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Impact of family type on general abilities of pre-school children

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in Faizabad district of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of family type on general abilities of pre-school children. Sample of the study comprised 32 girls and 68 boys of age between 3 to 5 years. Standardized Mc Carthy scales of children's abilities by Dorothea Mc Carthy (1972) was administered to find out the impact of family type on general abilities of pre-school children. Data was analyzed in terms of frequency, percentage and chi-square (χ^2). Statistical analysis revealed that there is significant relationship between general abilities of pre-school children and their family type. It was found that children who belonged to nuclear family had high general abilities as compared to those who belonged to joint family.

INTRODUCTION

Childhood experience during the early modern period was affected in numerous ways by family structure. A family is the place where the child starts his development and progress. The child takes birth in a family where he is introduced to emotions like love and security. There are different types of families that exists in the universe. Among these joint and nuclear families are very common and have different effect on children's development. Hockenberry and Wilson (2007) found that the family size and composition directly influence the child development. Parenting practices differ between small and large families. The primary care takers differ according to the configuration of the household. In nuclear families, parents normally assumed responsibility for raising their children. In a nuclear household, children had economic and emotional relationship with their parent alone, while in extended and blended families the network of ties is potentially much larger. Throughout history, family composition has affected children's lives in important ways. Using fixed effects estimators, Ermisch and Francesconi (2001), Case *et al.* (2001), and Evenhouse and Reilly (2004) found that family structure has a significant effect on children's educational outcomes.

The earliest years represent the period of the most dramatic development in the individual's life. At the same time these are the years of greatest vulnerability. If the young child is surrounded by supportive and positive influences it is likely that he will survive and thrive. These outcomes, surviving and thriving, are, to a very large extent depend upon how well-equipped families, especially primary caretakers, are to care for, respond to and manage the needs of young children from birth onwards (Grover, 2005). The most important factor in a child's healthy development is to have at least one strong relationship (attachment) with caring adults (such as parents) who value the well being of the child. Lack of a consistent caregiver can create additional risks for children.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Kumarganj, Faizabad district of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Four schools were selected purposively by purposive sampling, owing to their easy accessibility and possibility of finding respondents belonging to required study group. 100 subjects (32 girls and 68 boys) were selected randomly by simple random sampling within age range of 3 to 5 years. Mc Carthy Scales of Children's Abilities was administered individually to assess the general abilities of pre-school children. It includes six sub scales:

- Verbal scale (V):
- Perceptual performance (PP)
- Quantitative (Q)
- General cognitive (GC)
- Memory (Mem.)
- Motor (Mot.)

An interview schedule was used to collect background information of the respondents. Data was analyzed in terms of percentage, frequency and chi-square (χ^2).

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 (Fig. 1)reveals that maximum girls (40%) from nuclear families had high general abilities, 33.33 per cent girls had average general abilities while 26.67 per cent girls had low general abilities. In case of joint families only 5.88 per cent girls had high general abilities, 64.71 per cent girls had average general abilities and 29.41 per cent had low general abilities.

In case of boys, maximum (46.88 %) boys from nuclear families had high general abilities, while 34.37 per cent boys had average general abilities and only 18.57 per cent boys had low general abilities. 27.78 per cent boys from joint families had high general abilities, 41.67 per cent had average and 30.55 per cent boys had low general abilities.

The statistical analysis shows a significant relationship between family type (nuclear) and general abilities of pre-school children which may be due to focused attention of parents towards their children. These findings are in line with previous research of Parikh (1980) who found that parent child relationship is

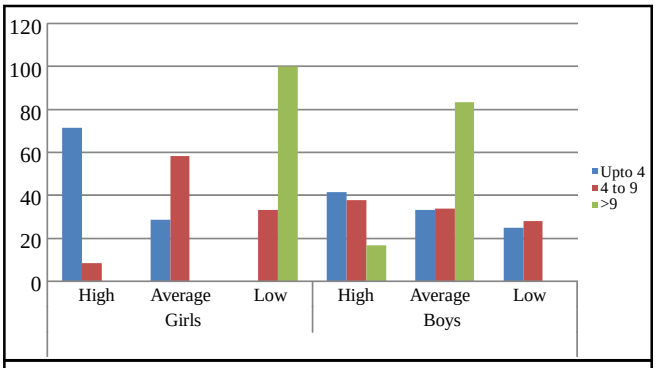

Fig. 1 : General abilities of pre-schoolers

Table 1 : General abilities of pre-school children with respect to family type

Sr. No.	Family type	Girls (n=32)				χ^2	Boys (n=68)				χ^2
		n	General abilities of pre-schoolers				n	General abilities of pre-schoolers			
			High	Average	Low			High	Average	Low	
1.	Nuclear	15	6	5	4	10.08	32	15	11	6	26.55
			(40.00)	(33.33)	(26.67)			(46.88)	(34.37)	(18.75)	
2.	Joint	17	1	11	5		36	10	15	11	
			(5.88)	(64.71)	(29.41)			(27.78)	(41.67)	(30.55)	
	Total	32 (100)	7	16	9		68 (100)	25	26	17	

Figures in parenthesis indicates percentage
Table value = 5.99 at 5% LS and 2 DF

favourable condition for the moral and cognitive development of the children. As we are in the phase of cultural based individualized care, it is the duty of the caretaker to assess family background which influences the development of children specially moral and cognitive development. Wade (2004) found that the relationship between family content and children's abilities measuring the effect of diverse variables such as family's socio-economic status, the social support received by the family during child rearing, the quality of the physical family environment and the materials provided by parents to estimate development. Espy *et al*. (2005) found that influences of family context on children's cognitive development of the children studied in a stable, stimulating and non-conflictive family environment. Ozcinar (2006) suggested that family is a primary socialization context and is, therefore, considered to be a very important factor influencing child development. The families in general and parents in particular have often been deemed to be the most important support system available to the child. The strongest factor in moulding a child's personality is his relationship with his parents (Mohanraj and Latha, 2005).

Conclusion:

It may be concluded from the results of present study that children from nuclear families have high general abilities as compared to children from joint families.

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