

Influence of socio-economic factors on parenting of rural infants of North Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

A cross-sectional study was carried out to know the influence of socio-economic status (SES) on parenting of rural infants. The sample consisted of 192 infants of age 6-24 months who were recruited equally from three age cohorts; 6-12, 13-18 and 19-24 months from three districts of North Karnataka. Majority (72.4%) of the families fell under lower middle, while 12.0 and 15.6 per cent were in upper and poor middle socio-economic group, respectively. Results revealed that on parenting, 69.8, 29.7 and 0.5 per cent were in high, medium and low level, respectively. There was a positive and significant relationship ($r=0.194^{**}$) between socio-economic status and parenting. However SES was negatively correlated with negative parenting ($r=-0.213^{**}$) indicating that as SES increased the scores on negative parenting decreased. As socio-economic status of the family has significant influence on parenting of rural infants there is a need to design parenting programmes for parents of low socio-economic status.

Key Words : Parenting, Negative parenting, Positive parenting, Socio-economic status

INTRODUCTION

Parenting or child rearing is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, financial, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Parenting refers to the aspects of raising a child aside from the biological relationship. The most common caretaker in parenting is the biological parent, although others may be an older sibling, a grandparent, a legal guardian, aunt, uncle or other family member, or a family friend. Social class, wealth, culture and income have a very strong impact on what methods of child rearing are used by parents.

Bernstein (1960) argued that mothers from different socioeconomic strata would use language differently with their children, so that the children would acquire different communicative styles. Recently, parental belief was found to be associated with socio-economic status (SES) in that higher SES mothers were likely to recognize their children as active agents of learning and development (Skinner, 1985). For example, a parent's socioeconomic status plays an important role in providing these educational resources and it appears to impose the greatest impact on the child's educational outcomes (Vellymalay, 2012). Studies focusing on SES suggest that lower SES parents prefer their children to be more submissive to authority, whereas higher SES parents expect their children to be more independent (Hoff-Ginsburg and Tardif, 1995). Moreover, there is ample evidence that children's

cognitive and emotional competencies are affected by living in impoverished socio-economic environments (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000; NICHD, 2005) and differences are already observable early in a child's life.

Low socio-economic status is related to less warmth and responsiveness and more withdrawal and harshness in mother child interactions, which also accounts for at least some of the association between poverty and child outcomes in early and middle childhood (Linver *et al.*, 2002 and NICHD ECCRN, 2005). Moreover, children from low socio-economic backgrounds are at risks of lower achievement, behavioral problems, dropping out of school, health problems, anxiety, depression and other negative outcomes (Klerman, 1991; McLeod and Shanahan, 1993).

Indeed, SES and ethnic differences have been found consistently in physical punishment (Deckard *et al.*, 1996). Specifically, it has been argued that economic hardship and poverty can lead to harsher, less responsive parenting and in turn poorer cognitive outcomes for children (Conger *et al.*, 1992), suggesting that the real causal mechanism is parenting.

Thus, there is good evidence that the quality of parenting is an important mediator of the relation between economic status and its relation towards the outcomes of child cognitive and overall development. Thus, the current study was designed to investigate the influence of socio-economic status of the family and parenting of rural infants in the three districts of Northern Karnataka.

METHODOLOGY

Population and sample :

The sample consisted of rural infants from three districts (Bijapur, Bagalkot and Dharwad) of North Karnataka wherein each district comprised of two taluks and from each taluks two villages were randomly selected for the study. A sample of 16 infants were randomly chosen from each village with a total of 12 villages comprising a total sample of 192 infants (6-24 months) drawn equally from three age cohorts: 6-12, 13-18 and 19-24 months. The final sample consisted of 53.9 per cent of female infants and 45.6 per cent of male infants.

Measures :

Parenting observation tool developed by Smith *et al.* (2012) with 25 items was used. This scale has two components positive and negative parenting with 16 items for positive and 9 items for negative. The responses for each item ranged from "can't tell" to "always" on a six point Likert scale and the scores were anchored from 5 to 1 for positive items and reverse scoring for negative items. The total scores ranged with a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 125. Parenting score was categorized as low (0-41), medium (42-83) and high (84-125).

Socio-economic status scale :

The socio-economic status was assessed by the socio economic status scale of Aggarwal *et al.* (2005). The scale consists of 22 statements which assess education, occupation, monthly per capital income from all sources, possessions, number of children, number of earning members in family, education of children, domestic servants in home possessions of agricultural land and non-agricultural land along with animals and social status of the family.

