

Original Article

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED FAMILY SUPPORT AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG PHYSICALLY IMPAIRED INSTITUTIONALIZED CHILDREN

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Abstract

Background: Emotional development is the most important aspect of the development of children in developmental psychology. Many factors contribute to emotional development of the physically impaired children. In this regards, family support is a fundamental aspect in emotional development of a child.

Objectives: The present research focused on the relationship between perceived family support and emotional development in physically impaired institutionalized children. Similarly, comparisons were made among children regarding their gender, family system and parental education.

Method: It was cross-sectional research in which purposive convenient sampling technique was used for data collection. Study consisted of physically impaired institutionalized children (N = 100) including boys and girls. The sample was taken from various special education institutions of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Perceived Family Support Scale and Emotional Development Scale was used for data collection.

Results: A significant high correlation is found between perceived family support and emotional development ($r = .84, p < .01$) among physically impaired children. The results indicate that male children ($M = 82.803, t = 2.88, p < .01$) significantly scored high on perceived family support as compared to female children ($M = 78.051, t = 1.880, p < .05$). Children from nuclear family system ($M = 81.307, t = 1.92, p < .05$) significantly scored high on perceived family support as compared to children from joint family system ($M = 78.36, t = 1.92, p < .05$). Children with educated fathers ($M = 81.324, t = 1.87, p < .05$) significantly scored high on perceived family support as compared to children with uneducated fathers ($M = 72.88, t = 1.87, p < .05$). Children with uneducated mothers ($M = 81.07, t = .11, p > .05$) non-significantly scored high on perceived family support as compared to children with educated mothers ($M = 80.796, t = .11, p > .05$).

Conclusion: In the light of the findings, emotional development of the physically impaired children can be improved with the help of family support. The findings revealed salient demographic differences in perceived family among children.

Keywords: Perceived Family Support, Emotional Development, Physically Impaired Children

Introduction

Family is the universal social institution within which the bearing and care of children has been based and where cultural traditions, beliefs and values have been transmitted to the young as individual actors fulfill their biological potential for production, growth and development.⁽¹⁾ Family serves multiple functions for a developing child. It contributes in the development personality,^(2,3) adjustment outside the home, socialization of the individual,^(4,5) school success,⁽⁵⁾ success in adult life, and developing feelings of valuable person.⁽⁶⁾

Along with these functions, family plays a vital role in the social, personality, intellectual, cognitive and emotional development of the children. Impaired children need more care and concern in order to cope with their multiple stressors. When such children are institutionalized, they have to survive in an artificial environment. The plight of the disabled and impaired children in developing countries is quite appealing. Around 80% of the total disabled population of the worlds concentrated in these societies. A more than 500 million populations in the world and around 100 million in India are debarred from full participation in their families, communities and societies. The lack of access to facilities, transportation and information circumscribes them from enjoying equal opportunities in housing, employment and health care.⁽⁷⁾

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Pakistan is a developing country and things are not so different in the Pakistan's scenario. In Pakistan, where there is a collectivistic culture, with a joint family, most likely having the grandparents, uncles and aunts in the house, the message to the child is most likely to be conflicting in nature. Where as in a small nuclear family there is greater compatibility. A child with a disability may find a positive and rich atmosphere as well as a negative and restricted atmosphere depending on the circumstances present in the family at any particular time.⁽⁸⁾

The present study identifies the etiological reasons of disabilities in Pakistan and also notes that there is scant indigenous scientific information and update knowledge about disabilities even today.⁽⁹⁾ This makes the estimate that 10% of the country's population is disabled, debatable, and lacking in scientific, systematic basis. There are variations in disabilities according to communities, genetic background, geographical location, environmental factors, cultural sophistication, nutrition and the

medical services available. A survey "census of all categories of disabled persons" in Islamabad/Rawalpindi area was started in 1986 and its preliminary report was published in 1987.⁽¹⁰⁾

Emotional development of the children is a well-researched topic and it is studied with a wide range of correlates^(11, 12,13) but it hardly investigated with reference to perceived family support. Warm support by the family helps the impaired children to cope with their stressors. Pakistan is a collectivist society where family support is the integral part of the emotional development. In Pakistani context, the present study is an initiative which aims to examine the relationship between perceived family support and emotional development of the impaired children.

