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Research Highlights

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PARENTING - A CHALLENGE FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

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Abstract

Parenting is one of the toughest and most fulfilling jobs in the world and one for which you might feel the least prepared and in case of special needs especially parents without sight, is somewhat difficult to cope up toward parenting a child. Good parenting helps to protect children against the development of anxiety, depression, eating disorders and other types of psychological distress. It also promotes the development of intellectual curiosity, motivation to learn and desire to achieve. Blind parents-to-be, like the sighted counterparts, they also have the equal importance in parenting. With the help of the adaptive techniques they can also able to execute the importance of parenting. The present study attempts to know the parenting skill of visually impaired parents towards their sighted children. The sample consists of 15 blind parents from Coimbatore district of Tamilnadu state. Interview schedule was prepared by the investigator to draw out information on Growth and Development, Daily living skills, Discipline, Behaviour Problem and Academics.

Introduction

Parenting is the most important job in life and to parent positively one need to understand what it takes to do the job well. The more one understand about a child's development and needs, the more one can be aware of what it takes to create healthy environments for children to thrive.

The purpose of parenting is to facilitate a child's optimal development within a safe environment. It is a 'task' that includes a number of dimensions. Sensitivity to a child's needs, social communication, emotional expressiveness and disciplinary control. Parenting occurs within a relationship that is affected by a wide variety of factors, when it comes to person with special need. It is a very huge challenge. Parenting involves several stages in the child's life at every stage of the child's life, from infancy to young adulthood blind parents use the basic methods and strategies essential to parents who can see. To accomplish some tasks, blind parents use "alternative techniques." These techniques are variations on the methods one who used to handle other aspects of everyday lives and

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are based on touch and hearing rather than sight.

Parenting children can be enormously rewarding and fulfilling - but also exhausting and challenging. The parents are the role model for their children and all parents want their children to be happy. Parenting choices really can help and the love and support give to the children is critical to their future well-being.

Parenting positively is the technique about understanding each child as a unique individual and knowing the way to communicate the love effectively. It is about listening, understanding, praising, encouraging and being a good role model for the child.

Parenting a normal child with special needs is another matter altogether and is one of the most challenging jobs imaginable. But if people want to be successful in bringing a new life into this uncertain, complex world and in steering him or her through childhood into adulthood, it helps to keep in mind three principles:

1. Confidence in parenting arises from having a stronger self-image and a deep self-understanding.
2. Parents who learn strategies for confident and practical parenting can play "The Parenting Game" with less stress and greater effectiveness.
3. Children benefit from words of encouragement appropriate to their stage of growth.

Need of the Study

In the case of visually impaired parents, parenting is a challenging process in their life. The parents are the role model for their child and all parents want their children to be happy. Parenting choices really can help and the love and support give to the children is critical to their future well-being. The loss of vision will hold them behind the sighted parents in this aspect. Hence an attempt is made in this direction to analyze the challenges faced by the visually impaired parents in terms of parenting.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are to

- Identify differently abled parents in selected districts.
- Develop a checklist to assess the parenting skills among visually impaired individuals and
- Assess the parenting skill among the selected samples using the developed checklist.

Methodology

Selection of Sample for Study

One of the most important aspects in research study is selecting the samples. The samples for the study consisted of 15 blind parents. Purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of the sample. Parents with blindness were the only criteria followed for the selection of samples.

Variables of the Study

Research cannot be possible without taking into consideration measurable factors that are subject to change due to circumstances. Anything that can vary in research due to circumstances is called a variable.

The variables of the present study were

Independent variable

The independent variables are the parents with visual impairment.

Dependent variable

The dependent variables are the growth and development, daily living skill, discipline, behaviour problem and academics.

Design of the Study

The objective of the study is to find out the challenges faced by the visually impaired parents in parenting a sighted child.

Construction of Tool

The tool covered five areas namely growth and development, daily living skill, discipline, behaviour problem and academics considered as the most essential

aspects in parenting. Three point rating scale were used namely always, rarely, never. Personal data form is used to collect the personal information of the person which serves as the basis for the study.

Data Collection

- Initially the samples were identified and selected using purposive sampling method.
- The rapport was established with the parents and their personal data was collected which includes the details about their family and education.
- The data were collected from the parents with visual impairment with the help of the checklist prepared.

Results and Discussion

The art of parenting style of visually impaired is described in the following tables in the selected areas.

Growth and Development among Children of Blind Parents

The table 1 presents the growth and development among children of blind parents.

Table 1. The Growth and Development Among Children of Blind Parents

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
Scale	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
Always	24	67.5	3	10	7	26	26	68	30	75	1	2	9	28	33	80.5	5	20	6	21
Rarely	10	27	20	70	8	30	12	32	10	25	4	10	22	70	8	19.5	20	80	20	68.7
Never	2	5.5	6	20	12	44	0	0	0	0	36	88	1	2	0	0	0	0	3	10.3

With regard to growth and development 81 percent of the mothers with visual impairment were able to identify their child's likes and dislikes in the early development of the child. Seventy percent of the mothers faced problem in developing eye hand coordination in their children. None of the mothers expressed that they had problem in assisting their child in attending the proper milestone and as well as in playing. It is surprised to note that 80

percent of the mothers expressed that they rarely sought assistance in the development of the child's milestone. Only 28 percent of the mothers were able to regularly correct the child in attaining the milestone. This might be due to the lack of vision.

