

Parenting skills and child behavior: A cross-sectional study in some selected areas of Nepal

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Abstract

Acting out, or misbehavior, is often associated with ineffective parenting. It negatively affects children across socio-economic backgrounds. While ineffective parenting might not solely be the blame for negative behaviors in children, parenting contributes significantly to children's behavioral outcomes. Till now there is lack of data regarding child behavior affected by parenting skill in Nepal. The aim of the study was to assess the effects of parenting skill on children behavior. In this descriptive type of cross-sectional study 369 respondents were selected by purposive sampling in some selected areas of Nepal. The mean age of the respondents was 36.14±6.69 years with 92.7% female and of them 92.1% were married. Out of 184 respondents, 45.1% gave proper childcare/love/sufficient time to children. Among the respondents 68% had spent quality time with their children very frequently. Statistically an association was found between parenting skill (quality time with children) and different behavior of children. Rearing children always needs good parenting skills which help to change the future of the nation by producing skilled, well behaved, intelligent citizens in the days to come. As such awareness about parenting skill should be made generalized and easily accessible to all eligible couples in the country.

Keywords: Parenting skill, Childcare, Child behavior, Quality time, Nepal.

Introduction

Effective parenting has never been more important to a family's success than today.¹ To engender good behaviors, parenting style needs to include developing and clarifying clear expectations. Parents should stay calm in the midst of turmoil, consistently following through with positive and negative consequences, being a positive role model. They should display corrective behaviors encouraging the children and praising their good behaviors.²

Parents finally need to build their child's brain and body. They should be provided healthy meals and snacks that model good eating habits. They need to teach them right from wrong, so they understand moral values and rules.³ As children grow, they seek more independence and have increasingly complex problems.⁴ Nobody can imagine how the parent will start feeling by changing in their own approach and getting the good results for both them as well as whole family.⁵

It was found that a negative parenting style characterized by more harsh, inconsistent discipline was clearly associated with more severe child antisocial behavior. Being in the top quarter of parents using of negative discipline was associated with having twice the rate of severe child behavior problems in the clinical range (rising from 21% of children in families who didn't use it,

Practice Points

- Rearing children always needs good parenting skills which help to change the future of the nation by producing skilled, well behaved, intelligent citizens.
- Still now there is lack of data regarding child behavior affected by parenting skill in Nepal.
- Among the study respondents, only 68% had spent quality time with their children very frequently.
- Among the respondents, 45.1% gave proper childcare/love/sufficient time to children, 74.5% respondents praised the children for their best efforts, 98.6% showed love and kindness and 95.1% always helped the kids.
- Parenting skills may be included in the curriculum of graduate level programs in order to facilitate learning regarding the pros and cons of different parenting style as well as skills.

to 40% if they did).⁶ Maternal negative attitudes towards the infant at 6 months is an independent predictor of child behavior problems at 5 years. This association remained significant for boys' externalizing

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behaviors and girls' internalizing behaviors.⁷

Greater negative maternal child rearing history indirectly influenced social initiating skills through its direct influence on maternal emotional stress.⁸ Greater maternal emotional stress directly influenced mothers' parenting that, in turn, directly influenced social initiating.⁸ A study conducted by the TRACK (Teaching, Rearing and Communicating with Kids) project found that maternal stress was negatively associated with a broad range of parenting skills, and that parenting skills were negatively associated with child problem behaviors.⁹

This study examined the effectiveness of three evidence-based parenting programs when rolled out on a large scale in community settings, as part of the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder (PEIP), and their relative effectiveness. The study found substantial improvements in all three programs in parenting behavior, parents' mental well-being and reported behavior of the child about whom the parent had the most concern for displaying, or being at risk of anti-social behavior.

Materials and Methods

It was a descriptive type of cross-sectional study. The sample was purposively selected from Neel Kantha VDC from Dhading district of Nepal and all parents of children of more than 2 years of age were included in the study. The study was conducted between May and August, 2013.

A pretested and modified questionnaire was used to collect the data. Data collection was done with the help of a trained data collector. Parents who were available at the time of field visit and gave consent to participate were included in the study. But mothers who were unwilling to participate, or were mentally or physically handicapped were excluded from the study.

Data entry and analysis was done using Statistical packages for social science (SPSS) software version 16.0, (Chicago).

Results

The study revealed that 55.3% and 30.6% of respondents belonged to the age group 30-39 and 40-49 years respectively with a mean age of 36.14 ± 6.69 (Table 1). 68% respondents very frequently spent quality time with their children (Figure 1).

Out of 184 respondents, 45.1% gave proper childcare/love/sufficient time to children, 31.5% maintained regular health checkups and 24.5% maintained proper education for the development of their child. Of them, 22.8% took responsibility, supporting their children throughout, and also supported exclusive breast feeding. Among them 19.6% looked after cleanliness of their children and only 11.4% arranged for timely immunization (Table 2).

