

EXPLORING SOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN YOUNG CHILDREN: MATERNAL AND PATERNAL PERSPECTIVES

Kavitha Kiran Vajha*, **Gaytri Tiwari****, **Suman Audichya*****, **Prakash Panwar******,
Sreedevi, P*****, **Rajshree Upadhyay*******

*Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Community Science, PJTSAU, Hyderabad

** Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Community and Applied Science, MPUAT, Udaipur.

*** Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Community and Applied Science, MPUAT, Udaipur.

****Professor, Department of Extension Education and Communication Management, College of Community and Applied Science, MPUAT, Udaipur.

*****Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Community Science, PJTSAU, Hyderabad

*****Professor, Department of Extension Education and Communication Management, College of Community and Applied Science, MPUAT, Udaipur.

Abstract

Social behavior encompasses the range of actions and interactions that individuals engage in within social settings. This includes how they communicate, cooperate, empathize, and form relationships with others. Social behavior is shaped by various factors, including genetics, upbringing, cultural norms, and environmental influences. Positive social behavior is characterized by traits such as empathy, cooperation, and effective communication, while negative social behavior may involve aggression, isolation, or lack of empathy. The present study aimed at investigating social behaviour in young children as assessed by both mother and father. The results found that the majority of the children were reported by parents as having above-average social awareness and social communication. Further, it was found that the majority were at average levels of social cognition and social play.

Keywords

Young children, Social behaviour, social awareness, social cognition, reciprocal social behaviour, social play, maternal and parental report.

Introduction

Young children's social behavior development is essential for their socialization. Children's social conduct is greatly influenced by their surroundings, parents, and peers. Children engage with peers, family, and adults in their environment to pick up social norms and behaviors. Character development occurs most dramatically in the early years, between the ages of 4 and 6 when supportive environments and parental guidance are crucial. Parents must develop positive social behavior in their children to prevent social difficulties. Children's social development in

early childhood is crucial for their ability to interact appropriately with peers, adults, and the broader community, aligning with societal expectations. The social behaviours of girls were quite high in frequency and length as compared to that of boys during pretend play. Boys mostly engaged in small talk and self-talk in conversation, while girls engaged in small talk and discussions on everyday happenings (Kandalla and Bhatt 2010). Aspects of social information processing in preschool are related to sociodemographic risk and behavior problems (Ziv and Sorongon 2011). Research on emotion understanding in preschoolers has indeed made significant strides in recent years, primarily focusing on various facets such as facial expression recognition, external factors influencing emotions, desires, beliefs, and contextual cues. Wang et al. (2010) demonstrated that by the age of 3, children exhibit proficiency in recognizing facial expressions and understanding the external triggers of emotions. Building upon this, Jiang and Tan (2018) expanded the scope, showing that children start comprehending desire-based emotions by approximately 4 years old. Furthering this timeline, Mou and Chen (2006) contributed by revealing that it's around the age of five and a half when children begin to grasp belief-based emotions. Yang and Hu (2003) added to this narrative, suggesting that children can effectively utilize contextual cues to enhance their understanding of emotions by six years old.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in three primary schools located within the municipal limits of Hyderabad city of Telangana to ensure optimum personal contacts for data collection. The sample for the present study comprised of 60 young children in the age group of 3-6yrs attending primary school. The Child Social Behaviour Scale was developed by the investigator to assess the social behaviour of young children. The tool comprised four dimensions such as social awareness, social cognition, reciprocal social communication and social play. In this step the investigator referred to different literature sources such as Books, Journals and Standardized Scales for finalizing the exhaustive tool. A pool of items or questions that are theoretically relevant to the concept being measured were generated. These items covered different aspects or dimensions of the construct and brainstorming sessions, expert opinions were utilized to finalize the scale items. The scale has total 60 statements, 15 statements under each dimension of social behaviour. Each statement was given five response options namely, “Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always” and a score of 1 was assigned to never, 2 to rarely, 3 to sometimes, 4 to often and 5 to always.

Interpretation

The interpretation of the scoring pattern for the Child Social Behaviour Scale is given below in Table No. 3.2.

Table-3.2: Categorization of the respondents based on their level of social behaviour

| S.no | Dimension | Item description | Minimum | Maximum | Description |
|------|---------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|--|
| 1. | Social awareness | 1-15 | 15 | 75 | 15-27 Low 27-39-Below Average 39-52-Average 52-64-Above Average Above 64 High |
| 2. | Social Cognition | 16-30 | 15 | 75 | 15-27 Low 27-39-Below Average 39-52-Average 52-64-Above Average Above 64 High |
| 3. | Reciprocal social communication | 31-45 | 15 | 75 | 15-27 Low 27-39-Below Average 39-52-Average 52-64-Above Average Above 64 High |
| 4. | Social play | 45-60 | 15 | 75 | 15-27 Low 27-39-Below Average 39-52-Average 52-64-Above Average Above 64 High |
| 5. | Social Behaviour | 1-60 | 60 | 300 | 60-108-Low 108-156-Below average 156-204 -Average 204-252-Above average Above 252 High |

Pilot Testing: The preliminary scale was administered to small sample to evaluate the generated items, clarity, relevance and to know whether the statements were clear and unambiguous to the respondents.

