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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 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 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.

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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 grand parents

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 (Prمود 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

S. No	Activities	Maternal Grand Parents		Paternal Grandparents	
		Yes	Per cent	Yes	Per cent
1	Bathing	31	44.3	13	18.6
2	Feeding	31	44.3	13	18.6
3	Preparing to school	18	25.7	12	17.1
4	Dropping in school	13	18.6	8	11.4
5	Picking from school	26	37.1	10	14.3

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

Sample grand parents	Mental health Scores		t-value
	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Paternal Grand Parents	24.1429	3.835	3.711
Maternal Grand Parents	28.7714	5.269	$P < 0.001^{**}$

** Significant

Table -2 shows means, SDs of mental health score of sample grandparents and t-value. The mean mental health score of paternal grandparents is 24.1429 (SD. 3.835) and the maternal grandparents is 28.771 (SD. 5.269). The t-values was significant ($t = 3.711, p < 0.001$), which shows that paternal and maternal grandparents differed significantly in their mental health scores. Comparatively maternal grandparents have positive mental health than maternal grandparents. Involvement in child rearing practices by maternal grandparents may be one of the reasons for their positive mental health. However, studies on larger sample are needed to establish the relationship.

In order to assess the association between mental health scores of paternal and maternal grandparents the sample were divided into two groups based on mean scores. Thus, the sample were divided into two groups and chi-square test was performed and results are presented in table-3.

Table 3: Mental Health Scores of Paternal and Maternal grand Parents and Chi-Square Values

Grand parents	Mental health score		Chi-Square Value
	> 26	< 26	
Paternal grand parents	11	24	6.937
Maternal grandparents	22	13	$P < 0.008^{**}$

** Significant

Table-3 shows the association between mental health scores and type of grandparents. The chi-square value was significant. This shows that there is significant association between type of grand parents and their mental health. from the table it is evident that majority of maternal grandparents had mental health score more than 26 which indicates positive mental health and majority of paternal grandparents had mental health score less than 26 which indicates not positive mental health.

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 grand parents
- 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.

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