants whereas majority of nuclear family couples (40.35%) were dissatisfied with this aspect of infant care. With respect to rest and sleep of the infant, majority (35.4%) of joint family couples were highly satisfied as compare to nuclear family couples where majority (47.05%) of them were partially satisfied with rest and sleep of the infant. Majority of joint family couples (36.7%) were moderately satisfied with all the miscellaneous task of the infant and majority of nuclear family couples (43.2%) were partially satisfied with miscellaneous task of the infant. In joint family, other family members are there to take care of young one for toileting, rest, sleep and miscellaneous task when mother is out for work. The findings of the study are at par with the findings of the study conducted by Wilson (1989). He states that the presence of extended family members can be helpful to parents because they can perform functions and fulfill roles that might go otherwise unprovided.

Regarding health care of the infant, nuclear family couples were satisfied (45.4%) whereas joint family couples were highly (47.3%) and moderately satisfied (32.49%). As this is a very important aspect of child

care and cannot be neglected. Couples from both families are believed to be better suited and sensitive enough to respond appropriately to the children's requirement of health care. So, both nuclear as well as joint family couples were satisfied with this aspect of child care.

Joint family couples were highly (33.77%) and moderately satisfied (32.69%) with socio-emotional behavior of the infant whereas nuclear family couples were partially satisfied (37.75%) and dissatisfied (23%) with this aspect of child care. The process of social emotional development is a child's development of trust in their approach to and security in their place in the world. This sense of safety provides her with the security to reach out and explore the world. This is well known that family is the most influential socializing agency for the child who transmits the mores, customs and modes of thinking. Parental sensitivity contributes to infant security in diverse cultures around the world, which demonstrates that the relation between parental responsiveness and infant security is a universal phenomenon (Posada and Richmond, 2002). In joint families, interactions with grandmothers may provide grandchildren opportunities to engage in positive social

Table 2 : Percentage distribution of satisfaction level for different aspects of nuclear family couples

Sr. No.	Aspects	Level of satisfaction				
		Highly satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Satisfied	Partially satisfied	Dissatisfied
1.	Personal care of the infant	1.82	7	15.15	33.9	42
	Feeding of the infant	0.052	4.78	17.75	36.6	40.35
	Toileting, bathing and dressing up	-	12.9	28.80	47.05	11.25
	Rest and sleep	6.10	14.95	31.9	43.2	3.85
	Miscellaneous task					
2.	Health care of the infant	14.75	27.35	45.4	11.46	1.04
3.	Socio-emotional behaviour of the infant	0.071	20.75	17.8	37.75	22.99
4.	Verbal cognitive competence of the infant	3.54	10.8	16.74	34.12	34.80
5.	Motor behaviour of the infant	1.9	9	35.6	27.89	25.61

Table 3 : Comparison of parenting satisfaction in joint and nuclear family couples

Sr. No.	Aspects of parenting satisfaction	t- values
1.	Personal care of the infant	
	Feeding of the infant	8.98**
	Toileting, bathing and dressing up	13.03**
	Rest and sleep	12.35**
	Miscellaneous task	12.23**
2.	Health care of the infant	11.19**
3.	Socio-emotional behaviour of the infant	8.006**
4.	Verbal cognitive competence of the infant	19.47**
5.	Motor behaviour of the infant	19.94**

** indicate significance of value at P=0.01, respectively

interactions, thus promoting social competence. The results are supported by Bhatia (1965) where he states that the growing child become the object of socialization of the entire household. Grand children are often fondled and over indulged in by grand parents.

With respect to verbal cognitive competence of the infant, joint family couples were highly (37.49%) and moderately satisfied (34.36%) with this aspect of child care. In nuclear family, couples were partially satisfied (34.12%) and dissatisfied (34.8%) with verbal cognitive competence of the infant. The reason for partial satisfaction among nuclear family couples could be that because of dual responsibility couples lacks time to motivate proper verbal cognitive competence of the infant.

