

PSYCHO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS IN URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT:

Research Problem: What is the magnitude and correlates of psychosocial behavioural problems in primary school children of an urban area.

Objectives: i) To know the prevalence of psychosocial behavioural problems in primary school children of Agra Corporation.

ii) To see the impact of various biosocial factors on the prevalence of above problems.

Design: Cross sectional study by questionnaire method and observation.

Setting: Primary schools run by Agra Corporation.

Participants: All the children studying in 7 primary schools selected from 108 schools run by Agra Corporation.

Sample Size: 520 primary school children.

Study Variables: Age, sex, socio-economic class and family size.

Statistical Analysis: By percentage, Z - test and Chi-square test.

Result: A majority of the study children (63.7%) were having some psychosocial behavioural problem or the other, the most common problem being educational difficulties (59.8%). The average number of problems per child was 2.9. The prevalence was highest in children from middle-sized families of low socio-economic class and in age group above 13 years.

Key Words: Psychosocial problems, behavioural problems, primary school children, corporation schools.

INTRODUCTION:

The international declaration of the "rights of the child" states that the child must be given the means or requisites for its normal development, materially and morally. Next to home, school is the effective place where attempts could be made in this direction, to meet the essential requirements of child's development - physical, intellectual, emotional and social.

For a child, school is the first experience of group life outside protected home environment. He is

exposed to the stress, strain and hazards of group life in a school, with children coming from different social strata of the community and having different quality of life. Thus, there are chances that school children may have various psychosocial behavioural problems. The present study was carried out in primary school children of Agra Corporation schools to assess the prevalence of such problems and their various correlates.

MATERIAL AND METHOD:

For the study, seven primary schools run by Agra Corporation were selected randomly, one from each ward. All the children studying in these schools were taken for the study. Each child under study was assessed regarding his/her psychosocial behavioural problems with the help of observations and complaints from the child him/herself and also by asking from school teachers. Biosocial factors like age, sex, family size and family income were also studied. All the information was recorded on a predesigned, pretested schedule which was tabulated, analyzed and tested statistically to draw valid conclusions.

OBSERVATIONS:

In seven primary schools of Agra Corporation 520 children were studied for their psychosocial behavioural problems. It was found that the psychosocial behavioural problems were highly prevalent in corporation school children and only 36.3% children were free of such problems with insignificant male-female difference. The most common problem was educational difficulties found in 59.8 per cent children while the least common ones were the psychosomatic problems, they being present in 19.6% children only. Other problems viz. habit disorders, personality disorders and antisocial problems were detected in about one-third of the children, prevalence being 35.2, 33.3 and 33.1 per cent respectively. Antisocial problems, habit disorders and educational difficulties were significantly higher in boys than girls (Table - I). It was also observed that average number of psychosocial behavioural problems per child were 3.0, 2.3 and 2.9 in

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boys, girls and total children respectively.

Regarding the relation with age, it was seen that prevalence was minimum in 7-9 years age group (53.1%) and it was maximum in children above the age of 13 years (71.4%). The overall picture was that in 5-7 years age group, nearly two - thirds children (67.0%) were having such problems and the rate dropped to a minimum i.e. 53.1% in 7-9 years age group and then it was continuously rising with increase in age, the association with age being highly significant statistically ($X^2 = 9.06$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$). The same pattern was shown by psychosomatic problems and educational difficulties, but the correlation was significant only for the latter. ($X^2 = 12.77$, $p < 0.05$). Habit disorders and personality disorders were maximum in 5-7 years age group (41.7% and 49.6% respectively), the prevalence, then going down with increase in age, being only 16.3 and 22.5 per cent in children above 13 years. Antisocial problems were minimum in 5-7 years age group, the prevalence rising with increasing age up to 57.1 per cent in children above 13 years of age. The association of prevalence of anti social problems, habit disorders and personality disorders with age was highly significant statistically ($X^2 = 39.79$, 26.53 and 20.42, $p < 0.001$). It was also found that the average number of psychosocial problems per child were maximum in 7-11 years children (7-9 years - 3.1% and 9 - 11 years - 2.9%) while it was 2.7 in other age groups (Table - II).

Table - III shows the prevalence of psychosocial problems in relation to socio-economic class and family size. It was seen that in comparison to the overall prevalence of 63.7 per cent, the prevalence in upper and middle socio - economic class was only 47.1 and 55.8 per cent respectively, while in lower and economically weaker sections, prevalence was high i.e. 66.7 and 70.3 per cent respectively. This association was significant statistically ($X^2 = 12.75$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$). Regarding relation with family size, the prevalence was found highest (70.2%) in children from medium sized families (6-10 members), while it was below 55 per cent in small and large families (52.1% and 54.1%). The association of family size with psychosocial problems was also statistically significant ($X^2 = 19.61$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$). Finally, prevalence was the highest in children from middle sized families of economically weaker sections and lowest in large-middle class families (77.0 and 28.6% respectively).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

In the present study, the various psychosocial behavioural problems prevalent in school going children alongwith their relation with social factors were assessed. Rogers' stressed the importance of assessment of mental health in school children. It was observed that recognition of emotional problems is of help to the pupil and his teacher, so that his action may be properly labelled as emotional disturbances rather than arbitrary misbehaviour, and also that the behavioural problems are not disease entities, but symptoms cause by emotional disturbance or environmental maladjustment.

