

A STUDY OF DIFFERENCES IN ADAPTIVE BEHAVIORAL SKILLS OF MENTALLY CHALLENGED CHILDREN WITH GENDER

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ABSTRACT

The present study assessed and compared the adaptive behavioral skills of 150 mentally challenged children from 3 RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) recognized special schools of Delhi across their gender. Sample was drawn randomly in equal proportions from three categories of mental challenge under study viz. mild, moderate and severe mental challenge, belonged to low and middle income families. The adaptive behavioral skills of mentally retarded children were assessed using Behavioral Assessment Scales for Indian Children with Mental Retardation Part A developed by NIMH. Small sample t test was employed to find out the significance of difference between child's genders on adaptive behavioral skills. The findings of the present study revealed that among both low and middle income families, gender has no role in acquiring adaptive behavioral skills among mentally challenged children. Interestingly, the predominant reason for non significant differences in adaptive behavior across child's gender might be the fact that children of both genders gets equally affected by disability condition and it's the disability status that may be the determining factor in the acquisition of adaptive skills.

KEYWORDS: Disability, Motor Skills, Activities of Daily Living, Mental Retardation, Low Income Families and Middle Income Families

INTRODUCTION

The birth of a baby in a family is usually associated with great excitement, happiness and expectations. This vigorous enthusiasm may become muted when a child is born with mental disability, and the child is considered to be mentally challenged/ retarded. Mental retardation is a developmental disability that can appear from the very birth of a child. AAIDD (The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities) defines mental retardation as a significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, resulting or associated with concurrent impairment in adaptive behaviour and is manifested during the developmental period (AAIDD 2010). AAIDD lists three criteria for an individual to be considered as mentally retarded: intellectual functioning level (IQ) is below 70-75; significant limitations exist in two or more adaptive skill areas; and the condition manifests before the age of 18.

Adaptive skills are those that are required by an individual to live and interact with the society in a meaningful way. These adaptive behavioral skills are the everyday living skills, such as walking, talking, eating, cleaning, getting dressed, going to school, going to work etc. It is also considered to be the functional ability of an individual that is needed to acquire personal independence and social responsibility. As children acquire more adaptive skills, they become more

independent, and they rely less on caregiver support and guidance. It has been noted by Hunt and Marshall (1994) that the adaptive behaviour skills, such as personal and social competence, are weaker in the mentally deficient population, and these individuals have difficulty in the adaptation to requirements of daily living.

Any disability cuts across the boundaries of gender, race, culture, class, sexuality and age. Disabled people have often been represented as without gender, as asexual creatures. Gender does not refer to the biological differences between males and females, rather it is considered to be a socio-cultural construct used to describe the characteristics we ascribe to people because of their being male or female. These socio-cultural constructs are formed by social roles, traditions, history and mythology, religious prescriptions, and a host of such factors (Lobel and Menashri 1993; Martin and Little 1990). In context to adaptive behavioral skills of mentally challenged children, it was reported by researcher that child's age had significant influence on acquisition of skills while gender did not influence the attainment of skills (Kumari and Khadi 2010). In this way it may be assumed that for disabled people gender has little relevance in acquiring adaptive skills. However, in another study on young children, Bornstein et al. (2005) found that gender differences were present in the adaptive skills of boys and girls. Girls scored higher on adaptive behaviour composite as well as adaptive communication skills, but boys higher only in adaptive motor skills.

Above discussion gives unclear picture about role of gender in acquiring adaptive behavioral skills among mentally challenged children. Therefore, the present study has been planned with the following objectives:

- To assess the level of adaptive behavioural skills of mentally challenged children across their gender.
- To investigate if the adaptive behavioural skills of mentally challenged children is influenced by their gender.

