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Influence of familial factors on sibling relationship of normal children with mentally challenged children

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Abstract

The present study entitled “influence of familial factors on sibling relationship of normal children with mentally challenged children” was conducted in 2015-16. The population of the study comprised of 90 children from urban and rural areas of selected districts of Northern Karnataka and special schools for mentally retarded located in Hubballi-Dharwad city. Sibling relationship Questionnaire (SRQ) (Furman Buhrmester, 1990) was used to assess the typical sibling’s perceptions of the relationship and behaviors towards their sibling with parental factor. Socio –Economic Status Scale (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2005) was employed to assess the socio economic level of family. Results revealed that majority of the children from joint family were in moderate level of sibling relationship and the children from nuclear family were in moderate and low level of sibling relationship. Among rural children belongs to small size family all them were in moderate level of sibling relationship and children from medium and large size family majority of children were in moderate level of sibling relation followed by low level of sibling relation. Children from poor family all of them had moderate level of sibling relation and children from high socio-economic level had moderate and low sibling relation which calls for educational programmes for parents and siblings to promote healthy sibling relationship among children.

Keywords: Sibling relationship, mentally challenged children, familial factor

Introduction

There is considerable literature on family adaptation after the birth of a child with a disability, which has primarily focused on the parents and siblings. Family systems theory has several basic assumptions: (a) family characteristics are inputs into the family system, to which the family responds, and from which outputs (i.e., family functions such as affection, daily care, etc.) are produced; (b) the family is a whole system and is affected by the relationships among family members, and (c) boundaries exist between family subsystems (i.e., parental, marital, sibling, and extended family) and with the outside world. Family member interaction occurs within and across family subsystems, has varying levels of cohesion (emotional bonding) and adaptability (ability to change in demand to stressful situations), is a dynamic process, and provides children with their first interactions with others. For families with children with developmental disability, the sibling subsystems of heightened importance since the sibling relationship can be the first and most intense peer relationship.

Typical sibling relationships change over time and provide the siblings opportunities to experience sharing, companionship, rivalry, and other outcomes. Some sibling pairs experience warm, supportive relationships, whereas others experience conflicts and isolation. Some researchers have explored sibling relationships, adjustment, and outcomes when one sibling has an developmental disability (e.g.,). Meadan et al. reviewed the literature related to the social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment of siblings of individuals with developmental disability. The authors reported positive and negative outcomes for and adjustment of typically developing siblings of individuals with developmental disability.

Research studies focused on families of children with developmental disabilities have often been designed to consider evidence those parents and siblings might be at increased risk for psychological problems as a result of the presence of a child with disabilities (Dodd 2004). Research indicates that Parents and sibling with children with disability appear to experience higher levels of stress and depression than other parents (Beckman, 1983; Beckman-Bell, 1981; Hadadian, 1994; Hanson and Hanline, 1990; Holroyd and McArthur, 1976; Kazak and

Marvin, 1984; Scott *et al.*, 1989), and that disruptions to the family life cycle are likely to occur (Hanline, 1991).

Material and Method

The population of the study comprised of normal siblings of mentally challenged children studying in special schools of mentally challenged of Hubballi-Dharwad. A total of 45 normal children having one mentally challenged sibling were selected as urban samples. For the rural area, the population consists of villages from the four districts of Northern Karnataka namely Dharwad, Belagavi, Vijayapur, Bagalkote and Gadag. A total of 45 normal children having mentally challenged child as sibling were selected. The total sample for the study constitutes 90 children. The children were contacted through home visits, and their parents and sibling were interviewed to obtain required information.

Sibling relationship Questionnaire (SRQ) (Furman Buhrmester, 1990) was used to assess the typical sibling's perceptions of the relationship. Items are rated with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "hardly at all" to "extremely much". It was used for all scales except the parental partiality scale in which possible choices range from "my sibling most always gets treated better, more attention, etc." to "I almost always get..." and scores were based on deviations from the midpoint of "about the same". The score range from High (176-240), Average (112-175), and Low (48-111). Chi-square test of association was employed to know the association of familial factors such as type of family, size of family, socio-economic status of the family and they are compared with sibling relationship of normal children with mentally challenged dyad.

