SOCIAL SKILLS OF CHILDREN IN RURAL HARYANA

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ABSTRACT

An investigation was undertaken with a view to assess the social skill development of preschoolers. A total of 50 children in the age group of 3-5 years were selected from rural areas of district Hisar. These children were subjected to age appropriate Vinland Behaviour Scale for assessment of their skills. Comparison of mean of boys to that of girls over the different age groups of 4-5 years. The boys were better in social skills than the girls which may be due to comparatively better interactions of parents or care givers towards boys. The overall mean values of social skills for boys were significantly higher than the mean of girls in the age group of 3-5 years.

INTRODUCTION

The social abilities gradually emerge and develop during preschool years of life. Cross-cultural evidence indicates that when children are looking at photographs of different facial gestures, people around the world associate them with emotions in the same way. This movement taught us that children do not talk about objects of interest in isolation. Children need regular interactions with emotionally supportive adults in order to develop, learn, and grow in healthy ways of behaving.

In recent years it has become increasingly clear that social and emotional skills underlie all other areas of development (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). In fact early social and emotional competence is associated with continued competence and may help reduce the risks for later problem behaviours. This study was conducted in order to assess the competencies for social development of children in rural areas, to find out the difference in way the boys and girls learn the social skills.

Attainment of positive social and emotional status has been shown to relate to important skills including social cooperation, and emotional regulation (Schorre, 2001). Routine care giving interactions affect children's social and emotional capacity by actually influencing the structure and function of the brain. This study was conducted in order to assess the competencies for social development of children in rural areas, to find out the children with low competencies.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A total of 50 children (half male and half females) in the age group of 3-5 years were randomly selected from the aganwadis of rural areas of Hisar district (Table 1). These children were subjected to assess the social skills. Vinland Behaviour Scale for assessment of their social skills (Sparrow et al. 1984) was used as a tool. These children were assessed for their competence for development of social skills. The difference between the boys and girls was determined with the help of t-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of children into different categories of social skills revealed that 70% children were in the category of having low performance for social skills followed by medium (20%) and high (10%) categories (Table 1). This indicate that majority of the children had poor social skills. This might be due to comparatively overall low standard of living in villages. Similar types of the results have also been reported by earlier workers (Eitan et al. 1992; Guttman, 1994; Hon and Watkins, 1995).

Table 1. Number of children in various categories investigated for social skills in Haryana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score of social skills</th>
<th>No. of children</th>
<th>% of total samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low (0-85)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (86-115)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (116-160)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall mean of boys (25) for social skills was 90.4±19.5 over different age groups was significantly higher (Z=3.25**) than that of girls (85.8±15.3) (Table 2). When the social development was compared over the different age groups, it was revealed that the boys were significantly better in all the age groups of 4-5 years. This may be due to more involvement of parents or care givers towards boys than girls. Haynes and Comer (1996) also reported that parental involvement was more in case of males than in the case of females in correcting the behaviour related to social skills in African American Children. Social skills improvement aimed at strengthening the parent-child relationship, reducing behaviour challenges and enhancing child and parent social-emotional capacities (McDonough, 1999), Infant-Parent Psychotherapy (Lieberman and Van Horn, 2005), and the Incredible Years Curricula (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2003). However, it is important to recognize that with higher levels of disturbance, change in parent-child relationships becomes more difficult to achieve. Therefore a continuum of social skills from promotion and prevention to direct intervention is highly desirable and may save families and their community time, money and distress (Tolan and Dodge, 2005). Once initial concerns have been identified at early stage of child development, children and families should be referred to early childhood mental health specialists for fell assessment and treatment when needed (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2006).

Table 2. Mean Performance of social skills of boys and girls during the age of 3-5 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>3-4 years</th>
<th>4-5 years</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Overall mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>89.3±15.2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>91.1±14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87.3±17.4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>84.1±15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total/Mean</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>92.3±13.9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>88.4±11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Z-B/G 1.5 3.15** 3.25**

** Significant at p = 0.01

CONCLUSION

Comparison of mean values of skills revealed that boys were in general better than the girls in terms of social skills. This may be due to more inclination of parents towards a male baby than the females especially in the rural areas.

REFERENCES