

Research Article

Level of Knowledge among Mothers of Preschool Children Regarding Habit Formation and its Impact on Personality Development

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A B S T R A C T

Introduction: Habit is acquired through repetition in thinking and acting in the same way several times. This makes the thought and action a part of the habit.

Method: A descriptive research design was adopted to assess the level of knowledge among mothers of preschool children in selected urban slums at Chitradurga regarding habit formation and its impact on personality development. Sixty mothers were selected by convenient sampling method.

Results: The finding showed that 1 (1.67%) mother had adequate, 49 (81.67%) mothers had moderate, and 10 (16.67%) had inadequate knowledge.

Conclusion: The mothers of preschool children had a moderate level of knowledge regarding habit formation and its impact on personality development. The study has emphasised that it is vital to figure out the cause of stress due to which a child may be behaving in a particular way.

Keywords: Knowledge, Mothers, Preschool Children, Habit, Personality

Introduction

We form habits for reducing stress and strain through practice. Any action that needs much effort and attention at the initial stage gradually becomes easier and less time-consuming. They become automatic and spontaneous through repetition. Habit is acquired through repetition in thinking and acting in the same way several times. This makes the thought and action a part of the habit. Habit when acquired, does not require any effort and attention.

It becomes automatic and almost mechanical.¹ Habits are routines of behaviour that are repeated regularly and tend to occur subconsciously without one being conscious of them.²

Habit formation is the process by which a behaviour becomes habitual. As behaviours are repeated in a consistent context, there is an incremental increase in the link between the context and the action. This increases the automaticity of the behaviour in that context.³ Habits are divided into

three types depending upon the nature of activities, viz., motor, intellectual, and habit of character.

In children, habits appear in many different forms. Many people engage in some degree of habit-like behaviour in their lifetime, for example, habits can range from seemingly benign behaviours, such as nail biting or foot tapping, to more noticeable physically damaging behaviours, such as teeth grinding and hair pulling. Common childhood habits included thumb sucking, nail biting, nose picking, breath holding, teeth grinding, head banging, rocking etc.⁴

However, mild forms of these behaviours can progress to cause functional impairment or physical and psychological stigmatisation. Few habits result in permanent physical damage and social dysfunction in children. Until the habits are fixed, no exceptions should be allowed to occur. Every exception has its dangers because it may introduce new interests. Using techniques like breastfeeding, eliminating distraction, positive methods, avoiding temper tantrums, good nutritional habits, the importance of vitamin D, toilet training, play ideas, engaging in play, etc. Mothers can build positive habits in children.

Objectives

- To assess the knowledge of mothers of preschool children regarding habit formation
- To improve the level of knowledge among mothers of preschool children regarding habit formation through Self-Instructional Module (SIM)

Material and Methods

A descriptive survey approach was used on 60 mothers of preschool children in selected urban slums of Chitradurga in the year 2011. Convenient sampling technique was adopted to conduct the study. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the District Health Officer, Chitradurga and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Mothers of preschool children who were interested in participating in the study
2. Mothers of preschool children who could read, write, and understand Kannada

Exclusion Criteria

1. Mothers of preschool children who were not interested in participating in the study
2. Mothers of preschool children who could not read, write, and understand Kannada

A structured questionnaire of 28 items used for assessing the knowledge level of mothers of preschool children regarding habit formation and its impact on personality was developed which was validated by 6 experts from various specialities. The sociodemographic profile consisted of items like the age of the mother, religion, educational status, occupation, type of family, family income, and number of children. The collected data was analysed in terms of frequency, percentage, and chi-square test.

Table 1. Distribution of Socio-Demographic Information of 60 Mothers of Preschool Children

N=60

Variables	Category	Frequency	Knowledge of Respondents			Chi-Square Values	p Value
			Adequate	Inadequate	Moderate		
Age of mother	21–25	36	1	7	28	1.63	0.95
	26–30	21	0	3	18		
	31–35	2	0	0	2		
	36–40	1	0	0	1		
Religion	Hindu	21	0	2	19	3.2	0.52
	Muslim	37	1	7	29		
	Christian	2	0	1	1		
Education	Illiterate	5	0	3	2	1.2	0.082
	Primary	13	0	3	10		
	High school	28	1	4	23		
	PUC & above	14	0	0	14		

Occupation	Coolie	15	0	3	12	2.26	0.89
	Housewife	31	1	6	24		
	Private employee	13	0	1	12		
	Government employee	1	0	0	1		
Type of family	Nuclear	28	0	5	23	0.92	0.63
	Joint	32	1	5	26		
Family income (INR)	< 3000	1	0	0	1	2.95	0.56
	4001–5000	26	1	6	19		
	> 5000	33	0	4	29		
No. of children	1	37	1	8	28	3.02	0.56
	-	2	16	0	2	14	-
	3	7	0	0	7	-	-
Total number of mothers	60	1	10	49	-	-	-

PUC: Pre-University Course

Table 1, depicts that the majority of the mothers of preschool children belonged to the age group of 21–25 years. Among these, the majority of mothers belonged to the Muslim religion, most of them had high school level education, were from joint families, and had a family income of 5001 INR and above per month.

The findings of the association show that there was no significant association between selected background variables and gain in knowledge regarding habit formation and its impact on personality development among mothers of preschool children such as age: $\chi^2 = 1.63$ ($p = 0.95$), religion: $\chi^2 = 3.2$ ($p = 0.52$), educational status: $\chi^2 = 11.2$ ($p = 0.082$), occupation: $\chi^2 = 2.26$ ($p = 0.89$), family type: $\chi^2 = 0.92$ ($p = 0.63$), family income/month: $\chi^2 = 2.95$ ($p = 0.56$), and number of children: $\chi^2 = 3.02$ ($p = 0.56$).

Knowledge Level	No. of Mothers	Percentage
Adequate	01	1.67
Inadequate	10	16.67
Moderate	49	81.67
Total	60	100.00

Table 2 shows that 1 (1.67%) mother had adequate knowledge, 49 (81.67%) mothers had moderate knowledge, and 10 (16.67%) had inadequate knowledge.

Discussion

The findings of the present study are consistent with other studies conducted on the parenting of toddlers with temper tantrums. The behaviours of mothers have significant effects on toddlers' temper tantrums and the management of these kinds of problems can be achieved only by changing mothers' behaviour.⁵

A descriptive survey approach was conducted among 60 mothers of preschool children. The findings in the present study showed that 1 (1.67%) mother had adequate knowledge, 49 (81.67%) mothers had moderate knowledge, and 10 (16.67%) had inadequate knowledge.

There was no significant association between selected background variables and gain in knowledge regarding habit formation and its impact on personality development among mothers of preschool children. To make the study more meaningful, the investigators prepared a Self-Instructional Module (SIM) in the form of a pamphlet and distributed it to the mothers of preschool children. Around 81.67% of mothers of preschool children were found to have a moderate level of knowledge regarding habit formation and its impact on personality development.

Conclusion

The mothers of preschool children had a moderate level of knowledge regarding habit formation and its impact on

personality development. Parents find many habits and behaviours of their children annoying. Often bad habits are just a coping strategy, and a change is required in preschool child behaviours. Hence, it is necessary to figure out the cause of stress. Redirecting and helping the child may give a better way to overcome problems.

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Conflict of Interest: None

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