

# Need for Parenting Counselling in Indian Education System

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## Abstract

*Many Indians do not feel the need of learning about child psychology and many rural ones are unaware that such concept exists. Parenting helps in shaping a child's character. Educated Indians (not all) access resources for child upbringing like books, websites, support group, social media whereas poor-uneducated mothers are unable to comprehend as well as follow the expert advices. Friends and family irrespective of income and education level, may lack effective child upbringing knowledge. Children (future workforce) need to learn the importance of parenting so that they may implement good practices on their next generation. The findings of this study involve toddlers to college level children, parents and grandparents. Thus, applicable to the entire education system. Alongside, parent-teacher meetings in educational institutions for discussing child performance, there must be parent performance discussions too and counselling thereafter. Government should reframe its educational schemes to develop a better workforce for India.*

**Keywords:** child, parents, parenting, educational system, uneducated mothers, India

## Introduction

Educational institutions and home-time of a child are contributors towards a child's education. Any child is the future worker for India. Mother is a child's first teacher. Fathers have an equally important role in child nurturing. But the parents are occupied between their child upbringing responsibilities and professional concerns. Parenting practices depend on beliefs that a family has but the responsibility is common to all. Parenthood is the nature's best gift but parenting is a challenge for mother, fathers (or any guardian /care-giver).

Questions arise: How should parents talk to the children so that that listen? How should children be explained about physical abuse and the action they should take? Do all mothers know the bad effect of hitting child? Does mother give rational explanations to a two-year-old? Are they aware of child psychology? How should a child be explained about private parts? When should parents agree to child's demands and when should they refuse? How to respond to child's stubborn behaviour? How to

handle institute's complaints? What is the age appropriate toy for child? What books to buy for child? Do caretakers know that stuttering and talking to a one-year old affects language learning? Is it known to all how to enable confidence building in child right from toddler age? Do all the parents know how to portray themselves as role models? How to help a child manage stressful situations?

Children learn through observational learning (Bandura et al, 1961). In India, the physical abuse ratio for urban to rural areas is 2:3 as per 'Play It Safe' poll by UNICEF (More, 2016). Debnath et. al. (2015) inferred from 230 mothers that child's gender plays an important role for mothers to know the safety measures that they should adopt for prevention against domestic injuries. Roy (2013) says that children are prone to physical abuse as they lack knowledge regarding the same. Children are prone to emotional damages (Bose, 2003: 21-24). For instance, a child witnesses the father hitting them, then eventually they may develop a self-concept that it is fine for father to raise hands. The child may replicate this on

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the next generation. Parenting is affected by socio-cultural factors and contributes in child psychopathology (Sahithya et al, 2019). This is a vicious circle of child upbringing actions shall continue to be implemented and impede the overall social development, if it is left unchecked now. This paper suggests a preventive measure for the same.

In general, all parents know the answers to such questions because the parenting style of all is different and best in their own way. But all parents may be unaware of reframing their responses in line with the child psychology. Uneducated parents cannot access parenting resources like books, websites, videos, classes and so on, but all educated parents do not access too, because they might not feel the importance of it to shape the child's character. It is believed in Indian homes that child will understand when they get matured and will start learning in school (or college). After some time parents feel, that for a good career, the child should enrol in good college and then settle down in life. But an unnoticed variable

here is of an individual's 'belief and personality' which would decide how much a personal is successful in professional and personal life. Parents contribute in shaping personality of child right from toddler age but need is to understand better about child psychology which is even applicable when child turns adult.

Research question of this study is: How can the good parents become better parents?

## Research Methodology

Thirty families were studied in the district Kaushambi (Uttar Pradesh) India. Twenty-five households belonged to rural areas and five belonged to urban area. The homes of families were visited and notes were made specific to child demands and parental responses. Questions listed in Appendix I were asked mothers and non-participatory observations were made. Descriptive and case analysis is done.