METHODOLOGY

A multistage purposive cum random sampling technique were used to select the sample. The present research study was carried out exclusively in Delhi. Delhi, was purposively selected as it is one of the nearest region that has appropriate number of RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) recognized special schools meant exclusively for mentally retarded (MR) children. Out of the nine RCI recognized institutes for MR children in Delhi, three institutes namely NIMH (National Institute for Mentally Handicapped), Manovikas and C.B.S Memorial were randomly selected as research base for the present study. It was observed that in all the three institutes under study, the population of mentally challenged children from high income group (HIG) was extensively low, thus, only those belonging to low income group (LIG) or middle income group (MIG) were considered for the present study. Out of the total population of LIG and MIG mentally challenged children, 75 mentally challenged children were selected from each social class by randomly drawing 25 from each level of mental challenge. Thus, the sample for the present study comprised of 150 mentally challenged children and their families. The Directors of the selected institutions were contacted, who provided all the necessary required details pertaining to the enrolled MR children and their families. The required samples were drawn and then, first common meeting was organized by the researcher with the families of MR children. Assurance was given to the families that the information provided by them will be kept confidential and utilized only for the research purpose. The parents were contacted for data collection on the place of their choice-institute or their home where they were interviewed and observations made by the researcher. Self-designed general questionnaire was used to study the socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents. Adaptive behaviour skills of mentally challenged children were assessed by employing "Behavioral Assessment Scales for Indian Children with Mental Retardation" (BASIC-MR) Part a developed at

NIMH. The scale entails detailed assessment of the skill behaviors of the children in age range 3 to 16 (or 18) years. The items included in Part A of the scale helps to assess the current level of adaptive behaviour of the child. The data collected was classified and tabulated in accordance with the objectives to arrive at meaningful and relevant inferences. Analysis was done by taking levels of mental retardation as control. The data was analyzed using statistical techniques like frequency, percentage, and mean and small sample t-test.

RESULTS

The frequency and percentage distribution of mentally challenged children on adaptive behaviour skills across gender is presented in Table 1 (a&b). It is very clear from the table that in low income families under mild and severe category of mental challenge more boys (52.94%, 31.25% respectively) as compare to girls were found highly adaptive in motor skill. While under child's moderate level of mental challenge 50% of boys showed high level of adaptivity under this component. On the other hand, in middle income families, among mildly challenged children more proportion of boys (65%) showed high adaptivity in motor skills. Whereas, in child's moderate level of mental challenge girls were more (57.14%) and in severe level of mental challenge both boys and girls shared almost equal proportion at high level of adaptivity

On activities of daily living, among low income families, almost half of the girls and boys from mild and moderate category of mental challenge were at high level. It was noticed that majority of severely challenged children were at low level, no difference across gender was noticed. Whereas, in middle income families under mild and moderate level of child's mental challenge more boys (55% and 33.33%) as compared to girls were found at high level of adaptivity. But the picture was quite opposite in severely challenged children, among them more proportion of girls (35.71%) had high adaptivity in activities related to daily life.

However, most of the children from LIG had low adaptivity for language and among them majority were of boys under the mild (70.59%), moderate (73.68%) and severe (100%) level of mental challenge. Moreover, in MIG, adaptivity of language were found low among most of the children, out of which more proportion of mildly and moderately challenged boys (60% and 72.22%) as compare to girls were at low level of adaptivity but among severely challenged children proportion of girls were more (100%).

Picture under LIG depicts that majority of boys (94.12%) as compare to girls (75%) with mild level of mental challenge showed low level of adaptivity in reading-writing, contradicting to it severely challenged girls (100%) were more in the same level. No difference across gender was found at child's moderate level of mental challenge. While, analysis of reading- writing component of MIG revealed that most of the children had low adaptivity. Out of which, the proportion of mildly challenged boys (95%) and moderately challenged girls (100%) were more and all the severely challenged boys and girls had low level of adaptivity.

Placement of Table 1(a & b)

On the component of number-time, majority of the LIG children reported low level of adaptivity, out of which mildly and moderately challenged boys (94.12%, 100% respectively) were found to have low adaptivity. Whereas severely challenged girls (100%) were more as compare to boys (87.50%).

An overview of the Table 1(a & b) depicts that low income families had majority of mildly and moderately challenged

boys (94.12% and 94.74%) under the domestic social component, who showed low level of adaptivity when compared with girls. Whereas, among severely challenged children, proportion of girls were more (100%) who had low level of adaptivity. Data presented in the table revealed that in number time and domestic social component mostly all the children from MIG had low level of adaptivity, out of which proportion of boys from mild and moderate level of mental challenge were found more. While, all the severely challenged girls and boys reported low adaptivity under the said components

Whereas, overview of pre vocational money component depicted that almost all the boys and girls from LIG in equal proportion reported low level of adaptivity. However, it was seen that percentage of mildly challenged boys was more (100%) at low level as compare to the mildly challenged girls (87.50%). Besides this, under MIG, all the moderately challenged boys and girls showed low adaptivity. Whereas, gender differences can be seen in child's mild level of mental challenge where more percentage of boys (95%) showed low adaptivity while all the severely challenged boys were reported low level of adaptivity.