Children who perceived their parental attitude as rejecting had low self-esteem.⁽¹⁴⁾ The physically handicapped child has adjusts himself to his own disabilities as well as the unfavorable conditions in which he/she is placed.⁽¹⁵⁾ The individual feels handicapped because he perceived that others look him as handicapped. Thus, more than the disability as such, what worsens the life of the disabled is his perception that he is viewed as a socially inadequate individual. This social handicap emanates from the stigma towards the disabled person or children.⁽¹⁶⁾

It was pointed out that physical impairment may impose limitations on the person as well as it may reflect limitations imposed on him because of socially and culturally defined reaction.⁽¹⁷⁾ The handicapped need acceptance as a person encouragement in his/her favors, empathy, not pity, cooperation in work, not help. Therefore, disability has a tremendous impact on the development of the personality of the individual and his corresponding adjustment with the society and parents.⁽¹⁵⁾ Child who cannot participate in sports or other peer activities perceive themselves as being different and not fitting in; the children thus withdraw from peer and family contacts. These children also perceive teasing and criticism and this must create negative feelings in their attitudes towards their parents.⁽¹⁸⁾

A physically handicapped child perceived feelings of inadequacy, rejection, frustration, hostility, and guilt from his family because of parental rejections. Over-protection and indulgent permissiveness may perceive as negativity and parental rejections which, causes difficulties in parent-child relationship. Physically handicapped children

perceive their parental overprotection with frequent emphasis on domination as an expression of covert rejection.⁽¹⁹⁾ Most of the children perceive their parent's attitude positively because the parents protect them from the harms and harsh conditions. The treatment of the child by different family members may also be different. If the message to be communicated to the child from different members of his social gathering is concordant, it may lead to a wholesome development of the child but if there are conflicting messages, demands, expectations, help and support, it might develop anxiety in the child and affect his emotional and social development.

Every 8th person is disabled either physically or mentally. During the war, and civil war in Afghanistan 3.5 lac men, women and children have become disabled, every 34th person was affected. 4 million people are deprived of visual or hearing problems. According to world report, Australia comes at number one; Finland is second and Hungry stands third for disabled people. Disease, accidents, wars and racial clashes are the causes of disability. During last decade 4-5 million children have become dependent of on support to live a life. According to WHO 3 lac and 50 thousand men, women and children lost their lives in prolonged civil war. Since two decades every 34th person has directly or indirectly been affected. 8% of the population of Pakistan (1, 1200000) is physically or mentally disabled; most of them are polio affected, out of total population of Pakistan. Some 42 million are physically and 28 million are mentally disabled, whereas 42 million are deprived of visual and hearing. Now rehabilitation of special children day is being celebrated. The major part of world population of special children belongs to Australia. According to the report of 1996 of developmental organization (UNDP), 22.7% of total population belongs to special children and second is Finland where there are 17% of disabled people. UNO has declared (1993-2002) the decade of special people for Asia and Pacific countries. According to UNO 12.5% of world's population is disabled. 75 crore of world's population has become challenge for governments, welfare organizations for their education, employment and legal rights. Out of 2 million of Afghanistan's population 6 lacs are disabled. According to experts opinion the major reason of disability in developed countries is accidents whereas in developing countries the causes of disability are various diseases and

accidents. With the cooperation of institutional funding organization; the number of polio affected people has been minimized. The situation of Pakistan is also not so different. According to one estimate, the number of children in the country today is approximately 49% of the total population. And although correct estimates are not available, the majority of them probably belonging to the poorer strata of society. The incidence of blindness, physical deformities and because of mal-nourishment, physical and mental deficiencies are more common among the children of these classes than among the affluent. Also, there are more orphans from these classes than the middle and upper classes. In the next millennium, it is expected that, Pakistan is likely to have a disproportionately large segment of either an unproductive and dependent population of adults afflicted with all kinds of maladies, or those who can support themselves, depending on what the government decides to do about the problem today.⁽²⁰⁾

According to physicians, the reasons of child impairment in Pakistan are due to insufficient diet to pregnant women, delay in treatment, excess use of drugs, infection during birth, inevitable impairment during the course pregnancy. Except it cousin marriage is also one of the reasons of disability.⁽²¹⁾ the study hypothesis was that perceived family support was positively correlated with emotional development among physically impaired institutionalized children. Second hypothesis was that female children were more perceived family support as compared to male. Third hypothesis was that children belonging to nuclear family system was had high perceived family support as compared to children belonging to joint family system. Fourth hypothesis was that children of educated father showed high level of perceived family support than uneducated father. Fifth hypothesis was that children of educated mother showed high level of perceived family support than the uneducated mother.