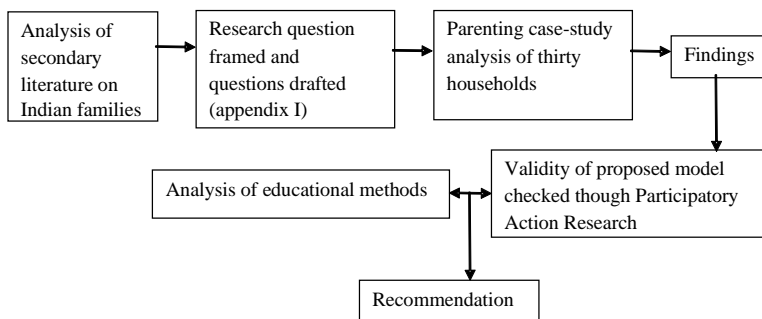


Figure 1: Steps of research

## The Start of Parenthood: An overview

The journey of parenthood commences when the news of conception to woman is known and care related to nutrition, vaccination, doctor visits and so on are taken care of post that. Educated mothers read pregnancy books to prepare themselves for the big change along with the help of the family. Several preparations are done for the hospital. New-born needs a lot of care and is greeted enthusiastically. Postnatal estrogenic dominance has mood swings associated (Schiller, 2015) which makes it difficult for a mother to accommodate with the surroundings. Parents are happy with the joy a baby

brings in but it is difficult for mother to cope up with joyful environment during the medical recovery phase and father to prepare for the new responsibility and extend care to the spouse as well.

In India, the religious activities are considered above mother's health in terms of priority (Ghosh, 2016) and the latter is given secondary priority even after the launch of national mental health programme launched way-back in 1982 (Upadhyay et. al, 2017). Parents seek aid for caretaking of the baby from the family members especially till the postpartum time-period ends. New mothers feel the necessity of establishing support networks to overcome the increased stress-level

(Brunton & Meddle, 2011; Dwivedi & Nagda, 2013). A mother receives many suggestions of child rearing which they filter as needed and even train helpers (maybe family members or hired professional people) on baby caretaking. Daily routines are changes for parents, even sleep-times in the night. For a good length of time, the topics of discussion are mostly on diapers, vaccines, sleep-time, crying, hunger, feeding, bath i.e. primarily to answer, "what does the baby want?".

A study of 218 couples proved that the post-birth deterioration in relationship exists largely (Rhoades et. al. 2010). A mid abundant celebrations, there is a felt need of cultivating the marital-bond due to the huge emotional change in the life of parents. Some women face marital struggles and absence of spouse support which is one of the few reasons of post-partum depression (Upadhyay et. al, 2017). Fathers are eligible for paternity leave and hence, the mothers expect husband to take care of the baby. Motherhood is a larger institution and gives a greater emphasises to a woman's role as wife, mother and daughter- in- law ( Ghosh, 2016 ). Harmonious environment in family is basis the presence of a woman in home as per the Indian culture. Motherhood is considered secondary in society but a mother's caretaking work for family is considered primary (Ghosh, 2016). Many men maintain a balance between their new responsibility as father and work alongside, in a pleasant household, especially when consulting paediatricians and, ensuring presence at the child's birth (Yogman and Garfield, 2016). This is an example of nurturing marital bond and the parents work towards shaping a child's personality in a positive way.

The autonomy of mother, employment and education pay vital role in child's survival (Pandey, 2009). Article 51A(k) makes it mandatory for parents to share educational opportunities to children aged between 6-14 years (Bhakhry, 2006). Now, how effective would education-unattained pedagogy be? In the year 2006, the findings were basis home scenarios which have not improved much in the year 2019 after the observations from respondents.

## Parenting Practices: In General

Scientific theories have defined child upbringing which is considered as an art. Grant (2013) writes that child

performance reduces when external force is applied. Concept of osmosis explains their learning where the low concentration become high when exposure is provided (concept of osmosis). Skill development is needed in child upbringing practices. Social interactions make a child learn and develop one's skills. These nurtures the progress in academics, problem solving, behaviours and frustration tolerability in children (Denham, 2006; Parlakian, 2003) thereby, shapes character.