The study found that 74.5% respondents praised the children for their best efforts. The attitudes of the respondents was observed and was found to be equally reflected in the children as well, such as showing love and kindness by 98.6% and always helping the kids by 95.1% respondents. It was also seen that 95.9% allowed kids to learn new things and new ideas; allowed healthy discussion and 94.6% demonstrated empathy in response to empathy (Table 3). Statistically an association was found between parenting skill (quality time with children) and different behaviors of children (Table 4).

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age (n=369)

Age group	Respondents (%)
20-29	44 (11.9%)
30-39	204 (55.3%)
40-49	113 (30.6%)
50-59	5 (1.4%)
60-69	3 (0.8%)
Mean=36.14±6.69	

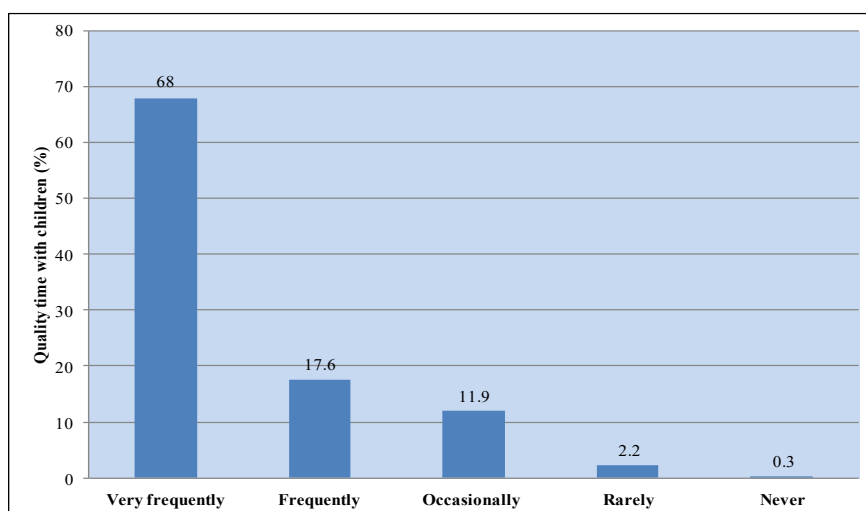


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by spending quality time with children (n=369)

Table 2: Knowledge learnt from health education program (n-184)

Health Education Program	Respondents (%)
Timely immunization	21 (11.4%)
Maintain health/ regular checkup	58 (31.5%)
Proper childcare/Love/ Time to children	83 (45.1%)
Cleanliness	36 (19.6%)
Proper education for development	45 (24.5%)
Importance of exclusive breast feeding/nutritious diet	42 (22.8%)
Responsibilities/ Support toward children	42 (22.8%)

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents by attitude (n-369)

Attitude	Respondents (%)
The more love and kindness you give, the more you receive	364 (98.6%)
Regularity, structure and clear boundaries create trust, it's what the child needs so you need to provide	318 (86.2%)
If you are optimistic and hopeful about the future it may turn out to be self-fulfilling	194 (52.6%)
Slow down and get sync with the child is the best way to be patience	333 (90.2%)
Never give up especially when it comes to helping your kids	351 (95.1%)
Believe in flexibility	163 (44.2%)
Allow kids to learn new things, have new ideas and allow exposure to others point of view	354 (95.9%)
Believe empathy is the effective antidote to attitudes that are selfish, insensitive and cruel	229 (62.1%)
The best of children learn empathy is experiencing our empathy for them	349 (94.6%)

Table 4: Association of parenting skills (quality time with children) and different behavior

Variables		p-value	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower limit	Upper limit
Spend quality time with children	Trouble sleeping	0.025	0.029	0.074
	Poor appetite	0.003	0.000	0.013
	Sad/unhappy	0.022	0.044	0.097
	Prefers playing/being alone rather than with peers	0.026	0.031	0.077
	Lacks confidence in his/her abilities	0.017	0.018	0.057
	Shy	0.021	0.007	0.037
	Sensitive to criticism	0.008	0.000	0.008
	Often fails to finish things	0.029	0.016	0.054
Poor concentration and attention when in school task		0.002	0.000	0.008

Table 4 reveals that there was a significant statistical association between parents spending quality time with children and children behaviors like, trouble in sleeping, poor appetite, sad/unhappy, prefer playing/being alone rather than with peers, lack of confidence in his/her abilities, shy, sensitive to criticism, often fails to finish things, poor concentration and attention in school task (p -value <0.05).

