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Influence of Parental Involvement and Parenting Styles on Number Readiness of Preschool Children

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ABSTRACT

The early years of a child's life are not only the most vulnerable but also the most significant for determining potential for lifelong learning and development (Kaul, 2004). Hence the need of sending children to preschool cannot be undermined. Just as the young children come in preschool having learned about the language they speak, so do they come to school with a broad background of experience in mathematical learning. The children are familiar with numbers because they have seen these in and around their environment. They are also aware of a number of pre number concepts informally. This includes identification of one digit and two digit numbers, identifying simple geometrical shapes and matching, sorting and classification. They need to be provided opportunities to formalize them and relate them with formal mathematical operations (Soni, 2005). Parents play an important role in developing the learning ability of the children especially, parental involvement and parenting style form major factors that influence the achievement level of children at all stages (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Parental involvement refers to parents being involved in their children's education through communication with teachers, helping with homework, attending school functions or being directly involved in the school itself. Parenting style is basically divided into authoritarian (telling children exactly what to do), permissive (allowing their children to do whatever they wish), and authoritative (providing rules and guidance without being overbearing) styles. The present paper aims to find the influence of parental involvement and parenting style on the number readiness of preschool children. This particular study was conducted on 543 preschoolers who were supposed to enter Class I in the next academic year. The paper focuses on the following objectives: (a) to study the extent of parental involvement, (b) to study the extent of number readiness among preschool children, (c) to study the effect of parental involvement on the number readiness of preschool children, (d) to study the level of number readiness of preschool children having parents displaying different parenting styles. The tools employed in the study are (a) Parental Involvement Scale (b) Bracken School Readiness Assessment (c) Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire. The major findings of the study are a) most of the parents are highly involved with the children in the development of their number readiness; b) most of the preschool children have developed above average number readiness; c) there is a significant difference in the number readiness of preschool children belonging to parents exhibiting high, average and low parental involvement and d) there is no significant difference in the number readiness of preschool children exposed to different parenting styles.

I INTRODUCTION

The first six years of a child's life are universally recognized as the most crucial years due to the rapid pace of development at this stage. A qualitatively rich environment is, therefore, most essential in these years to optimize a child's overall development and help him/her realize his/her full potential. The eleventh five year plan had recognized the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as critical for school readiness to ensure entry into formal schooling with increased basic vocabulary and conceptual abilities that help school retention. The twelfth five year plan too emphasizes on strengthening of ECCE and developed a national policy on ECCE and gave importance to this crucial stage of development.

Number readiness at pre- primary level includes a) number recognition and counting which includes single and double digit numerals (numbers) recognition and assigning a number value to a set of objects (counting); b) identification of sizes and comparing which includes concepts that describe one dimension (eg. tall being a descriptor of horizontal length), two dimensions (short may be descriptor of either vertical or horizontal length), or three dimensions (concept such as big and small, in

which more than two salient dimensions must be considered) it also measures a child's ability to match, differentiate, or compare objects based on one or more of their salient characteristics; c) recognition of shapes which includes one, two and three dimensional shapes; included in the one dimensional category is linear shapes such as line, curve, angle and diagonal; two dimensional shapes are represented by concepts such as circle, square and triangle, and three dimensional shapes include concepts such as cube and pyramids.

Parental involvement is the support and participation of parents at home, in the community, and at the school site that directly and positively affect the educational performance of all children. Parental involvement has been defined across studies as representing many different behaviours and practices at home or at school, including parental aspirations, expectations, attitudes and beliefs regarding child's education. Parental involvement is a core value that underpins the philosophy that the literate society begins in the home and is sustained by home literacy practices and culture. There have been positive opinions amongst academics on the aspects of parental involvement that contribute to children's achievement at the early stages. Parental involvement refers to both the spontaneous

informal contributions of parents and carers toward children's learning in the home and the formal organized inclusion of parents and carers in programmes that target children's development in all the skills of the pre-school. When schools collaborate with parents to help their children learn and when parents participate in school activities and decision-making about their children's education, children achieve higher levels. There is a broad distinction between involvement based at school and that based at home.

Parenting styles refer to a constellation of attitudes towards the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviours is expressed. There are a number of parenting styles and each has their own unique characteristics. The major styles are authoritarian (telling their children exactly what to do), permissive (allowing their children to do whatever they wish), or authoritative (providing rules and guidance without being overbearing) styles.

II RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Preschool is often considered a common experience and prerequisite in preparing children for formal schooling (Cheever & Ryder, 1986; Featherstone, 1986). Brand and Welch (1989) investigated the importance of preschool on the acquisitions of readiness skills. The results of this study indicated that preschool was instrumental in developing vocabulary, language comprehension, mathematics, visual memory, and perceptual organization skills when compared to those children who stayed at home during the preschool years. When it comes to number readiness it is found that while young children catch language and other cognitive concepts naturally, maths skills need to be acquired through concentrated efforts. When children are reciting, they're basically repeating what seems like a memorized sentence. When they are counting, they're performing a more cognitive activity in which they are associating a one-to-one correspondence with the object and the number to represent a quantity. (Manfra, Dinehart & Sembante, 2014) One of the major factors that affect development at this stage is the involvement of parents in the development of the children. Parental involvement not only supports but also enhances their pace of development. In this regard McWayne; Hampton; Fantuzzo; Cohen & Sekino (2004) found that parents who actively promote learning in the home, have direct and regular contact with school, and experience fewer barriers to involvement have children who demonstrate positive engagement with their peers, adults, and learning. This fact has also been studied by Melhuish; Sylva; Sammons; Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart (2001) who found that what parents do is more important for the academic and social/behavioural development of their children than who the parents are. Another major aspect that affects readiness is parenting style. A number of

independent studies have been conducted on the effect of parenting styles on achievement, but not many have been conducted to find its effect on readiness, except for Baumrind (1971) and Querido, Warner and Eyberg (2002) who found that the authoritative parenting style was most predictive of fewer child behaviour problems at preschool age. The present paper aims to find the effect of parental involvement and parenting styles on preschool children's number readiness.

III OBJECTIVES & HYPOTHESIS

(a) Objectives of the Study

The paper focuses on the following objectives:

- (i) To study the extent of parental involvement.
- (ii) To study the extent of parenting styles.
- (iii) To study the extent of number readiness among preschool children.
- (iv) To study the influence of parental involvement and parenting styles on the number readiness of preschool children.

(b) Research Questions

- (i) What is the extent of parental involvement?
- (ii) What is the extent of parenting style?
- (iii) What is the extent of number readiness among preschool children?

(c) Hypothesis

- (i) H_01 There is no significant influence of in the mean scores of number readiness of preschool children belonging to parents exhibiting high, average and low parental involvement.
- (ii) H_02 There is no significant influence of in the mean scores of number readiness of preschool children having parents displaying different parenting styles.

IV METHODOLOGY & ANALYSIS

"Ex-post facto" method is employed in the study. There were two independent variables, i.e. parental involvement and parenting styles; number readiness of preschool children was the dependent variable. As the sample for the present paper one section from 12 preschools which was about to enter into Class I in the next academic year was randomly selected. These 12 sections had 543 children.

- (a) **Tools:** Parent Involvement Scale (PIS) developed by Chorpa and Sahoo (1971), The Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) was developed by Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen & Hart (2001) and Bracken School Readiness Assessment-Third

Edition (BSRA-3) (number readiness part) developed by Bruce A. Bracken (2007) are used.

(b) **Statistical techniques used:** For the present paper percentage analysis, ANOVA and t-test are used.

(c) **Procedure for data collection:**

The researcher for the purpose of collection of the data personally visited the schools and collected the data from the parents by meeting them on the days of the parent teacher meet and by administering a test on the students to gauge their number readiness.

(d) Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis of data, its interpretation and the discussions based on the results are presented here.

(i) **Research Question 1** – The first research question is about the extent of parental involvement. According to the scores obtained by the parents in the Parent Involvement Scale, there were categories as having high, average and low parental involvement.