When a child turns around two-and-a-half years old, they are enrolled in schools. Routines get streamlined again. Children become more social, involve in activities, more curious about things, pros and cons of everything and want to know why things happen. Educational institution's environment gives good education by creating good environments in both play-schools and day care centres. The concepts become popular among housewives because the mothers are eased with the load of child caretaking and after the child goes to the educational facility, the stress level is reduced and mothers get personal time (Dwivedi & Nagda, 2013; Ghosh 2016) Both the facilities are now needed by parents as the families are more nuclear now and 'gender-equality' has enabled mothers to work professionally. Ministry of Women and Child Development started National Creche Scheme states that (p.2)

"There is a worldwide consensus among psychologists, educationists, paediatricians and sociologists regarding the significance of early years of life for the optimum development of child."

The guidelines for play schools state that a child is enrolled at the age of three and guidelines are listed to ensure that the rights are protected. At home, a mother may keep a child busy with sports, dance, music, tutorial classes, games, domestic animals, television and so on which augment their mental growth. The social influences impact self-regulation in a child (Blair & Diamond, 2008). The particular moment when parent responds to child's demands advocates the kind of education which is imparted at home from approximately two years of age until a child may be married and start own family life.

Parental responses depend upon the society and culture that persist in their homes and the act that a child is going to do. Belief is the culturally shared ideas (Tuli, 2012).

Every parent does a good parenting basis the knowledge and exposure that they have. For instance, parents take preventive measure to prevent shock-related injuries to child. Mother may stop a child firmly when one touches electric socket. This act is repeated and mother may be patient and stop firmly without shouting. This may be further repeated owing to the curious psychology of a child. There may be a point when the patience level is lost and the mother may end up shouting or even hitting the child. The woman would rationalise the act by saying that it was best to prevent the child from injury as he/ she was not listening to me. A tape may be applied on the switch but child may remove it and as a protective measure, the mother may hit again because the child does not listen to mother. Mothers need to know that a child's mind is curious (Loewenstein, 1994). A child can be explained sternly without shouting, repeatedly and a game can be played to reiterate the 'shock' aftermath. The child's 'little scientist' within has been pacified and would take interest as it is a fun activity. This is an example of home-preschool.

Another instance would be when the father returns from office after a tiresome day. He may be tensed about financial issues. A child approaches the father and starts asking some questions and explain the drawing that s/he is making. Out of frustration, the husband tells the child to go to the other room. He may call his wife and snap saying that keep the children busy and get some food. Child witnesses that father does not help the mother and understands that father does not spend time with them. Child may also get disturbed with the evening and this may hamper the performance in the school (or even college student). This inference is drawn as per the child psychology listed in the parenting books by Singh (2016) and Jindal (2018).

Parental role is more challenging with a growing up child as their emotional problems start happening. Moreover, with multiple children, it is an issue to pacify the sibling rivalry many a times and resources are searched by parents to get their pick of advices from.

## Parenting Resources

Social media support groups exist where parents list their problems (especially mothers) and get solutions. Mother help each other even in neighbourhoods. Within family,

solutions are provided by elder generations. Parenting websites are surfed to seek answers to their apprehensions which mostly revolve around questions like How to give the child ?, What should I do when child does .....?, When to explain the child ?, Which university should the child go to?, Why does my child not respect money?, How to teach ?, When to ignore.....?, How much to appraise.....?, What to reward... ?