Methods

The sample of present study consisted of 100 children from different institutions of physically impaired children in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The major attributes of the sample included male ($n = 61$), female ($n = 39$), age ranges, 5-10 years ($n = 11$), age range, 11-15 years ($n = 89$), nuclear family system ($n = 62$), joint family system ($n = 38$),

educated fathers ($n = 74$), uneducated fathers ($n = 26$), uneducated mothers ($n = 56$), and educated mothers ($n = 44$). Purposive convenient sampling technique was used for the data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants, their parents and their respective institutions.

Perceived Family Support Scale for physically impaired children consist of 30 items was used in this study. It is a 4- point Likert type scale. Responses are categorized as 1-4; score 1 was assigned to the response category as never, score 2 was assigned to the response category as sometimes, score 3 was assigned to the response category as most of the time, and score 4 was assigns to the response category as all the time.²²

The Emotional Development Scale was used to assess the emotional development of the respondents. Emotional developments are divided into six sub scales including joy, anger, sadness, jealousy, curiosity, and fear. It contains 34 statements arranged on a 5- point Likert-type scale. It reflects how much a person considers the statement about his or herself. The 5 categories range from always, most of the time, seldom, rarely, and least. These response categories were scored as 5, 4,3,2,1 for positively phrased items, whereas, this scoring was reversed for the negative items.²³

The present study was a cross-sectional survey research. Physically impaired children were approached individually by the researcher. Instructions regarding the questionnaire were given properly because of self-administered questionnaires. The nature and purpose of the study was openly discussed with the participants. Children were ensured to be confident as all the information will be kept highly confidential and will only be used for research purpose. At first, informed consent was obtained from the administration of the institutions of physically impaired children. Informed consent was taken from the children before administering the questionnaires. Finally, children and the administrative personnel were thanked for their cooperation.

Results

Pearson correlation was applied to study the relationship between perceived family support and emotional development among physically impaired

institutionalized children. Independent sample *t*-test was applied to study the mean differences among

children with respect to gender, parental education, and family system.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics, Alpha reliability coefficient and Pearson correlation among study variables (N = 100)

Study variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum	α	1	2
1. Perceived family support	80.95	12.48	49	104	.87	-	.84*
2. Emotional development	92.20	14.14	58	129	.74	-	-

* $p < .01$

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics, Alpha reliability coefficients, and Pearson correlation among Perceived Family Support Scale and Emotional Development Scale. Alpha reliability coefficients were found out to measure their cultural suitability for the scales for the present research. The results indicate high internal

consistency for Perceived Family Support Scale and Emotional Development Scale which shows their appropriateness to be used in the present study. The results of the Pearson correlation indicate that perceived family support has significant positive correlation with emotional development of the children.

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and *t*-values on perceived family support with respect to (1) gender, (2) family system, (3) fathers' education, and (4) mothers' education (N = 100)

Demographic Variable	Categories	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
[1] Gender	Male	61	82.80	13.41	1.880*
	Female	39	78.05	10.38	
[2] Family System	Nuclear	62	81.31	12.17	1.363*
	Joint	38	80.36	13.11	
[3] Fathers' Education	Educated	74	81.32	12.71	1.504*
	Uneducated	26	79.88	11.96	
[4] Mothers' Education	Educated	44	80.79	12.91	.109
	Uneducated	56	81.07	12.25	

* $p < .05$, $df = 98$

Table 2 shows Mean, Standard Deviation and *t*-values with respect to gender, family system, fathers' education, and mothers' education on perceived family support. [1] The results indicate that male children ($M = 82.803$, $t = 1.880$, $p < .05$) significantly scored high on perceived family support as compared to female children ($M = 78.051$, $t = 1.880$, $p < .05$). [2] Children from nuclear family system ($M = 81.307$, $t = 1.363$, $p < .05$) significantly scored high on perceived family support as compared to children from joint family system ($M = 80.36$, $t = 1.363$, $p < .05$). [3] Children with educated fathers ($M = 81.324$, $t = 1.504$, $p < .05$) significantly scored high on perceived family as compared to children with uneducated fathers ($M = 79.885$, $t = 1.504$, $p < .05$). [4] Children with uneducated mothers ($M = 81.07$, $t = .109$, $p = ns$) non-significantly scored high on perceived family

support as compared to children with educated mothers ($M = 80.796$, $t = .109$, $p = ns$).

