

ABSTRACT

Mothers' Knowledge and Attitude to Children with Down's Syndrome

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This study was undertaken with a view to identifying the existing knowledge of mothers regarding Down's Syndrome and their attitude towards children with Down's Syndrome.

Objectives of the Study

The study was undertaken with the following objectives.

- To assess the mothers' orientation to child rearing practices.
- To assess the mothers' attitude to children with Down's Syndrome.
- To determine the relationship of socio-economic status with orientation to child rearing practices, with knowledge and attitude.
- To find out the relationship between knowledge and attitude.

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey approach was used for the study. The study was conducted in all the special schools of Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka for mentally retarded children. The total population served by these schools was 350 mild to moderately retarded children and 66 of them were having Down's Syndrome. In this study the population is a cohort group. That is, the population and the sample are the same. All the mothers of Down's Syndrome children were included in the study. Self-administered standardized questionnaire by Sodhi, Sharma and Bhati *et al.* was used to collect the data. The tool consisted of

two parts:

Section A : Sodhi and Sharma Socio-economic Status Schedule — 1985.

Section B : A tool to study the attitude of parents towards the management of mentally retarded children (Bhat *et al.* 1985).

Findings of the Study

The subjects were found to be similar in character as 85% of the mothers who took part in the study were within the age group of 25-44 years. All the mothers had an education of middle to high school and there were no illiterate mothers. An analysis of the socio-economic background showed that there was no one belonging to the low socio-economic status. Thus the sample can be said to be a homogeneous group in terms of age, education and socio-economic status. Twentyfive (38.3%) of the children were first born and 30(45%) were last born. The age of the mothers at which Down's Syndrome children were born ranged from 15-41 years. Only 6 (9%) of the mothers get the Down's Syndrome child after the age of 35 years. Majority of the mothers (66.7%) had good orientation to child rearing practices and only a few (6.7%) had very poor orientation to child rearing practices. Though more than half of the sample (58.3%) possessed adequate knowledge nevertheless a good many (41.7%) lacked knowledge of Down's Syndrome.

Attitude of mothers to children with Down's Syndrome in general was a positive one. None of the mothers expressed a negative attitude.

There was a significant relationship between mothers' socio-economic status and their orientation to child rearing practices ($\chi^2 = 4.688$, $P < 0.05$) socio-economic status and their knowledge of Down's Syndrome ($\chi^2 = 5.143$, $P < 0.05$), socio-economic status and attitude of mothers to children with Down's Syndrome ($\chi^2 = 8.887$, $P < 0.01$).

The relationship between mothers' orientation to child rearing practices and their knowledge of Down's Syndrome ($\chi^2 = 14.502$, $P < 0.01$), mothers' knowledge of Down's Syndrome and attitude to their children with Down's Syndrome ($\chi^2 = 5.807$, $P < 0.05$) were found to be significant.

Conclusion

All the mothers belonged to either upper middle class or lower middle class families. It does not mean that poor people are not having children with Down's Syndrome. The better performance in this group may be due to the nature of the population. The fact that children are kept at home and are attending the special school can help in changing the mothers' attitude and increase in their knowledge. This need not be applied to the illiterate and low socio-economic background mothers who had no contact with any health personnel or educational programme.

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