

## A study on adjustment and perception about parenting among institutional children

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■ **ABSTRACT** : The present study was undertaken during 2005-07 with the objective to study the prevalence of different types of abuse adjustment, perception about parenting and its relationship with adjustment among institutional children. The population comprised children residing juvenile institutions of Belgaum division. Information about social, emotional, educational adjustments of children and their perception about different parenting models was collected using Sinha and Singh (1997) and Bharadwaj *et al.* (1998) scales, respectively. The results revealed that majority of children were neglected followed by physical abuse by their parents/caregivers. Further, majority of children had unsatisfactory adjustment in social, emotional and educational areas. Majority of children perceived that their parents had rejecting attitude towards them, careless about them and indulgent in their interpersonal relationships. Positive relationship was observed between children perception about different parenting models and their adjustment.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Adjustment, Perception, Parenting, Institutional children

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In recent years the role of parent- child relationship in personality development of children and their adjustment is highly emphasized. Parents are the architects in shaping the personality of a child. The foremost duty of parents is to provide their child with satisfaction by creating in home an emotional climate conducive to their healthy personality development. Besides fulfilling their children's physical needs they are responsible to satisfy their psychological needs for affection, security, belongingness, praise and all suitable models for behaviour. The amount of rapport that exists between parents and children determines the degree to which the children absorb in them ideals and aspirations set for them by their parents. According to Khan (1980) how parents treat children, how much interest they take in children's affairs, what works children are made to attend at home, discrimination among children, punishment given to children and facilities at home are some of the issues which influence the behaviour of children.

Institution children are often referred as orphan, destitute children who are in need of care and protection. They are left

helpless, abandoned, neglected due to social, economic and personal reasons of their parents or caregiver. They experience early separation of parents and deprivation of parental care, love, affection, warmth, security, acceptance during childhood. Those who are deprived of secure attachment with the primary caregiver may develop negative model of self and primary caregiver in their interpersonal relationship. The perception of children about their parents is an indication of what they receive from them. It depends upon parent's attitude towards children and their quality of reaction expressed towards them. Children develop a feeling of trust and sense of security if parents provide warmth, support and proper care. Serot and Teevan (1961) pointed out that child's perception of his parent-child relationship is correlated to his adjustment. So, the present study was carried out with the following objectives, to know the prevalence of different types of abuse, to study the social, emotional and educational adjustment of institutional children, to understand the children's perception about their parent's parenting and to find out the relationship between different models of parenting and adjustment of

children.

## ■ RESEARCH METHODS

The sample for the present study comprised children residing in Juvenile Institutions of Belgaum Division, in Karnataka state. Among the 9 institutions in the division, four Juvenile Institutions *i.e.*, two for boys and two for girls nearer to Dharwad were selected for the study. 148 children between 10-16 years, who were neglected, physically and multiple abused were selected for the detailed study. Data were collected with the help of structured schedule. Information regarding each institution was collected by interviewing respective institution teachers. Further information about children and their background information were collected by referring to case files of each child and interviewing probation officers. Data about adjustment of children and their perception about parenting were collected by administering adjustment inventory (Sinha and Singh, 1997) and parenting scale (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 1998) to individual child.

### Description about tools:

#### Structured questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of statements which elicited information about the institution, children and their family background as well as type of abuse.

#### Parenting scale :

The perception of children about parenting was assessed with help of parenting scale developed and standardized by Indian author Bharadwaj *et al.* (1998). The scale consisted of eight parenting models. The first three parenting models *viz.*, rejection vs acceptance, carelessness vs protection, neglect vs indulgence were considered to assess the perception of parenting by children as they were more suitable for the study. The dichotomy in each parenting model was studied as role of mothering and fathering separately as well as parenting as a whole.

Each model of parenting has five items with five alternative answers describing particular behaviour of the parent. The answer for each statement by the child is to be responded separately for mother and father which express their relation with them up to 15 statements. Each item of the scale was rated on 5 point scale with the score ranging from 1

to 5. Thus, the maximum score of each respondent could obtain was 25 and minimum 5. The interpretation of scores for both parenting either in relation to each model of parenting or as a whole was made with the help of norms known as 'sten' scores that refer to standard score derived from standard 10 scale. Below 5.5 sten is considered as low score which indicates rejection, carelessness, neglect and above 5.5 is considered high score which indicates acceptance, protection, indulgence modes of parenting.