In the present study, it was found that the over all prevalence of psychosocial behavioral problems was 63.7% which seems to be quite high. The reason for this high prevalence may be that these schools run by Corporation are having children from poor, less literate families who do not look after their children properly. The schools also do not provide environment which inculcates proper habits and attitudes in their students. The prevalence was maximum i.e. about 77% in children from middle sized families and from low socio-economic class. Educational difficulties were found in about 60 per cent children while antisocial problems, habit disorders, and personality disorders were prevalent in about one third children, usually more in boys as boys pass their most of the spare time outside the home, so they have the chance to mix with children having these problems

The problems were overall maximum in children above 13 years of age and this association with age was highly significant. The age factors seem to be important, as in primary schools, the usual age group of students is 6 - 11 years and the children of higher age group in primary classes are definitely poor in studies so they develop various types of behavioral problems or vice versa. Mukherjee², Malhotra and Prasad³ reported habit disorders in 40 per cent children while they found bad habits of mud eating, thumb sucking and biting of nails in 49.1, 39.5 and 11.3 per cent children respectively.

TABLE - I

PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS IN SCHOOL GOING BOYS AND GIRLS.

S.No.	Psychosocial* problems	Children with psychosocial problems						Test of signifi- cance (z)
		Male (n=389)		Female (n=131)		Total (n=520)		
		No.	%.	No.	%.	No.	%	
1.	No problem	143	36.8	46	35.1	189	36.3	0.34
2.	Antisocial problems	146	37.5	30	22.9	176	33.1	3.17**
3.	Habit disorders	149	38.4	34	26.0	183	35.2	2.71**
4.	Personality disorders	132	33.9	41	31.3	173	33.3	0.56
5.	Psychosomatic Problems	76	19.5	26	19.9	102	19.6	0.07
6.	Educational difficulties	246	63.2	65	49.6	311	59.8	2.35**
	Total problems	749		196		945		
	Problems per child	3.0		2.3		2.9		

* Multiple response

** Significant

TABLE - II

AGEWISE PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS IN SCHOOL CHILDREN

S.No.	Psychosocial Problems		No. of Children with psycho- social problems Age in Years					Test of signifi- cance X ² (d. f.=4)
			5-7 (n=115)	7-9 (n=128)	9-11 (n=138)	11-13 (n=90)	>13 (n=49)	
			1.	Antisocial problems	No.	19	45	
		%.	16.5	35.2	28.3	50.0	57.1	
2.	Habit disorders	No.	48	49	61	17	8	26.53**
		%.	41.7	38.3	44.2	18.9	16.3	
3.	Personality disorders	No.	57	40	35	30	11	20.42**
		%.	49.6	31.3	25.4	33.3	22.5	
4.	Psychosomatic problems	No.	20	19	32	18	13	4.81
		%.	17.4	14.8	23.2	20.0	26.5	
5.	Educational difficulties	No.	71	60	87	59	34	12.77*
		%.	61.7	46.9	63.0	65.6	69.4	
6.	Total children with problem	No.	77	68	89	62	35	9.06*
		%.	67.0	53.1	64.5	68.9	71.4	
7.	Problem rate/child		2.7	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.7	

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.001$

TABLE - III

PSYCHOSOCIAL BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS IN RELATION TO S.E. CLASS AND FAMILY SIZE

S.No.	Socio-economic class	Children having psychosocial problems						Total		
		Family size								
		Upto 5		6-10		>10		No.	%.	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%.	No.	%.	
1.	Upper S.E. Class	N	7	-	9	-	1	-	17	-
		n	3	42.9	5	55.6	-	-	8	47.1
2.	Middle S.E class	N	60	-	114	-	7	-	181	-
		n	30	50.0	69	60.5	2	28.6	101	55.8
3.	Lower S.E class	N	42	-	80	-	5	-	127	-
		n	22	52.4	60	75.0	3	60.0	85	66.7
4.	Economically weaker sections	N	58	-	126	-	11	-	195	-
		n	32	52.2	97	77.0	8	72.7	137	70.3
Total		N	107		329		24		520	
		n	87	52.1	231	70.2	13	54.1	331	63.7

N = Total no. of children in that category n = No. of children out of N

Test of significance : X^2 (Family size) = 19.61, df = 2, $p < 0.001$

X^2 (S.E class) = 12.73, df = 4, $p < 0.05$

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