Family characteristics

1) Type of Family: Based on the structure, the family was classified into two types

Sl. No.	Type of family
1	Nuclear
2	Joint

2) Size of the family: Based on the total number of members residing in the family, it was grouped into three categories as follows:-

Sl. No.	Size of the family
1	Small size family (≤4 members)
2	Medium size family (5-6 members)
3	Large size family (≥7 members)

Socio-economic status of the family: Socio economic status of family was classified into six categories according to socioeconomic status scale developed by Aggarwal *et al.* (2005).

Socio economic classification	Score
Upper High	>76
High	61 – 75
Upper middle	46 -60
Lower middle	31 – 45
Poor	16 – 30
Very poor	<15

Result and discussion

Table 1: Association between type of family and level of sibling relationship among rural and urban children

Locality	Type of family	Level of sibling relationship			Modified χ^2
		Low	Moderate	Total	
Rural	Nuclear	6 (23.1)	20 (76.9)	26 (100)	1.18 ^{NS}
	Joint	2 (10.5)	17 (89.5)	19 (100)	
	Total	8 (17.8)	37 (82.2)	45 (100)	
Urban	Nuclear	5 (16.1)	26 (83.9)	31 (100)	2.54 ^{NS}
	Joint	-	14 (100)	14 (100)	
	Total	5 (11.1)	40 (88.9)	45 (100)	

Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage
NS – Non-significant

Table 2: Comparison of mean scores sibling relationship by type of the family

Locality	Type of family	Mean	SD	t-value
Rural	Nuclear	131.31	18.09	0.318 ^{NS}
	Joint	132.95	15.53	
Urban	Nuclear	135.39	17.95	1.77 ^{NS}
	Joint	145.50	17.14	

NS-Non-significant

Influence of type of family on sibling relationship of children:

With respect to type of family in rural children from nuclear family 76.9 per cent of them were found in moderate level followed by 23.1 per cent were in low level of sibling relationship. Among children from joint family majority of them were in moderate level (89.5%) and 10.5 per cent were in low level of sibling relationship.

Among the children from nuclear family in urban area most of them were in moderate level (83.9%) followed by 16.1 per cent of them in low level. In case of joint family all were in moderate level and none were in low and high level of sibling relationship. Chi-square analysis showed non-significant association between sibling relationship and type of family in both rural and urban children.

On comparison of mean scores t-test results showed non-significant difference in mean scores of type of family and sibling relation in both rural and urban children.

Family type is an important factor because it may influence the way in which individual think of them and the way family members relate to one another and the outside world. However the present study revealed non-significant association between type of family and sibling relation in both rural and urban area. Majority of the children from joint family were in moderate level of sibling relationship and the children from nuclear family were in moderate and low level of sibling relationship. This may be due to reason that joint family system gives more opportunities for the children to express their emotions, feelings. Grandparents and other family members also helping the children for moderating there sibling relation.

Table 3: Association between size of family and level of sibling relationship among rural and urban children

Locality	Size of family	Level of sibling relationship			Modified χ^2
		Low	Moderate	Total	
Rural	Small	-	9 (100)	9 (100)	4.89 ^{NS}
	Medium	5 (17.2)	24 (82.8)	29 (100)	
	Large	3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)	7 (100)	
	Total	8 (17.8)	37 (82.2)	45 (100)	
Urban	Small	-	9 (100)	9 (100)	1.96 ^{NS}
	Medium	4 (16.6)	20 (83.3)	24 (100)	
	Large	1 (4.1)	11 (91.6)	12 (100)	
	Total	5 (11.1)	40 (88.9)	45 (100)	

Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage
NS – Non-significant

Table 4: Comparison of mean scores of sibling relationship by size of the family

Locality	Size of the family	Mean	SD	F-value
Rural	Small	143.11	15.69	4.39* CD=6.69 SEM=0.27
	Medium	131.52	15.82	
	Large	119.71	15.28	
Urban	Small	144.78	13.67	0.80 ^{NS}
	Medium	135.83	19.92	
	Large	139.25	17.36	

*Significant at 0.05 level
NS-Non-significant

Influence of size of family on sibling relationship of children

Results presented in table revealed the association between family size and sibling relationship of children. Children from small size family all of them had moderate level sibling relation. Children with medium size family majority of them belong to moderate and low level (82.8% and 17.2% respectively) of sibling relation. In case of children from large size family 57.1 per cent were in moderate level and 42.9 per cent were in low level of sibling relationship. Chi-square analysis showed non-significant association between family size and sibling relation. However F-test revealed statistically significant difference

where children from small size family had higher mean scores (143.11) than compared to children from medium (131.52) and large size family (119.71).

