Changing role of grand parents in child rearing and its association with mental health

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Abstract
In traditional joint families grandparents make profound contribution to their families. Usually grandparents mentor by teaching sharing skills and talents, providing advice and listening to their grandchildren. Many grandparents thrill at the opportunity to be a crony or playmate with their grandchild. Grandparents provide maturity, knowledge, Stability and unconditional love to the lives of their grandchildren. This interaction provides positive mental health to grandparents as well as grandchildren. The industrialization and urbanization have contributed much to family disorganization and there is a growing tendency among women either to live far away from their families or to set up separate households for them after marriage. Grandparents usually have more indulgent relationships to their grandchildren than parents. Studies in variety of cultures suggested that there is a general tendency that adjacent generations normally are tense and alternate generations are relaxed. For many, the grandparent’s role is more pleasurable than the parent’s role. The present study was conducted, to assess the changing roles of grandparents in child rearing and its association with their mental health. The study sample was 70 families in Tirupati town in which 70 grandparent (i.e. 35 maternal grandparents and 35 paternal grandparents) were interviewed. Grandparent’s Role Activity Inventory (Vishnupriya, 1997) was used to assess the grandparent’s role in child rearing activities. Convenient sampling technique was used to collect the data. Mental health of grandparents was assessed using in Mental Health Scale (Pramod Kumar, 2010). Results revealed that there was a significant difference in the roles of child rearing of maternal grandparent’s paternal grandparent. Maternal Grandparent’s involvement is more in child rearing and contributed to positive mental health among them than paternal Grandparents.

Keywords: Changing role, association, mental health

1. Introduction
Secure attachment to parents is seen as vital for children's emotional development but less attention is given to attachment relationships with other significant family members. However, there are advantages for children in having attachments to a number of significant adults and especially to grandparents. Contact with grandparents can be mutually satisfying for both generations. Grandparents are usually not so caught up with the daily routines and issues of living with the grandchildren and have more time to listen, observe and attend to small things than busy parents. Grandparents can reflect and pass on to their grandchildren cultural knowledge as well family and community traditions (Hillman, 1999; Kornhaber, 1996) [4]. Positive relationships with grandchildren are not only satisfying for the grandparents but also offer opportunities for emotional integration rather than self-absorption in their later life development.

For several deeds India has been synonymous with joint family system. A joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common worship and related to each other as some particular type of kindred. In traditional joint families grandparents make profound contribution to their families. But, owing to the on rush of people from the villages to the cities the traditional joint family systems has been very much influenced and adding to it, industrialization and urbanization have contributed much to family disorganization. There is a growing tendency among women either to live far away from their families or set up a separate household for them after marriage. Every society perpetuates itself in and through its children. Grandparents usually have a more indulgent relationship with their grand children than parents. Studies in a variety of cultures suggested that there is a general tendency that adjacent generation normally is tense and alternate generations are relaxed.
For many the Grandparents role is more pleasurable than the parents role. Grandparents mentor by teaching, sharing skills and talents, providing advice and listening to their grand children. Many grandparents thrill at the opportunity to be a playmate with their grandchild. Grandparents provide maturity, knowledge, stability and unconditional love to the lives of their grand children which promotes positive mental health to grandparents as well as grand children. In the changing context of family structure a need was felt to assess the changing role of grandparents in child rearing and its association with mental health. The following are the objectives of the study

**Objectives**
1. To study the role of paternal and maternal grandparents in child rearing activities
2. To assess the mental health of sample grand parents
3. To compare whether there is significant differences in child rearing of maternal and paternal grandparents

**Methodology**
The study sample was 70 families in Tirupati town in which 70 grandparents (i.e. 35 maternal grandparents and 35 paternal grandparents) were interviewed. Grandparent’s Role Activity Inventory (Vishnu Priya, 1997) was used to assess the grandparent’s role in child rearing activities. Convenient sampling technique was used to collect the data. Mental health of grandparents was assessed using in Mental Health Scale (Pramod Kumar, 2010).

**Results and Discussion**
Percentages were calculated for the responses related to involvement of grandparents in child rearing practices. Table 1 shows the distribution of sample grandparents who told that they were involved in different child rearing practices like bathing, feeding etc.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample Grand Parents as per the Involvement in Child Rearing Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Maternal Grand Parents</th>
<th>Paternal Grandparents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bathing</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feeding</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Preparing to school</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dropping in school</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Picking from school</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table-1 it is evident that comparatively maternal grandparents were involved more in child rearing activities than paternal grandparents. Majority of maternal grandparents (44.3 per cent), mentioned that they were involved in activities like bathing and feeding the child. Nearly half the per cent of paternal grandparents (18.6 per cent) told that they were doing the same. Next to it 37.1 per cent of maternal grandparents and 14.3 per cent of paternal grandparents told that they were bringing children home from school or from bus-stops. In Indian culture usually the girls go to the mother's house for delivery and mostly maternal grandmothers are used to involve in such child rearing practices till mother gets accustomed to those activities. This may be the reason for more involvement of maternal grandparents in child rearing practices than paternal grandparents.

The mental health of sample grandparents were assessed using mental health inventory. Higher the score the better was mental health of the respondents. To test whether there is significant difference in mental health of paternal and maternal grandparents t-test was conducted and results are presented in table-2.

Table 2: Mean Mental Health Scores of Sample Grand Parents and t-value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample grand parents</th>
<th>Mental Health Scores</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Grand Parents</td>
<td>24.1429</td>
<td>3.835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Grand Parents</td>
<td>28.7714</td>
<td>5.269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**
The Results showed that
1. Even the frequency of nuclear families has been increasing, still grandparents are playing a role in child rearing practices of young children.
2. Comparatively majority of maternal grandparents were involved in child rearing practices like bathing, feeding etc. than paternal grandparents.
3. Comparatively maternal grandparents had good mental health than paternal grandparents.
4. However, further study on a large sample is needed to generalize the results.
Implications

- Spending time with grandchildren seemed to improve positive mental health of grandparents.
- Hence, parents can be educated to involve grandparents in child rearing practices and grandparents can be motivated to do activities for grand children to improve positive mental health.

References