Joint family couples were highly (35.76%) and moderately satisfied (33.1%) with motor behaviour of the infant whereas nuclear family couples were partially satisfied (27.89%) and dissatisfied (25.61%) with this aspect of child care. Possibly the reason for low satisfaction among nuclear family couples could be that physical safety of the infant is important aspect for which couples are over concerned and they have less time to supervise the child's physical safety.

It can be said from this study that the joint family is the center of Indian society in which there are many adults and elder children to handle infants. Reason for high parenting satisfaction among dual earner joint family couples could be that the mother is helped by her mother-in-law and other elders in the family. The joint family also provides physical as well as emotional security for the mother and the child. Grandparents, particularly grandmothers, often play important roles in the lives of their grandchildren. Grandmothers also often provide considerable emotional and informational support to parents and grandchildren (Smith and Drew, 2002). Further, by relieving mothers from household tasks, extended family members may allow them the opportunity to improve their economic situations primarily through additional education and employment. The mother-in-law usually takes care of the infant and uses her own indigenous methods for rearing children. Throughout this role of rearing the child, mother is guided and helped by her mother-in-law and other elders in the family. Similar results were found by Shields (2008) in his study where he stated that social support is very important for a working mother to maintain satisfaction as well as to follow positive parenting style.

Grandparents might be more actively involved in caring for their grandchildren and that is generally associated with improved childcare and improved outcomes (NICHD Early Childcare Research Network, 2005). Many studies show that grandparents can often be involved in the lives of their grandchildren through offering child care (McDonald, 1995). In dual earner joint families, working couples have someone to leave their children with when they are away at work, rather than leaving their children in a creche or with servants. They can be assured that their children are being looked after by people who care for them almost as much as they do themselves.

Present study showed that parenting satisfaction of dual earner couples in nuclear families was low. Reason could be that in nuclear families there are no elder members in the family to take care of the child and mother has to carry out all the responsibility on her own. In nuclear families, parents have to perform multiple roles: worker, parents and spouse. As compare to joint families, the member of the nuclear families are deprived of any assistance in household tasks and childcare which might have led to time constraints, difficulty in child rearing and finding suitable child care arrangements. Previous studies show that the interaction between mother and children in various activities such as playing with children, reading books, singing and other activities are important for social competence, language acquisition and intellectual development of the children (Tong, 2009). But the fact that most of cases, working women's parental style and satisfaction might be challenging especially when it involves combining with their career.

The working couples might feel burdened and strained due to multiple responsibilities on their shoulders as they have limited time and energy at disposal. Similar results are observed by Rao (1991) who found in his studies that if mother go out to work, the children are deprived of the care and security and the home lacks a warm, homely atmosphere. Hence, women who go out to work need alternative child care arrangements, redefinition and redistribution of the household and child care tasks to be undertaken by the adult members of the family which in nuclear family are the husbands and wives themselves. The traditional gender division in respect of housework and childcare are viewed in many societies that lead people to consider domestic responsibilities as the women's primary role. This attitude frees men from domestic and childcare responsibilities

at home while it may increase challenges in their family that might effect on their parental style and satisfaction (Charles and Davies, 2000). In dual earner nuclear families, kids are left at day care or at the mercy of a maid while the parents are away at work. Parental role is found central to the stress and conflict reported by spouses in dual working families (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1977). Young mothers and mothers with very young children often develop a sense of guilt and anxiety attached to their being not able to provide enough care and attention for the child. Alternative arrangements made in this regard satisfy such mothers only to a certain extent. Whereas in joint family setup; they're looked after by a trusted family member, under whose supervision the children feel protected, loved and nurtured. It can be said that in nuclear families where both the couples are working, directly or indirectly it affects the development of children, which leads to low satisfaction in terms of their parenting role.

Conclusion:

It can be justifiably concluded that dual earner couples in joint family were highly satisfied with all the aspects of child care which leads to high parenting satisfaction. On the other hand, nuclear family couples were partially satisfied or dissatisfied with most of the aspects of child care which results in low parenting satisfaction. Times have changed with more and more women joining employment and with the emergence of nuclear families; the job of parenting has certainly become much more difficult. This may have repercussions and benefits both for parents as well as children and may affect family life in both positive and negative ways.

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