Discussion

The core objective of the present study was to examine the relationship between emotional development and perceived family support among physically impaired children. The other objective was to examine the role of various demographic variables of the children including gender, family system, and parental education in perceived family support. Most of the findings were consistent with the prior research.

The first hypothesis "Perceived family support will be positively correlated to emotional development among physically impaired institutionalized children" was supported in the present study. Families are often regarded as the primary source of support for children and support

from families and parents has been widely recognized in the literature as paramount to child adjustment and emotional development is considered as an integral part of child adjustment.⁽²⁴⁾ High levels of self-worth, high levels of peer support, and good coping techniques appeared to be somewhat protected from the potentially harmful effects that maladaptive family functioning may have on emotional adjustment. These results highlight the importance of focusing on the underlying processes involved in human development.⁽²⁵⁾ This indicates that perceived family support plays a vital role in the emotional development of the physically impaired institutionalized children. Even in the face of physical abuse, children may still feel that they are an important part of their family and that their families care about them and do things for them.^(24,25)

The 2nd hypothesis “Female children will show more perceived family support as compared to male children” was not supported in the present study. Male children exhibited more perceived family support and less as compared to female children. Research evidence illustrates that men and women did not differ in support networks they receive and perceive. Such contradictory findings also indicate some of the traditional conservative practices of gender discrimination in our culture. Parental attention in children also varies widely between cultures. Human demographic changes have also had an over whelming impact on the context of parenthood.¹ As cultural differences exist in perceived family support, therefore difference of the finding may be due to the difference in Pakistani culture.⁽²⁶⁾

The 3rd hypothesis “Children belonging to nuclear family system will have high perceived family support and emotional development than children belonging to joint family system” was supported in the present study. Family system shapes a healthy environment which facilitates the emotional development of the children. A favorable home environment and positive emotional climate has critical influences on the child’s personality, social, and emotional development.⁽²⁷⁾ A healthy person is one who actively masters his or her environment, shows a certain unity of personality and is able to perceive the world and himself correctly.⁽²⁸⁾

The 4th and 5th hypotheses were partially supported in the present study. Children with educated fathers and uneducated mothers displayed more perceived

family support as compared to children from uneducated fathers and educated mothers. Researchers in the field and early childhood educators both view the parents as an integral part of the early childhood education process. In their relations with their child the loving mother and father communicate affection through all their ways of dealing with him.⁽⁶⁾ The effects of support provided by families, peers, and teachers have been most frequently investigated. Besides demonstrating the benefit of support availability, studies suggest that the impact of support varies, depending on the nature of the relationship between the supportive individual and the child. Families and parents assume a nurturing role, providing children with a sense of security and protection. Parental and family support is negatively correlated with a variety of externalizing difficulties in children who are chronically ill and handicapped.⁽²⁹⁾

The current findings regarding mothers’ education and perceived family support can be justified as the uneducated mothers pay more attention to their children because they are less likely to engage in jobs related activities. Similarly, due to the availability of time, they are more likely to spend time with their children in hospitals as compared to mothers who are educated and do some job and consume much time in outdoor activities instead of taking good care of their impaired children.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

The present study only targeted one category of special children which were physically impaired. In future research, other categories including deaf, blind and mentally retarded should also be taken into consideration. Furthermore, only one aspect of social support i.e. family support was included in the present study. In future research, role of friends and significant others should also be investigated. Only one aspect of the impaired children development was focused, in future research the other developmental aspect should also be focused.

Conclusion

It was a descriptive research on impaired children. Role of family support in emotional development was focused. Positive association between perceived family support with emotional development was confirmed through the empirical investigation. The magnitude of the correlation

indicated very high correlation between these two constructs. Besides this, significant differences were found across demographic variables. The insights of the present study can be effectively incorporated to improve the emotional development of the impaired children by incorporating family support in their life.

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Masud Akhtar: Conception and design of the work, The acquisition, analysis, interpretation of data, drafting the work and revising it for final approval. Responsible for data integrity.

Naveed Riaz: The acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work, Drafting the work and revising it critically for final approval. Responsible for data integrity.

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