Data collection procedure :

Data collection was made by personal interview with the caregivers and observation method

was used to assess the child behavior and at the same time parent-child interaction was elicited by administering the Bayley tool. A door to door survey was carried out to select the infants in each village. The information regarding SES was also collected through interviewing the mothers of selected infants. The interview was conducted for about 20-30 minutes.

Statistical analysis :

Frequencies and percentages were carried out to know about the percentage distribution of infants by SES and parenting level. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between SES and parenting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample comprised of 53.9 per cent females and 45.6 per cent males with ages ranging from 6 to 24 months (mean 1.97, SD 0.84). Among the age cohorts' majority 37 per cent were in the age group of 6-12 months followed by 13-18 months (31.2%) and 19-24 months (31.8%) age groups. Majority of the family (53.9 %) belonged to nuclear family while 45.6 per cent belonged to joint family. The mothers had better education with 50 per cent of them in higher education whereas majority of the father had primary education (72%). Most of the parents (43%) were having maximum of two children in each family where 45 per cent of infants were in the first ordinal position followed by 38 per cent and 17 per cent were in the third and fourth ordinal position, respectively. Majority (86 %) of the participants belonged to backward castes followed by dalits (8%) and tribals (5%). It was also observed that majority of the families (72.4%) fell under lower middle category of socio economic status while 12 per cent and 15.6 per cent were in upper and poor middle category (Table 1).

Further, with regards to parenting the findings revealed that in positive parenting majority of the mothers fell under the medium level (Fig. 1). On total parenting majority fell under the high level of parenting (Fig. 2) but in negative parenting majority fell under the low level of parenting (Fig. 3).

Table 3 shows the influence of SES on parenting where the result revealed that there was a positive correlation between SES and positive parenting ($r = .194^{**}$) as well as between SES and total parenting ($r = .122$). While there was a negative correlation between SES and negative parenting ($r = -.213^{**}$) suggesting that lower the SES, lower was the quality of parenting. Previous studies have also shown similar results. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) reported that low-SES levels lead to harsh or negative parenting, which leads to lower competence and to more maladaptive behaviors in children. Lower-SES parents are more likely to suffer from low levels of energy and high levels of anxiety, hostility, and depression, have low social support levels, and experience distress from their jobs (Gallo and Matthews, 1999). Therefore, those parents are more likely to use negative and

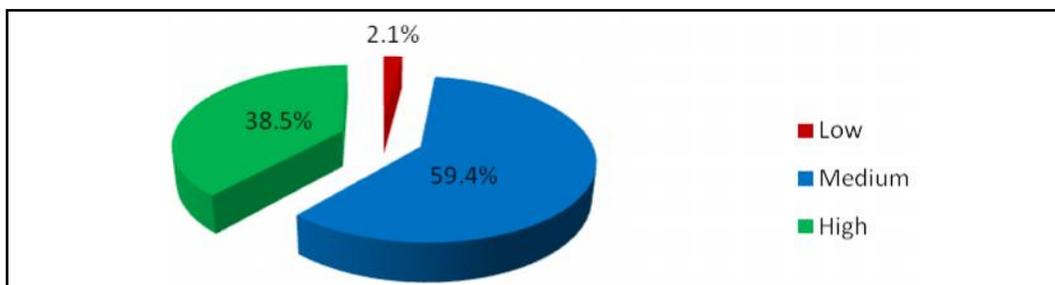
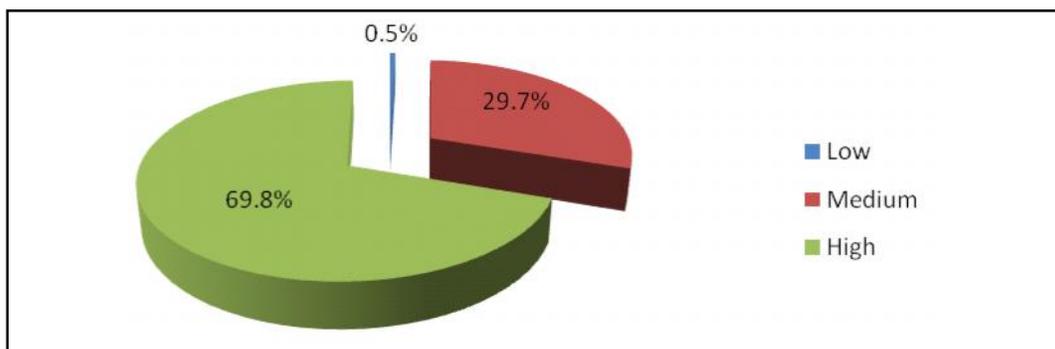