Reliability and Validity: Reliability and validity measure the consistency and accuracy of the scale constructed. The internal reliability of the 114-item Child Temperament Assessment Scale was investigated using Cronbach's alpha. The Results indicated that the standardized alpha for the total scale was equal to .68, which means it qualifies for moderate reliability and is acceptable. Validity was tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient which is .477, significant as it is greater than the critical value of 0.234 at 58 degrees of freedom ($df=n-2, 60-2=58$).

Results and Discussion:**Table 4.8 Maternal Observational Report of Social Behaviour Occurrence in Young Children N=60**

| S.no | Behaviour | Low | | Below Average | | Average | | Above average | | High | |
|------|--------------------------|-----|------|---------------|------|---------|-------|---------------|-------|------|-------|
| | | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| 1. | Social awareness | 1 | 1.70 | 3 | 5.00 | 25 | 41.70 | 29 | 48.30 | 2 | 3.30 |
| 2. | Social cognition | - | - | 2 | 6.00 | 24 | 40.00 | 22 | 36.70 | 8 | 13.30 |
| 3. | Reciprocal communication | - | - | 6 | 10.0 | 16 | 26.70 | 26 | 43.30 | 12 | 20.00 |
| 4. | Social play | 1 | 1.70 | 6 | 10.0 | 29 | 48.30 | 22 | 36.7 | 2 | 3.30 |
| 5. | Overall social behaviour | - | - | 3 | 5.0 | 24 | 40.00 | 30 | 50.0 | 3 | 5.00 |

The social behaviour of young children from the mother observation report was presented in the above table. In the social awareness domain, a majority (48.3%) of children were reported as having above average awareness, 41.7 per cent average, five percent below average and 3.3percent high and 1.7 percent low levels of social awareness. In social cognition domain, 40 percent of the children having average, followed by 36.7 percent above average, 13.30 percent high and 6 percent below average levels of social cognition. From the mother observation report results revealed that in reciprocal communication 43.30 percent were found to have above average, 26.7 percent average, 20% high levels of reciprocal communication. In the social play domain, it was reported that nearly half of the respondents (48.3%) had average, 36.7 percent above average, 10 percent below average, 3.3 percent high and 1.7 percent low levels of social play. Overall social behaviour, it was found that majority (50%) of the children were reported as having above average levels, forty percent of them having average, 5 percent high and 5percent low levels of social behaviour. In a similar study, (Van Huynh, 2018) found the mean of social awareness ability of students in grade 4 and 5 in Vietnam is 2.25 – average point. Children can understand other people’s emotions via their non-verbal messages conveyed by observing the expressions on their face, body and language and their voice (Bahman & Maffini 2008).

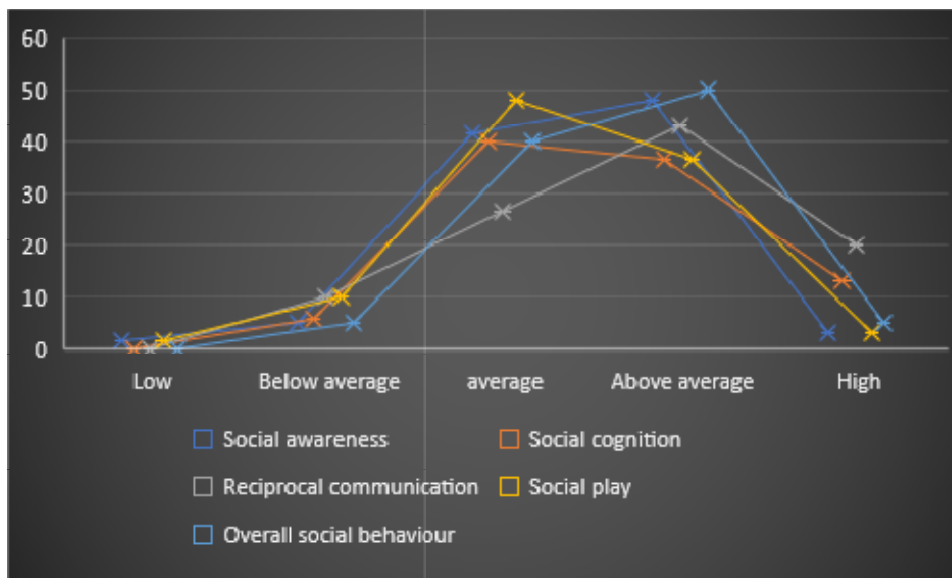


Fig 4.9 Maternal Observational Report of Social Behaviour in Young Children

Table 4.9 Paternal Observational Report of Social Behaviour Occurrence in Young Children N=60