#### Adjustment inventory:

The standardized scale developed by Sinha and Singh (1997) was used to assess social, emotional and educational adjustment of children. The scale consisted of 60 questions indicating significant problems of adjustment of school students in three areas. The questions were to be answered as 'Yes' and 'No' response. Maximum score the respondent could obtain for each area of adjustment was 20 and minimum was 1 and lower score in each area is an indicative of better adjustment of the child. The children were grouped into five different categories based on the raw scores obtained in each area as good, average, unsatisfactory and very unsatisfactory.

## ■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results on the prevalence of abuse (Table 1) among institution children revealed that neglect was found to be highest followed by multiple, physical and sexual abuse. The reason may be because almost all institutional children in the study were from culturally deprived background and their family environment was characterized by parental deprivation, low caste and unemployment, low educational and occupational status of parents, large family and alcoholic fathers. The social structure in which majority of parents were living was stressful and responsible for high stress in the family. According to socio-situational theory, abuse and violence are more common in such families as an attempt to gain control over stressful and irritating events. The family conditions were such that they limit parent's ability to provide basic needs and insensitive, rejecting, inconsistent, unpredictable in their behaviours which lead to thwarting of psychological needs such as love, affection, belongingness and security. Here child abuse is not an isolated phenomena or a personality defect of the parents, rather normal parents

Institutions	Types of abuse				Total
	Neglect	Physical	Multiple	Sexual	
Gadag	13 (36.11)	11 (30.56)	12 (33.33)	-	36 (100)
Hubli	45 (57.69)	15 (19.23)	16 (20.51)	2 (2.56)	78 (100)
Khanapur	8 (47.06)	5 (29.41)	4 (23.53)	-	17 (100)
Saundatti	7 (36.84)	4 (21.05)	8 (42.11)	-	19 (100)
Percentage to total	73 (48.67)	35 (23.33)	40 (26.67)	2 (1.33)	150 (100)

Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentages

Table 2 : Distribution of children according to level of adjustment					(n=148)
Area of adjustment	Level of adjustment				Mean
	Good	Average	Unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory	
Social	24(16.22)	50(33.78)	51(34.45)	23(15.54)	7.67
Emotional	19(12.84)	48(32.43)	55(37.16)	26(17.57)	8.22
Educational	20(13.51)	47(31.76)	54(36.49)	27(18.24)	8.19
Total	16(10.81)	47(31.75)	58(39.19)	27(18.24)	24.18

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Lower mean indicate better adjustment

are socialized into abusive child care practices through the interaction of cultural and familial influences. Similarly, a study conducted by Harnath and Deviprasad (1995) found physical and verbal abuse in juvenile home inmates in Visakhapatnam by their parents. While Kewalramani's (1996) study conducted in small village of Rajasthan found 50 per cent of children were the victims of physical abuse, 41 per cent emotional abuse, and 9 per cent sexual abuse.

The results of the study (Table 2) showed that majority of institutional children had unsatisfactory social, emotional and educational adjustment and very few had good adjustment. This clearly indicates that institutional children have more social, emotional and educational problems which made them socially more aggressive, emotionally unstable and educationally not interested in studies and these characteristics were responsible for unsatisfactory adjustment of children. Similarly, Mohanty (1990) found that adjustment of socio-culturally deprived adolescents was poor in home, health, emotional and school areas compared to non-deprived counterparts. The earlier studies conducted by Biradar (1992), Hiremani *et al.* (1994), Chaudhary and Bajaj (1995) and Chaudhary and Uppal (1996) also reported that institutional children were emotionally insecure, immature and unstable.

The analysis regarding perception of children about parenting with respect to rejection vs. acceptance, carelessness vs. protection and neglect vs. indulgence indicated that majority of the children perceived that their parents were rejecting, not caring and neglecting them (Table 3). The perceived rejection of children may be attributed to

physical neglect, denial of love and affection, lack of interest in child's activities and failure to spend time with them, harsh inconsistent punishment and excessive criticism. The perceived carelessness of the children may be attributed to the fact that when both or either of parents fail to provide proper care, attention, supervision towards children and their activities. Such negligent behaviours of parents develop a sense of unwantedness among children and are responsible for perceived carelessness about parents. The perceived parental neglect by children may be due to lack of attention and co-operation with them, willful ignoring them and activities and avoidance of their genuine needs, least attention to their feeling and needs. Similarly, Nalinadevi and Shweta (1997) found that majority of the neglected street children perceived their parents as rude, indifferent and harsh towards them and Wiehe (1992) found that abusers rated their mothers as less nurturing and more restrictive as compared to non-abusers.