DISCUSSIONS

Table 2 (a & b) clearly displays that adaptive behaviour skills of mentally challenged children did not varied significantly across gender. Boys and girls from both LIG and MIG acquired equal level of motor skills, reading-writing skills and domestic social skills; also had equal level of adaptivity of activities required for daily living; quite similar level of language adaptivity, number-time adaptivity, and had equal level of skills related to pre vocational money. These results are in conformity with Figen et al. (2008) who reported that gender differences were not significant in development of social and personal skills of mentally challenged children. In contrast, some researchers concluded that gender difference exists in acquiring adaptive skills. Nourani (1998) conducted a research and found that the teachers' and parents' ratings of social skills were higher for girls than for boys. In another study, Abdi (2010) found that girls received higher marks in social skills than boys.

Placement of Table 2(a & b)

The probable reason for the non significant difference in the present research study may be due to the fact that children of both genders irrespective of their income class equally affected by disability condition and disability status may be the determining factor in the acquisition of skills. In simple words, we can say that it's not the gender of child that makes difference in acquiring adaptive behavioural skills but it's the child's level of cognitive ability or I.Q that makes difference in acquisition of adaptive skills. This finding is supported by Schatz and Hamdan-Allen (1995) who reported that IQ was positively related to each of the Vineland domains (adaptive skills domains). A similar trend was present for daily living skills. Besides this, Peters (2004) who had conducted a study on cognitive and adaptive behaviour of children with Angel man Syndrome found that the adaptive behaviour skills of children were strongly correlated with their cognitive abilities.

CONCLUSIONS

It is evident from the study that for sure under both low and middle income family's gender of MR children has no impact on their adaptive skills. However, these non significant differences can be attributed to the role of cognitive ability or I.Q. of the child in acquiring adaptive behavior skills. Moreover, the non significant difference may create an environment for mentally challenged children of both sexes to attain equal opportunities and freedom to perform the various duties of the society and nation without gender biasness. Present study finding may also be helpful in eradicating

the myth from the society that gender of mentally challenged child has an influence on their adaptive behavioral skills. It's not the gender of the child but the child's intellectual ability that makes the difference in acquiring adaptive behavioral skills. So, in this path schools and parents can made efforts to improve the adaptive skills of MR children by involving both boys and girls equally without the gender disparity in various trainings related to certain useful daily skills, so that both can become effective member of society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents and teachers should remove their myth that gender is contributing factor in acquiring adaptive behavioral skills among children with mental retardation. Hence, MR children should be given equal efforts and opportunities irrespective of their gender.

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APPENDICES

Table 1(a): Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Mentally Challenged Children from Low Income Families on the type & Level of Adaptive Behaviour Skills across Their Gender

Domains of Adaptive Behavior Skills	Levels of Adaptive Behavior Skills	Score range	Low Income Families (n=75)											
			Mildly Challenged Children (n ₁ = 25)				Moderately Challenged Children (n ₂ = 25)				Severely Challenged Children (n ₃ = 25)			
			Girls (n _{1a} =8)		Boys (n _{1b} =17)		Girls (n _{2a} =6)		Boys (n _{2b} =19)		Girls (n _{3a} =9)		Boys (n _{3b} =16)	
			n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Motor	Low	0-66	2	25.00	2	11.76	1	16.67	2	10.53	2	22.22	4	25.00
	Moderate	67-133	5	62.50	6	35.29	2	33.33	13	68.42	5	55.56	7	43.75
	High	134-200	1	12.50	9	52.94	3	50.00	4	21.05	2	22.22	5	31.25
Activities of Daily Living	Low	0-66	3	37.50	7	41.18	2	33.33	7	36.84	8	88.89	14	87.50
	Moderate	67-133	1	12.50	1	5.88	1	16.67	3	15.79	0	0.00	0	0.00
	High	134-200	4	50.00	9	52.94	3	50.00	9	47.37	1	11.11	2	12.50
Language	Low	0-66	3	37.50	12	70.59	3	50.00	14	73.68	8	88.89	16	100.00
	Moderate	67-133	4	50.00	5	29.41	3	50.00	5	26.32	1	11.11	0	0.00
	High	134-200	1	12.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Reading-Writing	Low	0-66	6	75.00	16	94.12	6	100.00	19	100.00	9	100.00	14	87.50
	Moderate	67-133	1	12.50	1	5.88	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	12.50
	High	134-200	1	12.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Number-Time	Low	0-66	6	75.00	16	94.12	5	83.33	19	100.00	9	100.00	14	87.50
	Moderate	67-133	2	25.00	1	5.88	1	16.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	12.50
	High	134-200	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Domestic Social	Low	0-66	6	75.00	16	94.12	5	83.33	18	94.74	9	100.00	15	93.75
	Moderate	67-133	2	25.00	1	5.88	1	16.67	1	5.26	0	0.00	1	6.25
	High	134-200	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Pre vocational money	Low	0-66	7	87.50	17	100.00	6	100.00	19	100.00	9	100.00	16	100.00
	Moderate	67-133	1	12.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	High	134-200	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00