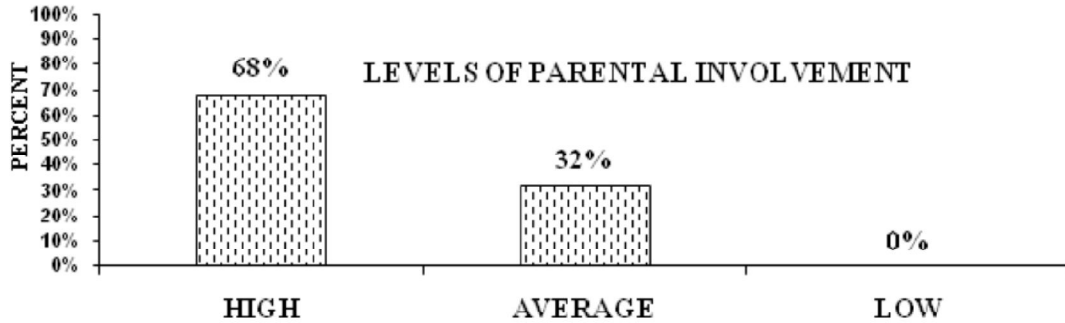


Fig.1 Percentage of Parents Exhibiting Different Levels of Parental Involvement

Figure 1 indicates that more than two-third (68%) parents displayed high levels of parental involvement, one-third (32%) showed average level of parental involvement and there were no (0%) parents who displayed low level of parental involvement. This shows that all the parents are involved in the school readiness of the children by either coordinating with the school or by helping them at home. Parental involvement of the parents includes their involvement at school as well as home and through parent teacher association. It is seen that the parents even if are not helping at

home, make sure that they attend the parent teacher meet at regular interval. Hence there are no parents that come in the low level of parental involvement.

(ii) **Research Question 2** – The second research question is about the extent of parenting style. The parents were categorized as having authoritative, authoritarian and permissive style of parenting according to the scores obtained by them in the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ).

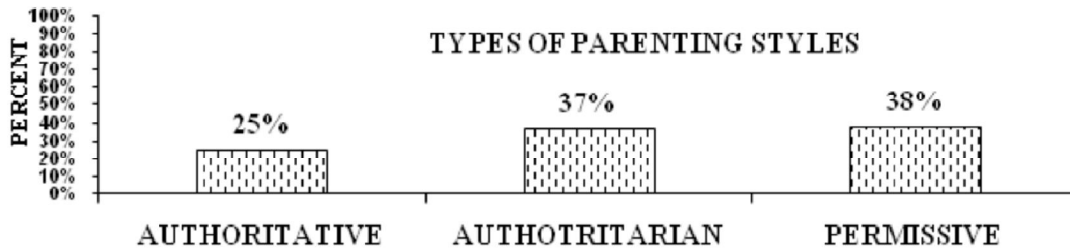


Fig. 2 Percentage of Families having different Types of Parenting Styles

Figure 2 indicates that 25% parents followed authoritative parenting style, 37% authoritarian parenting style and 38% followed permissive parenting style. The number of parents following authoritarian and permissive parenting style is almost equal. Only one-fourth of the parents followed authoritative parenting style in which the parents encourage the child to be independent. This may be because they may either think that the children are too small to take their own decisions (authoritative parenting style) or it is time for them to be free and not to be under strict rules (permissive parenting style).

(iii) **Research Question 3** – The third research question is about the extent of number readiness among preschool children. The children were characterized as having very advanced, advanced, average, delayed and very delayed number readiness according to the scores obtained by them in the (BSRA-3).

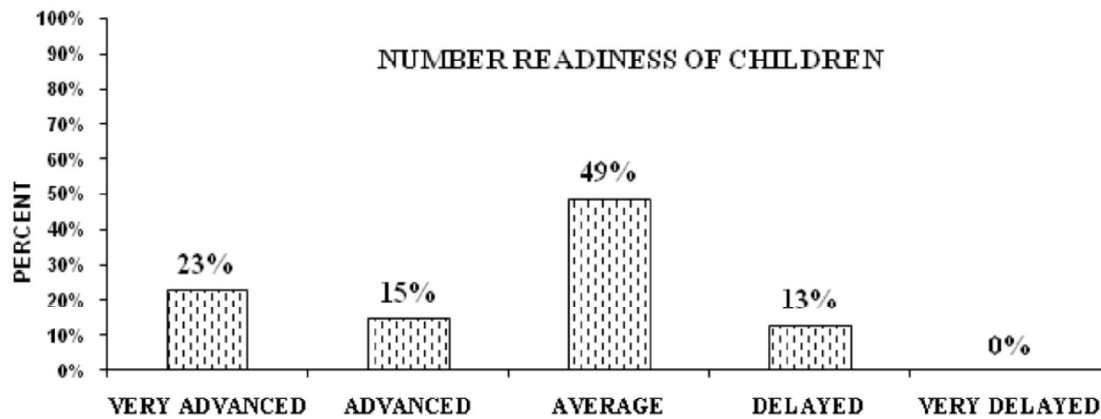


Fig. 3 Percentage of Number Readiness of Preschool Children

In figure 3 it can be seen that almost one-fourth (23%) children are having very advanced number readiness and almost half of the children (49%) have displayed average number readiness. The percentage of children showing advanced (15%) and delayed (13%) number readiness is almost similar. There are no children (0%) children who have displayed very delayed number readiness. Children at preschool level learn a lot of things just by observation. Hence it can be seen that most of the children (87%) have shown average or above average number readiness. The children at this age should be exposed to as many age appropriate experiences as possible to make their learning fruitful.