The analysis of relationship (Table 4) between perception of children regarding rejection vs. acceptance behaviour of fathers, mothers, parenting as a whole was negatively but not significantly related with social, emotional, educational adjustment of children. This means that higher level dimension of parenting model *viz.*, rejection vs. acceptance encouraged the development of proper social, emotional, educational adjustment skills among children. This clearly indicates that accepting the thoughts of children, giving attention to them, accepting their ideas, expressing satisfaction over their behaviours and expression of love are related to higher dimension on rejection vs. acceptance continuum. Expression

Table 3 : Distribution of children based on perception about parenting					(n=148)
Models of parenting	Parenting	Low scores (1-5)	High scores (>5-10)	Total	
Rejection vs. acceptance	Fathering	146 (98.6)	2 (1.4)	148	
	Mothering	140 (94.6)	8 (5.40)	148	
	Parenting as a whole	148 (100.0)	-	148	
Carelessness vs. protecting	Fathering	144 (97.3)	4 (2.7)	148	
	Mothering	142 (95.9)	6 (4.1)	148	
	Parenting as a whole	146 (98.6)	2 (1.4)	148	
Neglect vs. indulgence	Fathering	145 (98.0)	3 (2.0)	148	
	Mothering	139 (93.9)	9 (6.1)	148	
	Parenting as a whole	146 (98.6)	2 (1.4)	148	

Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentages

**Table 4 : Relationship between perceived parenting and adjustment**

Model of parenting	Parenting	Adjustment		
		Social	Emotional	Educational
Rejection vs. acceptance	Fathering	-0.029 NS	-0.061 NS	-0.054NS
	Mothering	-0.122 NS	-0.153 NS	-0.118NS
	Parenting as a whole	-0.072 NS	-0.057 NS	-0.105 NS
Carelessness vs. protecting	Fathering	-0.022 NS	-0.080 NS	-0.020 NS
	Mothering	-0.214*	-0.213*	-0.180*
	Parenting as a whole	-0.176*	-0.151 NS	-0.198*
Neglect vs. indulgence	Fathering	-0.044 NS	-0.095 NS	-0.010 NS
	Mothering	-0.174 *	-0.201 *	-0.165 *
	Parenting as a whole	-0.125 NS	-0.153 NS	-0.113 NS

\* indicates significance of value at P=0.05

NS=Non-significant

of these characteristics in father-child, mother-child, and parent-child relationship contributes to the proper social, emotional and educational adjustment among children. Further, the perception of children regarding carelessness vs. protection behaviour of fathers, mothers, parenting as a whole was negatively related with social, emotional, educational adjustment of children. But mothers and parenting as a whole had significant relation with social and educational adjustment of children. This indicated that showing concern, conveying regards, giving encouragement by parents leads to better adjustment of children in all areas. Similarly, results also revealed that perception of children regarding neglect vs. indulgence behaviour of fathers, mothers, parenting as a whole also had negative relation with social, emotional, educational adjustment of children (Table 4). But mothers' behaviour had significant relation with all areas of adjustment of children. This clearly demonstrate that respecting the ideas of the children, accepting their view, guiding them in difficulty and fulfilling their needs are higher order characteristics especially by mothers and both parents encouraged better level of social, emotional and educational adjustment among children. Similarly result was reported by Roychaudhury and Basu (1998).

### Conclusion:

It is obvious from the study that majority of institutional children were neglected by their parents/caregivers. Abusive experiences during childhood were stressful for many children responsible for unsatisfactory adjustment indicating more social, emotional and educational problems. The finding has important practical implication that such behaviours later are likely to drag them towards anti-social behaviour. There are theoretical and empirical evidences regarding links between child abuse and delinquency. So, child abuse is only the beginning that sparks off a series of problems that lasts for life time. From the perspective of children, there is need for intervention efforts targeting towards victims to restore their optimum level of functioning and preventing them from

maladjustment. Under the circumstance where the family atmosphere is unhealthy, institutional care is the best available alternative for these children. In this regard, protective agency has high responsibility towards abused children who are experiencing great stress and help them to overcome pain, fear, and confusion and develop feeling of trust, confidence and sense of security.

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