Discussion

The cross-sectional study was conducted to assess the parental skills affecting child behavior in selected areas of Nepal. The present study showed that 55.3% respondents belonged to 30-39 years age group followed by 30.6% in 40-49 years, 11.9% in 20-29 years, 1.4% in 50-59 years and 0.8% in 60-69 years age group with the mean age of 36.14 ± 6.68 years. This finding is closer to the findings of the study conducted on Parents' Perspectives on Parenting Styles and Disciplining Children in 2010 in Dublin, Ireland with 1353 participants;

the age group of parents varied from 21- 69 years with a mean of 40.45 ± 7.98 .¹⁰

This study found that 3.6% respondents never or rarely spent time with their kids, 11.9% occasionally and 85.6% spent sufficient time. The first finding of the study matches with the finding of the survey conducted by one poll which revealed that one in 33 parents (three per cent) do not feel like to spend any quality time with their kids.¹⁶ Research has also revealed that nurturing in the form of spending sufficient quality time with children was fun and enjoyable for parents leading to happy, healthy, successful kids.¹⁷

Showing affection every day is the best way to let children know that parents love them. Most mothers and fathers i.e. 87% and 73% respectively report that they hug their children and tell their children that they love them every day. This study also showed similar

findings i.e. 77.8% frequently does followed by 15.7% occasionally and remaining 6.5% never or rarely shows their affection towards their children.¹⁸

According to the mind/Body Medical Institute at Harvard University, 60-90% of all medical office visits in the United States are for stress related disorders and to overcome stress following different techniques.¹⁹ In this present study also 78.6% frequently practice, 11.1% occasionally and 10.3% less commonly or do not practice relaxation techniques.

The study revealed that 98.6% parents had the idea that treating children with love and affection will be reciprocated equally by the children. It also observed that 95.9% respondents allowed their kids to learn new things or had new ideas and allowed exposure to others point of view so that their child can handle and tackle different situations. Of the respondents 95.1% never gave up to help their children. 94.6% respondents believed that kids learn empathy best when they were treated with empathy, 86.2% believed clear structures and boundaries create trust, only 44.2% believed in flexibility with children. In the report from family and community development evaluation regarding parenting skills workshop series present the data as deal with challenges with mean 1.36 ± 0.908 , respecting feeling 1.2 ± 0.873 , confidence in parenting 0.97 ± 0.702 and positive image 0.81 ± 0.784 .²⁰

It was observed from the study that 49.9% attended the Health Education Program. As a result 11.4% respondents went for timely immunization, 31.5% maintained healthy condition or regular medical checkup of their children, 45.1% learnt proper childcare, to provide love and sufficient time for children, 19.6% perceived the importance of cleanliness, 24.5% understood the necessity of proper education, 22.8% followed exclusive of breast feeding or nutritious diet and 22.8% could know their responsibilities and need of their support toward children. This study also showed that 65.9% found parenting program effective to develop positive parenting skills. In a study entitled 'Parenting Early Intervention Program' carried out in UK in March, 2010²¹ no match was found with the findings of this study possibly due to change of terrain, socio-economic condition, cultural values and educational status.

An association was found between parenting skill (Quality time with children) and different child behavior related variable. Here it is associated with trouble in sleeping ($p=0.025$), poor appetite ($p=0.003$), remain sad/unhappy ($p=0.022$), prefer playing/being alone rather than with peers ($p=0.026$), lack confidence in his/her abilities ($p=0.017$), shy ($p=0.021$), sensitive to criticism ($p=0.008$), poor concentration and attention to school work ($p=0.002$).

It was only the small study in which there is the limitation of time and fund and the result will not represent the condition of the other places i.e. data will not be generalized to all parents. This was a descriptive

cross sectional study so the parents who are not available do not have a chance of participation and responses of the non-participants may differ from the addressed respondents.

Conclusion

Effective parenting skills that have been covered in this study include developing and clarifying clear expectations, staying calm when children get upset, consistently follow through with positive and negative consequences, being a positive role model, role playing corrective behaviors and lastly, praising children for their behavior. Maximum parents had positive attitude towards children which also contribute to develop positive behavior in the children. Those who had participated in parenting program had gained knowledge about timely immunization, sufficient time and love is needed for the kids, importance of exclusive breast feeding as well as a nutritious diet, regular health check-ups and responsibilities, and their support toward their children. A provision of parenting programs for expecting parents and parents of children will further improve positive parenting skills and the development of positive child behavior.

To create conscious parents with adequate skill of parenting following actions may be undertaken:

- Parenting skills may be included in the curriculum of secondary education programs in order to facilitate learning processes regarding the pros and cons of different parenting style as well as skills.
- Health centers/ MCH clinic may be organized in a way so that parenting skills and its benefits are communicated well to the care seekers.
- Mass media may be used to organize to conduct regular programs on parenting skills and its ultimate benefits for the nation to create awareness among the target groups of present and future.

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