In the following lines the data is analysed hypothesis wise.

H₀1 There is no significant influence of in the mean scores of number readiness of preschool children belonging to parents exhibiting high, average and low parental involvement.

In order to find the effect of different levels of parental involvement on the number readiness of preschool children, the composite scores obtained by children were analysed with the help of one-way ANOVA. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Summary of ANOVA for Number Readiness of Preschool Children of Parents having different levels of parental involvement

	Df	SS	MSS	F-Value
Among 1		221102.01	221102.01	160.577*
Within 541	541	744914.42	1376.92	

* Significant at 0.01 level.

Table 1 indicates that the F-value for number readiness of preschool children is 160.577, which is significant at 0.01 levels with df equal to 1/541. The F value indicates that there is a significant difference in number readiness of preschool children of parents having high, average and low levels of parental involvement. Therefore, the hypothesis, namely, “there is no significant difference in mean number readiness score of preschool children belonging to different levels of parental involvement”, is rejected. Thus, it can be

inferred that the number readiness of preschool children is dependent upon the involvement of parents in the various activities of children at home and school.

As significant differences in the mean number readiness scores of preschool children of parents having different level of parental involvement is found, so there is need to find the difference between the various groups. This is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Significance of Difference of Means between Categories of Parental Involvement in Respect of Number Readiness

Category 1	Category 2	df	Mean Difference	t	Significance
High (171.94)	Average (128.70)	501	64.84	31.95	P < 0.01

Table 2 indicates the mean scores of number readiness of preschool children belonging to parents having high and average levels of parental involvement. There were no parents who came under the low level of parental involvement category. The mean scores of the children of parents having high parental involvement are higher in comparison to parents having average level of parental involvement. This states that there exists a difference in the school readiness of children of parents having different level of parental involvement and the difference is in favour of high parental involvement.

There are been no direct studies on the influence of parental involvement on number readiness of preschool children but some related studies are mentioned. The finding is in conformity with the findings of Henderson and Berla (1994); Keith and Lichtman (1994); Marcon (1999) who found that the family makes critical contributions to student's achievement from the earliest childhood years. The finding is also in agreement with the finding of Bus, Van IJzendoorn, and Pellegrini (1995) who found that early reading experiences with their parents prepare children for the benefits of formal literacy instruction. The finding of the present study are also in conformity with the findings of Hickman, Greenwood and Miller (1995) who stated that parents of average and low-achieving students are not actively involved in their children's education.

It is often said that education begins at home; hence parents play a crucial role to help their child become educated and be a better person. Education is the most important thing happening to a child and if parents are actively involved in their child's education, then the child is definitely going to do

much better. Parents are known to be the role models for their children. It was seen in the results that none of the parents fell in the low parental involvement category; the reason for this may be that, this study is conducted in the private C.B.S.E. schools. Hence the parents may be very careful about keeping their children abreast with the activities needed to be completed at school level. The parents may have avoided something that they were expected to do at home, but they were cautious to keep the child up to date at the school front. A parent can help the child deal with lots of issues with their constant guidance and support. A parent should be actively involved in their child's development, growth, feeding and overall health concerns. The same involvement should be applied to their child's academic development especially number readiness. If parents successfully allot a specified time to their child's development, the child is definitely going to have better number readiness. The parents know their children's strengths and weaknesses. They can provide for interventions programmes at the right time to avoid later delays and thus help in the optimum number readiness of their child, be it at the home or at school or elsewhere.

H₀₂ There is no significant influence of in the mean scores of number readiness of preschool children having parents displaying different parenting styles.

In order to find the effect of different levels of parenting styles on the number readiness of preschool children, the composite scores obtained by children were analysed with the help of one-way ANOVA. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Summary of ANOVA for Number Readiness of Preschool Children of Parents having Permissive, Authoritative and Authoritarian Parenting Styles

	Df	SS	MSS	F-Value
Among 2		626660.426	313330.213	498.586*
Within	540	339356.009	628.437	

* Significant at 0.01 level.