| S.no | Behaviour | Low | | Below Average | | Average | | Above average | | High | |
|------|--------------------------|-----|------|---------------|-------|---------|-------|---------------|-------|------|-------|
| | | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| 1. | Social awareness | 1 | 1.70 | 2 | 3.30 | 24 | 40.00 | 26 | 43.30 | 7 | 11.70 |
| 2. | Social cognition | - | - | 5 | 8.30 | 27 | 45.00 | 24 | 40.00 | 4 | 6.70 |
| 3. | Reciprocal communication | - | - | 6 | 10.00 | 15 | 25.00 | 27 | 45.00 | 12 | 20.00 |
| 4. | Social play | 2 | 3.30 | 6 | 10.00 | 30 | 50.00 | 19 | 31.70 | 3 | 5.00 |
| 5. | Overall social behaviour | - | - | 3 | 5.00 | 24 | 40.00 | 32 | 53.30 | 1 | 1.70 |

The table reports paternal observations of social behaviour in young children. From the table, it can be concluded that social awareness among the majority (43.3%) was above average, with forty percent at average levels, 11.7 percent at high levels, and 1.7 percent at low levels of social awareness. Regarding the social cognition dimension, according to fathers' reports, it can be concluded that nearly half of the respondents (45%) were at average levels, forty percent were above average, 8.3 percent were below average, and 6.7 percent were at high levels of social

cognition. In the reciprocal communication dimension, 45 percent were above average, 25 percent were average, 20 percent were high, and 10 percent were low levels of social cognition as reported by fathers. For social play, according to fathers' reports, it can be concluded that the majority of the children (50%) were at average levels, followed by 31.7 percent above average, 10 percent below average, 5 percent high, and 3.3 percent low levels of social play. In the overall social behaviour dimension, the majority (53.3 percent) were found at above average levels, followed by 40 percent at average, five percent at high, and 1.7 percent at low levels of overall social behaviour.

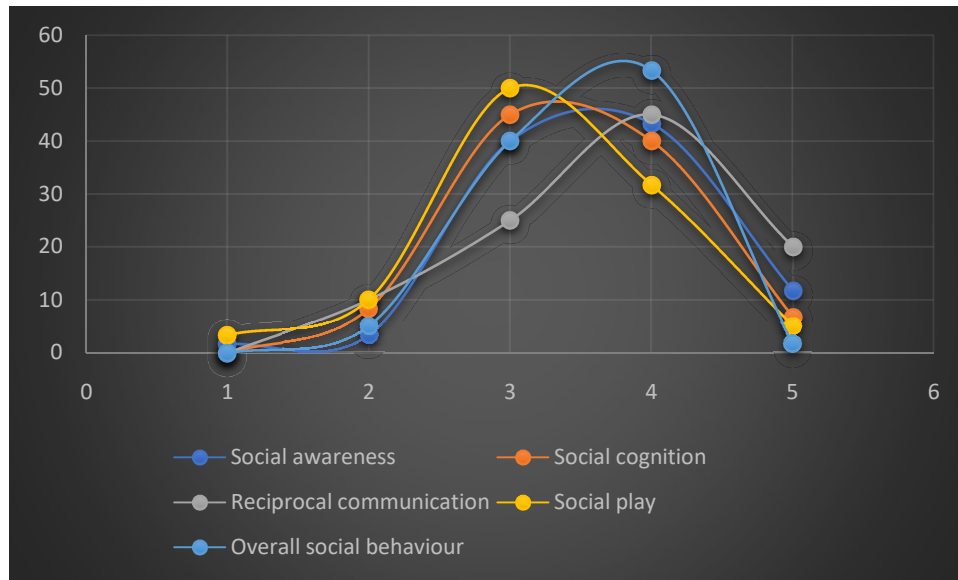


Fig 4.10 Paternal Observational Report of Social Behaviour Occurrence

Table 4.24: Parental Differences in Mother and Father reported Social Behaviour

| S.no | Behaviour | Mothers (n=60) | | Fathers (n=60) | | t value | p value |
|------|--------------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|---------|---------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | |
| 1. | Social awareness | 52.26 | 8.57 | 53.23 | 9.08 | .60 | .55 |
| 2. | Social cognition | 51.71 | 8.98 | 51.85 | 8.11 | .085 | .932 |
| 3. | Reciprocal communication | 54.61 | 10.26 | 55.30 | 10.63 | .358 | .721 |
| 4. | Social play | 48.93 | 8.44 | 48.91 | 9.42 | .01 | .992 |