There is a vast variety of educational games available in shops of commercial urban areas and on dynamic websites. Child development is fostered with toy engagement (ESG, 2017; Loewenstein, 1994). Educational toys play a vital role in the development of mathematical skills, observation and creative abilities (Jing et. al, 2012). The touch-and-feel and life-the-flap books increase a child's vocabulary. Former books augment the sensory skills of new-born and latter books enhance child's curiosities (Spellings, 2000). The right way to engage with a child in order to create pre-school at home is searched from various places. The right (and wrong) parental response to child demands are listed in all the resources. The middle- and high-income segments of people have access to parenting classes. Depending upon the context and location, there are various answers to the right ways to bring up a child. Parenting behaviour depends on the social class and the gender (Ishizuka, 2019).

Let us put the same concerns for poor household. In India, uneducated mothers (mostly rural) make up nearly 68% of the population. At grassroots level, there are efforts in health, nutrition, sanitation, education and employment areas. When a woman gets married, knowledge is shared for contraception and self-care. On conception, knowledge on nutrition is given along with health-care and they are encouraged to opt for institutional delivery. On the new-born's arrival, rituals are performed, celebration are done, family support is extended, immunization is kept track of and child start going to school after certain age. The apprehensions regarding child upbringing are same as that of an educated mother would have. Because of the cultures and education level, practices vary. The home environments and topics of discussion vary that further augments the environment. In India, the enrolments rates in education, failure rate and drop-out rates are high (Maitra and Sharma, 2009). The lifestyle differs totally and the uneducated-poor

mothers are unaware of the documented advices of effective child upbringing practices that is the reframing of the sentences so that child understand better and leaves a good impact (Swami, 2019; Jindal, 2018; Faber & Mazlish, 2017; Chaudhury, 2017; Singh, 2016). They may be prone to poor domestic environments (Lokshin et al, 2005) and friends and family may not give any better advices as they belong to the same society. Hence, on the same page.

In India's hinterland, it is mostly believed that a child starts getting educated in school (or college) and a child is forced to open book and write. When they do this, it is believed that they study. Even if in reality they may not. Also, in educational institutions, in case of bad behaviour of child, teachers make complains to the parents. Do all the parents know how to model behaviour in children?

## Findings

All the respondents had i) Own children ii) Children within families or iii) Children in neighbourhood. The age range for the children was 2-20 years and parents were in the age range 22-50 years.

## Descriptive Analysis from Respondents

90% mother said that there was no need of brushing for a child at one-year old age. 83.3% children witnessed the problems between the parents and other family members. This was mostly due to small home areas. 33.33% used profane language. 60% families did not buy books for child until school enrolment. Many were unaware about the touch-and-feel books and lift-the-flap books as they had never seen in the market. Some received complaint from college regarding child: 40% mothers complained of stealing and 36.6% of fights with other students. 56.6% chose not to answer what they do when the child witnesses the parents in intimate position and remaining either ask them to go away (some later hit the child). 46.6% mothers chose to ignore acts of child. 93.3% mothers believed that child will understand the value of money and 100% were clueless about any specific things that that should do presently. 80% said that their child had enquired about sanitary pad out of which 58.3% chose to change the topic of discussion as the child was below 6 years of age. 100% mothers did not know the indication of thumb-sucking which was noticed by one

mother. 26.6% preferred traditional methods of medication to the prescriptions of the allopathic doctor.

## Case Summary of Participatory Action Research on Parenting: Solutions for Child Upbringing

Considering the writings by Bradbury (2010) which say that theory must be put to practice, the validity of the recommendation was tested.

## Background of Indian Parenting and Resources

The Indian culture draws a metaphorical line between the parents and the children. Certain issues are still considered a taboo (Egg. contraception talks, menstruation discussions: "ladies' problem". The documented expert advice 1) to explain the value of money and 2) parent reaction at child during intimate observations as per Singh (2016) may be unknown to many. In many homes a boy child is still preferred in spite of efforts for gender equality.

## Goal of Participative Action Research (PAR)

The goal was to understand the current parenting practices and explain mothers about child psychology which may help them to shape their child's behaviour.