Fig. 1 : Percentage distribution of infants on positive parenting

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the infants selected for the study

Characteristics	Category	N	%
Age	6-12 months	71	37
	13-18 months	60	31.2
	19-24 months	61	31.8
Gender	Male	92	47.9
	Female	100	52.08
Ordinal position	First	73	37.8
	Second	86	44.6
	Third	28	14.5
	Fourth	4	2.1
	Five and above	1	0.5
Type of family	Nuclear	104	53.9
	Joint	80	45.6
Father's education	Illiterate	31	16.1
	Primary	139	72.4
	Higher education	22	11.5
Mother's education	Illiterate	14	11.8
	Primary	81	42.1
	Higher education (above secondary education)	97	50.5
No. of children	1	75	39.1
	2	83	43.2
	≥3	34	17.7
Caste	GM	2	1.0
	OBC	165	85.9
	SC	16	8.3
	ST	9	4.7
Socio-economic status	Upper middle	23	12
	Lower middle	139	72.4
	Poor	30	15.6

**Fig. 2 : Percentage distribution of infants on Total parenting**

harsh strategies to deal with parent-child relationships, and provide less warmth, responsiveness, and monitoring.

Consistent with the work of Kohn *et al.* (1977), low income parents were more likely than middle-income parents to endorse the physical use of power to resolve conflict, whether between parent and child or between children. Mothers with a higher socioeconomic level recognize and

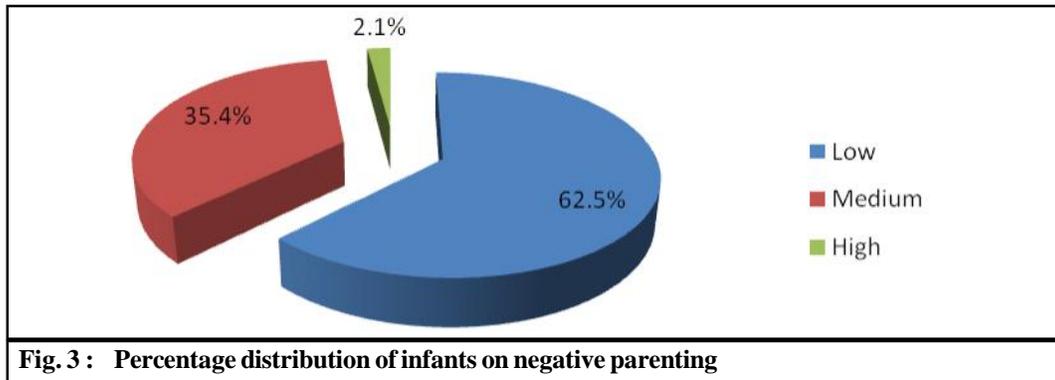


Table 2 : Correlation matrix between SES and parenting components

Factors	1	2	3	4
SES	1			
Positive parenting	.194**	1		
Negative parenting	-.213**	-.238**	1	
Total parenting	.122	.767**	-.454**	1

** . Significant at the 0.01 level@

respond more appropriately to child signals, structure the interaction in a way that better foster child play and exploration and are more able to limit their display of negative emotions during interaction.

The positive association between SES and the quality of mother interactive behavior measured in similar and different ways has been observed by Evans *et al.* (2005) and Tarabulsy *et al.* (2005) and attributed to higher cognitive, emotional, material, and social resources that characterize high compared to low SES families.

Literature on SES and parenting has also shown that impoverished parents, especially parents are more punitive and less affectionate and supportive of their children (McLyod and Wilson, 1991). The finding of this study on the influence of socio-economic on parenting of rural infants provides more evidence for the importance of parenting regardless of socio-economic status. Thus the study assumed that there exist a correlation between the socio economic status of parents and their infants’ development.

Conclusion :

The result in the study indicates that mothers with low economic status react negatively in their parenting roles. Parents experiencing poverty are more likely to report more reactive processes and, in turn, to use more harsh discipline responses. Because harsh discipline often is linked with inconsistency (Patterson, 1982), it may negatively affect children’s functioning. Thus, any parent experiencing these intense negative parenting may benefit with the interventions target to reduce their intensity. Thus, there is a need to plan an intervention programme to reduce the intensity of negative parenting.

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