Table 3 indicates that the F-value for number readiness of preschool children is 498.586, which is significant at 0.01 levels with df equal to 2/542. The F-value indicates that there is a significant difference in number readiness of preschool children of parents having authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles. Therefore, the hypothesis, namely, "there is no significant difference in mean number readiness of preschool children exposed to different parenting

styles", is rejected. Thus, it can be inferred that the number readiness of preschool children is dependent upon the parenting style of the parents.

As significant difference in the mean number readiness scores of children from parents displaying different parenting styles are found, so there is need to find the difference between the various groups. This is shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4
Significance of Difference of Means between Categories of Parenting Styles in Respect of Number Readiness

Category 1	Category 2	df	Mean Difference	t	Significance
Authoritarian (144.46)	Authoritative (201.44)	336	56.98	31.18	P < 0.01
Authoritative	Permissive (124.95)	341	19.52	7.89	P < 0.01
Permissive	Authoritarian	403	76.49	30.46	P < 0.01

Table 4 indicates that there is significant difference in mean score of number readiness of preschool children belonging to parents having permissive, authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles. The mean number readiness of preschool children of parents having authoritative parenting style is higher in comparison to parents having permissive and authoritarian parenting style. Similarly, the mean number readiness of preschool children of parents following authoritarian parenting style is higher in comparison to children of parents having permissive parenting style. This indicates that there exists a difference in number readiness of preschool children of parents having different parenting styles. Hence it can be inferred that number readiness of preschool children of parents having authoritative style has the best school readiness, also that the parents displaying authoritarian parenting style have children who are more ready to learn formal number than children of parents showing permissive parenting style.

The finding of the study did not find any similarity in earlier researches as no studies have been conducted to find the influence of parenting style on number readiness of preschool children. Nevertheless, the finding of the present study is in conformity with Baumrind (1971) and Querido, Warner, and Eyberg (2002) who found that the authoritative parenting style was most predictive of fewer child behaviour problems. Behavioural problems occur when there is lack of social-emotional readiness among the children. The study is also in agreement with Dornbusch et al. (1987) who found that authoritarian and permissive parenting styles were negatively associated with higher grades, whereas the authoritative parenting style was positively associated with higher grades among adolescents. In a recent study too Kordi and Baharudin (2010) too suggested that authoritative parenting styles were associated with highest levels of children's school achievement, which goes with the finding of the present study.

The study has found that parenting styles (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) did have a significant impact on a child's number readiness. The study has also found that children of parents following authoritative parenting style had better readiness than children of parents following authoritarian and permissive parenting style. This

finding suggests that parent who create a warm and supportive home environment (with or without rules or boundary setting) for their children are more likely to have children who did not have better school readiness. Although the children are small they have developed logical thinking and hence understand the reason behind a particular acceptance or denial of their wants. The table also suggests that children of parents displaying authoritarian style have better readiness than those who have parents displaying permissive style. In this case, the parents may have found that it takes a lot of time for the children to understand and as they learn the rules, the reason for the same can be made to understand. Many of the parents still believe in the famous notion 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. The reason why the children of parents displaying permissive style have poor number readiness may be because the children may have taken things for granted and at this stage as they have not understood the real meaning of learning and as there was no backing the children who were left voluntarily did not bother to perform and did not develop proper number readiness.

V FINDINGS

- (a) Most of the parents are highly involved with the children in development of their number readiness.
- (b) Most of the preschool children have developed above average number readiness.
- (c) There is a significant difference in the number readiness of preschool children belonging to parents exhibiting high, average and low parental involvement. The higher the involvement of parents the higher is the number readiness of preschool children.
- (d) There is a significant difference in the number readiness of preschool children exposed to different parenting styles. The parents who create a warm and supportive home environment at home ensure better number readiness at preschool stage.

VI RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) Since almost one-third of the parents, exhibit just average level of parental involvement, strategies should be developed so that these parents too are highly involved, keeping in mind the benefits that highly involved parents have on the overall development of their children.
- (b) Since most of the students possess just an average level of number readiness, so there is an urgent need to review, modify, strengthen and develop curricular practices and pedagogical approaches through programmes and activities giving specific emphasis on number readiness among preschool children.
- (c) Exposure to methods of improving parental involvement could be emphasized during the pre-service teacher education programme by the teacher education institutions. Innovative strategies should be developed to involve parents in the educational development of their children during the pre-service programmes itself.
- (d) The parents should be counseled by schools and other stakeholders on the appropriate parenting style and be made aware that force does not ensure optimum academic development.

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