The table 4.24 provides information related to parental differences in reporting social behaviour of children. The mean score for social awareness as per the maternal report was 52.26 and the paternal report was 53.23. With t value of .60 and p value of .55, no parental significant differences were found. In the social cognition dimension of social behaviour mother reported a mean score 51.71(SD=8.98) and the father reported a mean score 51.85 (SD=8.11), with a t

value .085 no significant differences between the mother and father reports were found. In reciprocal social communication, the mother reported a mean score of 54.61 (SD=10.26), father reported a mean score of 55.30(SD=10.63), with a t value of .358 no significant parental differences were found. In social play mean score of the mother report was 48.93 and the father reported a mean score 48.91 no significant parental differences were found ($t=.01$). The study concludes that both the mother and father were in agreeableness on the social behaviour of their children. The reason for this may be because fathers and mothers spend more time with children, understanding them. Cabrera et al. (2000) explore the trends and factors contributing to increased father involvement in various aspects of child rearing, including caregiving, play, and discipline. Findings revealed a significant shift in paternal roles, with fathers increasingly taking on more active and engaged roles in their children's lives compared to previous generations. Factors such as changing societal norms, shifts in gender roles, and the increasing recognition of fathers' contributions to child development were identified as key drivers of this trend. The study concluded that fatherhood in the modern era is characterized by greater involvement, nurturing, and emotional connection between fathers and their children, highlighting the importance of acknowledging and supporting fathers in their parenting roles. Duhig et al (2000) highlighted the complexities involved in relying solely on one informant (e.g., mothers or fathers) for assessing child social behaviour. They discuss factors such as parental perception, differences in observation contexts, and individual biases that can lead to variations in reporting. Understanding these differences is crucial for obtaining a comprehensive understanding of child behaviour and ensuring accurate assessment and intervention strategies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the mother observation report underscores the diverse range of social behaviors exhibited by young children, highlighting strengths in areas such as social awareness and reciprocal communication, while also indicating areas for potential improvement, particularly in social cognition and social play. Paternal observations align with maternal observations, revealing a range of social behavior among young children. While there are variations in perceptions between mothers and fathers, both emphasize the prevalence of above average social behavior among the observed children, with some variations in specific dimensions such as social cognition and reciprocal communication. These findings underscore the importance of considering multiple perspectives when assessing children's social development. Understanding children's abilities to perceive and interpret non-verbal cues, remains crucial in assessing their social development and designing appropriate interventions to support their socio-emotional growth.

References

- Bahman, S & Maffini, H 2008, *Developing Children's Emotional Intelligence*, Continuum International Publishing Group, New York

- Cabrera, N., Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Bradley, R. H., Hofferth, S., & Lamb, M. E. (2000). Fatherhood in the twenty-first century. *Child Development*, 71*(1), 127-136.
- Duhig, A. M., Renk, K., Epstein, M. K., & Phares, V. (2000). Interparental agreement on internalizing, externalizing, and total behavior problems: A meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 7*(4), 435-453.
- Jiang Z. Y., Tan D. L. (2018). Research progress on positive thinking of children based on positive psychology. *JNWU* 55, 124–130. doi: 10.16783/j.cnki.nwnus.2018.02.017
- Kandalla, M., & Bhat, P. 2010. Early social skills as a function of gender. *Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Methods and Techniques in Behavioral Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1931344.1931383>
- Mou L. X., Chen Y. S. (2006). The influence of task, age and gender on the performance of emotion understanding in preschoolers. *Psychol. Explor.* 26, 75–77. doi: 10.3969/j.issn.1003-5184.2006.02.017
- Van Huynh, S. (2018). Social awareness and responsible decision making of students in grade 4 and 5 in Vietnam. *Journal of education and human development*, 7(4), 7-15.
- Wang X., Liu X., Feng T. (2021). The continuous impact of cognitive flexibility on the development of emotion understanding in children aged 4 and 5 years: a longitudinal study. *J. Exp. Child Psychol.* 203:105018.
- Yang L. Z., Hu J. S. (2003). Preschool children's understanding of emotions, prosocial intent and behavior under different cues. *Sheng Li Xue Bao* 26, 988–991. doi: 10.16719/j.cnki.1671-6981.2003.06.007
- Ziv, Y., & Sorongon, A. (2011). Social information processing in preschool children: Relations to sociodemographic risk and problem behavior. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 109,* 000-000.