

Assessment of Maternal Knowledge on Selected Behavioral Problems Among Preschool Children in Selected Village, Coimbatore: A Descriptive Study for the Development of an Educational Booklet

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Abstract: Background: Behavioral problems in preschool children can significantly impact their developmental trajectory and family dynamics. Mothers, as primary caregivers, play a critical role in recognizing and addressing these concerns early. Objectives: This study aimed to assess maternal knowledge regarding selected behavioral problems in preschool children in Ravathur Pirivu and to examine associations between knowledge levels and selected demographic variables. Methods: A descriptive quantitative study was conducted among 35 mothers of preschool children using a purposive sampling method. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into two sections: demographic information and 20 multiple - choice knowledge questions. Ethical clearance and informed consent were obtained prior to data collection. Results: Among participants, 25.7% had low knowledge (scores 0–10), 65.7% had moderate knowledge (11–15), and 8.5% had high knowledge (16–20). A significant association was found between mothers' knowledge and their educational level ($\chi^2 = 19.61, p < 0.05$), while other variables such as age, child's birth order, or locality showed no significant association. Conclusion: While most mothers demonstrated moderate awareness of behavioral problems such as thumb sucking, nail biting, enuresis, and school phobia, a considerable proportion had low knowledge. The study highlights the need for targeted educational interventions, leading to the development of an informational booklet to improve maternal awareness and facilitate early management of behavioral concerns.

Keywords: Preschool Children, Behavioral Problems, Maternal Knowledge, Descriptive Study, Educational Intervention

1. Introduction

Preschool years are a critical period in a child's emotional, cognitive, and social development. Behavioral problems that emerge during this stage—though not necessarily mental disorders—can serve as early warning signs for future psychological concerns. Common behavioral issues such as thumb sucking, nail biting, enuresis, and school phobia are often overlooked or misinterpreted by caregivers.

Such behaviors may stem from stress, environmental changes, unmet emotional needs, or developmental stages. Without timely intervention, they can affect a child's self-esteem, social competence, and school readiness. Studies show a notable prevalence of these behaviors in early childhood. For instance, nail biting affects 23% of children aged 3–6 years, and thumb sucking persists in 30% beyond age 5. Nocturnal enuresis and school refusal also pose substantial concerns globally.

Given the central role mothers play in caregiving, their knowledge is critical for early detection and response. This study explores maternal awareness regarding behavioral problems and investigates the correlation with demographic factors, aiming to inform educational initiatives in the community.

Objectives

- 1) To assess the level of knowledge regarding selected behavioral problems among mothers of preschool children in Ravathur Pirivu.

- 2) To determine the association between maternal knowledge and selected demographic variables such as education, occupation, and family structure.

2. Materials and Methods

- **Research Approach:** Quantitative research was employed to assess knowledge levels numerically and establish associations between variables.
- **Design:** A descriptive research design was adopted to explore and describe maternal knowledge in a natural setting without manipulating variables.
- **Setting:** The study was conducted in Ravathur Pirivu, a village near Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.
- **Population and Sampling:** The population included all mothers of preschool children in the selected area. Thirty - five mothers were selected using purposive sampling, based on their availability and willingness to participate.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Mothers with at least one preschool - aged child (3–6 years)
- Willingness to participate
- Ability to read and understand Tamil

Exclusion Criteria:

- Mothers unwilling to participate

Data Collection Tool:

A structured questionnaire with two sections:

- **Section I:** Demographic details

- **Section II:** 20 multiple - choice questions on behavioral problems (e. g., causes, identification, management)

Data Collection Procedure: Informed consent was obtained. The questionnaire was administered in person and took 20–30 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) were used to summarize data. Chi - square tests were employed to assess associations between knowledge and demographic variables.

3. Results

Knowledge Levels:

- **Low (0–10):** 9 mothers (25.7%)
- **Moderate (11–15):** 23 mothers (65.7%)
- **High (16–20):** 3 mothers (8.5%)

Most mothers demonstrated moderate knowledge, particularly regarding common behaviors like thumb sucking and enuresis. However, the 25.7% with low knowledge suggests a need for awareness - building.

Association with Demographic Variables: n=35

| Variable | df | χ^2 Value | Significance |
|----------------------------|----|----------------|--------------|
| Age of the Child | 2 | 2.41 | NS |
| Gender of the Child | 2 | 1.35 | NS |
| Order of the Child | 6 | 3.00 | NS |
| Number of Children | 6 | 1.45 | NS |
| Mothers' Education | 8 | 19.61 | S |
| Mothers' Occupation | 4 | 7.13 | NS |
| Locality of Residence | 4 | 5.95 | NS |
| Type of Behavioral Problem | 8 | 7.5 | NS |

NS = Not Significant; S = Significant

Educational status was the only demographic variable significantly associated with knowledge. Mothers with higher education levels were more informed about behavioral issues.

4. Discussion

This study highlights the moderate level of knowledge among most mothers regarding behavioral problems in preschool children. However, the presence of a substantial group with low knowledge indicates a gap that could hinder timely identification and intervention.

The significant relationship between mothers' education and knowledge aligns with previous research emphasizing the influence of maternal literacy on child health outcomes. Educated mothers are more likely to access, comprehend, and implement health - related information.

No significant association was found between knowledge and variables such as the number of children, child's age or sex, or family locality. This suggests that educational interventions should prioritize less literate or non - educated mothers across all demographics.

To address these findings, an educational booklet was developed to enhance awareness and equip mothers with

practical strategies for recognizing and managing behavioral problems in their children.

5. Conclusion

The study reveals that while a majority of mothers have moderate knowledge, a significant proportion lack sufficient awareness regarding behavioral issues in preschool children. Given the potential long - term impact of unaddressed behavioral problems, targeted educational initiatives are essential. The development and distribution of an informational booklet is a step toward empowering mothers with the knowledge needed to support their child's mental and behavioral well - being.

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