Table 1(b): Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Mentally Challenged Children from Middle Income Families on the Type & Level of Adaptive Behaviour Skills across Their Gender

Domains of Adaptive Behaviour Skills	Levels of Adaptive Behaviour Skills	Score range	Middle Income Families (n=75)											
			Mildly challenged children (n ₁ = 25)				Moderately challenged children (n ₂ = 25)				Severely challenged children (n ₃ = 25)			
			Girls (n _{1a} =5)		Boys (n _{1b} =20)		Girls (n _{2a} =7)		Boys (n _{2b} =18)		Girls (n _{3a} =14)		Boys (n _{3b} =11)	
			n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Motor	Low	0-66	1	20.00	3	15.00	2	28.57	1	5.56	8	57.14	2	18.18
	Moderate	67-133	1	20.00	4	20.00	1	14.29	13	72.22	5	35.71	8	72.73
	High	134-200	3	60.00	13	65.00	4	57.14	4	22.22	1	7.14	1	9.09
Activities of Daily Living	Low	0-66	1	20.00	8	40.00	5	71.43	8	44.44	7	50.00	6	54.55
	Moderate	67-133	2	40.00	1	5.00	2	28.57	4	22.22	2	14.29	2	18.18
	High	134-200	2	40.00	11	55.00	0	0.00	6	33.33	5	35.71	3	27.27
Language	Low	0-66	2	40.00	12	60.00	3	42.86	13	72.22	14	100.00	8	72.73
	Moderate	67-133	3	60.00	5	25.00	4	57.14	5	27.78	0	0.00	3	27.27
	High	134-200	0	0.00	3	15.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Reading-Writing	Low	0-66	2	40.00	19	95.00	7	100.00	17	94.44	14	100.00	11	100.00
	Moderate	67-133	1	20.00	1	5.00	0	0.00	1	5.56	0	0.00	0	0.00
	High	134-200	2	40.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Number-Time	Low	0-66	3	60.00	18	90.00	6	85.71	18	100.00	14	100.00	11	100.00
	Moderate	67-133	2	40.00	2	10.00	1	14.29	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	High	134-200	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Domestic Social	Low	0-66	3	60.00	16	80.00	5	71.43	17	94.44	14	100.00	11	100.00
	Moderate	67-133	1	20.00	4	20.00	2	28.57	1	5.56	0	0.00	0	0.00
	High	134-200	1	20.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Pre vocational money	Low	0-66	4	80.00	19	95.00	7	100.00	18	100.00	14	100.00	10	90.90
	Moderate	67-133	0	0.00	1	5.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	9.09
	High	134-200	1	20.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00

Table 2(a): Mean Differences in the Adaptive Behaviour Skills of Mentally Challenged Children from Low Income Families across Their Gender