## Research Practice

Parenting books by Singh (2016) and Jindal (2019) were studied to gather knowledge regarding child upbringing and notes were made regarding suggestions on the same that were circulated amongst respondents. Two videos by Greenhath Products (2019) were circulated to WhatsApp users for knowledge sharing. One camp was organised for the workers of health schemes where knowledge sharing for child upbringing was done to many mothers.

## Collaborative action

Suggestions were novel to mothers. They shared it in their community.

## Results

Positive behavioural modification was noticed in many children after providing rational responses.

## Education System of Rural and Urban India

There are plenty government schemes and policies for women and child development. United Nations, World Bank and multinational non-governmental organisations are focused on their development. Innovative programs are being developed. Schemes Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and National Health Mission schemes are flagship ones and under them Anganwadi (courtyard shelter) and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA), workers are hired respectively. They advocate the rural mother son health, nutrition, new-born care, contraception and, education for children up to six years of age. When a child turns three-years-old, education is provided in private schools or Anganwadi centres for education and knowledge about safety, care, respect and other basic concerns. The curriculum of Anganwadi centres is designed for students aged 3-6 years (Lokshin et. al, 2005). These para-professionals have an income of approximately INR 4500 per month which shows that they belong to the same sect and are unaware of the documented expert advices on parenting. National Education Policy 2019 provides pedagogical outline for childhood education through these paraprofessionals. First framework is new-born to three-year-old children where methods for cognitive stimulation are given. Sensory, hearing-aid games like rattles, percussion instruments, toy craft out of newspapers and so on must be prepared in Anganwadi and these products should be given to parents. Second framework is for children from three to eight-year-old where parents will be taught too on play-based, activity-based and discovery-based methods of learning. Oral and written communication is given importance. Parenting training for adult education must be given. Activity books are provided by Ministry of Women and Child Development when a child turn three-years-old, as mentioned in the Annual Report 2018-19. It is further stated on p.107 regarding training programs for parents that they are explained about the mental health of children. Kingdon (2017) writes that there is diversion in schooling from government to private. The private

schools have curriculum on education of child. There are private and government colleges. Ownership is different and curriculums are made to impart best education to children. Parenting education is not provided in any facility.

## Recommendations

Considering the discrepancy that is observed at ground level in parenting knowledge in Indian homes and the policy frameworks, the recommendation is made.

## Parenting counselling in Educational Institutions

Explanations regarding child psychology must be given to parents and teachers. The caretakers should know how to handle the stubborn behaviour of children. Doing this will improve home and institute's environments i.e. developmental ecology.

## Parent training of paraprofessionals of government schemes for door-to-door education

Anganwadi and Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) (paraprofessionals) workers meet rural women everyday for advocating on health. They must be given additional training on parenting to explain the poor mothers regarding child psychology. They will self-improve as well when they implement effective parenting practices with their own children.

## Parenting Camps in Urban and Rural India

Organisation of parenting programs is effective preventive measure (Mejia et. al., 2012). Parenting camps must be organised where authors of parenting books could be invited. Considering the vast rural geography of India, the family (wife's) of government officers that reside in districts could be the instructor in parenting camps. In order to motivate more women to take up this initiative, government could provide incentives. They are the potential trainers for the health-related paraprofessional workers.



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## Appendix I

1. Should a one-year old baby brush teeth twice a day?
  2. Is your child witness to the fights between you and your spouse?
  3. What do you do when elder child hits younger child?
  4. Does your child steal?
  5. How do you punish your child?
  6. What do you do when your child witnesses you in an intimate position with your spouse?
  7. Do you praise your elders and spouse in front of your child?
  8. How do you explain the values of money to child?
  9. Has your child enquired about sanitary pad to you? What was your response?
  10. Does your child fight in school, steal, use profane language or have you received any other complaint from school?
  11. Have you ever seen your child thumb-sucking? (Singh, 2016)
  12. Have you ever asked your child, “why are you doing that..”, “what good happened..”, “what had happened...”? (Jindal, 2018)
  13. Where do you see your child after two years?
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