Daily Living Skill among Children of Blind Parents

The table 2 gives the daily living skill among children of blind parents.

Table 2. The Daily Living Skill Among Children of Blind Parents

Scale	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
Always	21	63.7	6	24	0	0	15	42.9	1	2.9	27	69.3	18	52.9	0	0	2	6.1	5	17.8
Rarely	8	24.2	16	64	18	50	20	57.1	18	52.9	12	30.7	14	41.1	16	43.2	12	36.4	14	50
Never	4	12.1	3	12	18	50	0	0	15	44.2	0	0	2	6	21	56.8	19	57.5	9	32.2

Above 64 percent of the mothers were able to plan before teaching the area of daily living skills. It is found out that 69 percent of the mothers with visual impairment were able to identify their child's cry for sleep. With the help of the auditory ability they were able to differentiate the sound of cry for sleeping. None of them faced problem in developing independent bathing skill to their child. Only 43 percent of the mothers were regularly able to identify their child's

indication for toilet. Fifty percent of the mothers faced difficulty in developing independent bathing habit to the child whereas 50 percent of mothers rarely sought assistance for the completion of the tasks in daily living skills, the reason might be the limitation in their vision.

Discipline among Children of Blind Parents

The table 3 shows the discipline among children of blind parents.

Table 3. The Discipline Among Children of Blind Parents

Scale	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
Always	39	92.86	2	6.45	21	56.76	5	14.71	6	17.14	1	3.45	39	90.70	0	0	3	8.57	18	50
Rarely	2	4.76	20	64.52	16	43.24	20	58.82	4	11.43	20	68.97	4	9.30	22	64.71	20	57.14	18	50
Never	1	2.38	9	29.03	0	0	9	26.47	25	71.43	8	27.58	0	0	12	35.29	12	34.29	0	0

In the area of the discipline, 90 percent of the mothers with visual impairment appreciated their children when their children were able to obey and 71 percent of the mothers were able to develop the habit of respecting elders. None of the mothers showed the preference in giving punishment to control their child's disobedience. Many of the mothers expressed difficulty in developing self-discipline in their children. The loss of

vision might be the obstacles in imitating the techniques in teaching self-discipline skill. Fifty percent of the mothers rarely sought assistance from their family members to develop appropriate discipline in their children.

Behaviour Problem among Children of Blind Parents

The table 4 reflects the behaviour problem seen among children of blind parents.

Table 4. The Behaviour Problem Seen Among Children of Blind Parents

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
Scale	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
Always	18	56.25	2	7.14	24	63.16	18	51.43	18	50	15	44.12	45	100	39	92.86	39	92.86	0	0
Rarely	10	31.25	26	92.86	14	36.84	16	45.71	18	50	18	52.94	0	0	2	4.76	2	4.76	22	64.71
Never	4	12.5	0	0	0	0	1	2.86	0	0	1	2.94	0	0	1	2.38	1	2.38	12	35.29

In the area of the behaviour problem, 93 percent of the mothers with visual impairment expressed that they were rarely able to identify their child's odd behaviour whereas they were able to handle the child's misbehavior. It is shocked to note that all the mothers faced difficulty in guiding their children to differentiate the appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. About 65 percent of the mothers rarely felt that punishment is the only way to correct their child's undesirable behaviour and 53 percent of the

mothers found some techniques to make the child to get rid of from that behaviour. Above 93 percent of the mothers encouraged their children to participate in the social events to acquire proper behaviour. It is surprised to note that 93 percent of the children accepted their mother condition.

Academics among Children of Blind Parents

The table 5 projects the academic performance among children of blind parents.

Table 5. The Academic Performance Among Children of Blind Parents

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
Scale	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
Always	33	80.49	34	89.47	24	64.86	12	40	30	78.95	33	80.49	30	75	9	32.14	45	100	45	100
Rarely	8	19.51	4	10.53	12	32.44	14	46.67	6	15.79	8	19.51	10	25	16	57.14	0	0	0	0
Never	0	0	0	0	1	2.70	4	13.33	2	5.26	0	0	0	0	3	10.72	0	0	0	0

With regard to academics it is surprised to note that all the mothers with visual impairment were able to maintain a good relationship with their child's teacher to make the child to adjust with the school environment. None of the mother expressed problem in teaching their child to understand the difference between the school and home environment and in teaching basic concepts to their children. All the mothers were able to reinforce their child for his/her good performance in school. Only 40 percent of the mothers were always able to help their child in doing their homework but only 32 percent of them were assisting their child to prepare for their examinations. The reason might be due to their lack of vision. About 81 percent of the mothers felt comfortable in attending the school meetings with the sighted

parents and 75 percent of mother also encouraged their child to participate in the co-curricular activities to improve their personality.

Conclusion

Parenting skills are very essential for every parent including the visually impaired. It showed the capability of every individual to care their child independently in matter of showing love and affection to the infinite extent. These research accomplishments have been undertaken with the aim of knowing how far the visually impaired parents had exposure to various kinds of parenting skill. The result revealed that the loss of vision is not the barrier in parenting for the visually impaired in terms of caring their child in growth and development, daily living skills, discipline, behaviour problem and in academic area.

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