Domains of Adaptive Behaviour Skills	Low Income Families								
	Mildly Challenged Children (n ₁ = 25)		t	Moderately Challenged Children (n ₂ = 25)		t	Severely Challenged Children (n ₃ = 25)		t
	Girls (n _{1a} = 8)	Boys (n _{1b} = 17)		Girls (n _{2a} = 6)	Boys (n _{2b} =19)		Girls (n _{3a} = 9)	Boys (n _{3b} = 16)	
	Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)		Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)		Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)	
Motor	122.19 (53.44)	126.25 (52.67)	0.35 ^{NS}	109.87 (43.5)	98.73 (42.77)	0.86 ^{NS}	78.98 (44.56)	64.65 (40.44)	0.86 ^{NS}
Activities of Daily Living	128.77 (64.77)	139.15 (65.88)	0.47 ^{NS}	111.45 (53.42)	95.98 (54.76)	0.90 ^{NS}	71.83 (45.76)	77.77 (39.87)	0.72 ^{NS}
Language	61.98 (50.34)	57.47 (52.88)	0.21 ^{NS}	49.87 (47.77)	41.67 (46.87)	1.56 ^{NS}	37.67 (34.87)	29.77 (37.65)	0.65 ^{NS}
Reading-Writing	29.78 (35.42)	26.83 (37.13)	0.28 ^{NS}	18.77 (16.78)	16.87 (15.88)	0.78 ^{NS}	6.28 (7.23)	4.35 (4.89)	0.32 ^{NS}
Number- Time	22.48 (21.11)	19.55 (19.67)	0.39 ^{NS}	10.87 (13.44)	12.63 (12.56)	1.10 ^{NS}	2.87 (8.77)	3.99 (10.34)	0.36 ^{NS}
Domestic Social	39.77 (28.88)	42.87 (30.34)	0.43 ^{NS}	28.63 (27.16)	24.98 (26.45)	0.43 ^{NS}	17.66 (18.36)	14.39 (16.86)	0.98 ^{NS}
Pre vocational money	24.68 (21.35)	29.44 (23.88)	0.39 ^{NS}	16.88 (18.32)	11.7 (15.87)	1.23 ^{NS}	9.87 (11.45)	7.88 (12.37)	1.80 ^{NS}

Note: NS indicates non significant at p<0.05

Table 2(b): Mean Differences in the Adaptive Behaviour Skills of Mentally Challenged Children from Middle Income Families across Their Gender

Domains of Adaptive Behaviour Skills	Middle Income Families								
	Mildly Challenged Children (n ₁ = 25)		t	Moderately Challenged Children (n ₂ = 25)		t	Severely Challenged Children (n ₃ = 25)		t
	Girls (n _{1a} =5)	Boys (n _{1b} =20)		Girls (n _{2a} = 7)	Boys (n _{2b} = 18)		Girls (n _{3a} = 14)	Boys (n _{3b} = 11)	
	Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)		Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)		Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)	
Motor	123.19 (55.24)	128.25 (56.17)	0.45 ^{NS}	111.67 (43.5)	99.73 (43.67)	0.96 ^{NS}	80.98 (44.56)	75.65 (40.44)	0.86 ^{NS}
Activities of Daily Living	129.27 (63.76)	137.36 (66.78)	0.42 ^{NS}	113.65 (54.42)	97.98 (55.76)	0.86 ^{NS}	71.83 (43.76)	75.37 (36.87)	0.75 ^{NS}
Language	63.48 (50.34)	51.47 (47.88)	0.24 ^{NS}	47.87 (45.67)	43.67 (44.27)	1.56 ^{NS}	39.27 (34.87)	34.77 (38.65)	0.69 ^{NS}
Reading-Writing	27.72 (25.42)	25.83 (27.13)	0.23 ^{NS}	17.77 (16.48)	16.87 (15.38)	0.88 ^{NS}	7.28 (8.73)	5.35 (7.89)	0.46 ^{NS}
Number-Time	25.48 (23.21)	17.55 (17.67)	0.43 ^{NS}	12.83 (11.44)	14.63 (14.56)	1.16 ^{NS}	3.67 (8.67)	4.99 (10.64)	0.37 ^{NS}
Domestic Social	37.77 (27.57)	41.87 (30.34)	0.54 ^{NS}	29.63 (26.13)	23.98 (22.45)	0.63 ^{NS}	18.66 (16.36)	15.39 (17.86)	0.98 ^{NS}
Pre vocational money	25.28 (20.15)	27.44 (22.78)	0.37 ^{NS}	15.78 (17.22)	12.70 (15.87)	1.43 ^{NS}	10.87 (12.45)	11.88 (14.37)	1.84 ^{NS}

Note: NS indicates non significant at p<0.05