In case of urban area majority of children from small size family all were in moderate level of sibling relation. 83.3 per cent of children were in moderate level followed by low level (16.6%) of sibling relationship among children from medium size family. Children from large size family had moderate level (91.6%) and 4.1 per cent of them had low level of sibling relation. Chi square showed non-significant association between family size and sibling relationship.

F-test revealed that non-significant difference in mean scores of size of family and sibling relationship.

Among rural children belongs to small size family all them were in moderate level of sibling relationship and children from medium and large size family majority of children were in moderate level of sibling relation followed by low level of sibling relation. There was non-significant association between size of the family and sibling relation in both rural and urban children. Children belonged to small size family had higher mean scores on sibling relation. Simeonsson (1986) reported in his study that among families of individuals with intellectual disabilities, a larger family size is associated with a greater burden being reported by siblings in childhood.

Table 5: Association between socio-economic status and level of sibling relationship among rural and urban children

Locality	Socio-economic status	Level of sibling relationship			Modified χ^2
		Low	Moderate	Total	
Rural	High	1 (33.3)	2 (66.7)	3 (100)	1.19 ^{NS}
	Middle	7 (17.5)	33 (82.5)	40 (100)	
	Poor	-	2 (100)	2 (100)	
	Total	8 (17.8)	37 (82.2)	45 (100)	
Urban	High	-	4 (100)	4 (100)	3.59 ^{NS}
	Middle	4 (10.3)	35 (89.7)	39 (100)	
	Poor	1 (50)	1 (50)	2 (100)	
	Total	5 (11.1)	40 (88.9)	45 (100)	

Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage
NS – Non-significant

Table 6: Comparison of mean scores of sibling relationship by socio-economic status

Locality	Socio-economic status	Mean	SD	F-value
Rural	High	125.00	15.71	0.47 ^{NS}
	Middle	132.12	17.38	
	Poor	140.00	10.04	
Urban	High	151.50	14.70	1.42 ^{NS}
	Middle	137.74	18.01	
	Poor	128.00	24.04	

NS-Non-significant

Influence of socio-economic of family on sibling relationship of children

An appraisal of table shows that 66.7 per cent of children fell in moderate level followed by 33.3 per cent were in low level of sibling relation those from high socio-economic status. Maximum numbers of children (82.5%) from medium socio-economic status were in moderate level followed by low level of sibling relation (17.5%). Among children from poor socio-economic status all were in moderate level sibling relationship.

With respect to socio-economic status in urban area all children had moderate level sibling relations who were from high socio-economic status. In case of children from middle socio-economic status majority of children were in moderate level (89.7%) followed by 10.3 per cent were in low level. Among children from poor socio-economic status half of them were in moderate and same were in low level of sibling relationship. The chi-square analysis revealed non-significant association between socioeconomic status and sibling relationship.

F-test also revealed that no significant difference in the mean scores of socio-economic status and sibling relationship in both rural and urban children.

In rural area children from poor family all of them had moderate level of sibling relation and children from high socio-economic level had moderate and low sibling relation. This is may be due to the reason that high socio-economic status calls for high status in the parents and more burdens on the sibling of mentally challenged child. Children from high socio-economic status caring for mentally challenged child and meeting the expectation of the parents may be the predictor of the low sibling relation. In case of low socio-economic status parents have the helplessness feeling. Kumar (2000) also briefed in his study that parents in less prestigious occupations may have lower expectations of their children and may be accustomed to feelings of helplessness. In urban area children from high socio-economic family had higher sibling relation.

Conclusion

Type of the family, size of the family and socio-economic status of the family showed non-significant association in both rural and urban children. Majority of the children from joint family were in moderate level of sibling relationship and the children from nuclear family were in moderate and low level of sibling relationship. This may be due to reason that joint family system gives more opportunities for the children to express their emotions, feelings. Grandparents and other family members also helping the children for moderating there sibling relation. Children belonged to small size family had higher mean scores on sibling relation. Children from poor family all of them had moderate level of sibling relation and children from high socio-economic level had moderate and low sibling relation.

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