

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CORRELATES OF BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS AMONGST THE URBAN SLUM DWELLERS AGED BETWEEN 6 TO 18 YEARSJayshree D Naik¹, Sandip S Jogdand²**Authors' Affiliation:** ¹Associate Professor and Head, Department of PSM, Government Medical College, Miraj; ²Associate Professor, Department of PSM, Rural Medical College, Loni**Correspondence:** Dr. Sandip S Jogdand, Email: sjogdand76@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

Introduction: Hundreds of millions of children live in urban slums, many deprived to basic services. This all resulted in the different kind of behavioural problems in children living in urban slum. Many of these problems are of transient nature and are often not even noticed or sometimes neglected. Various factors play role in causation of behaviour problems.

Aim: The present cross-sectional study was planned in the adopted slum field area of Government Medical College, Miraj to find out prevalence and factors associated with behaviour problems amongst slum dwellers of 6 – 18 years age group.

Material and Methods: Total 600 parents of children in the age group of 6-18 years were selected by simple random sampling method using random number table from the register of "Family survey register" of field workers of UHC.

Results: The behavioural problems were identified in 189(55.1%) male children out of total 343 male children. The gender wise difference was statistically significant (p -Value < 0.005). There was statistically significant difference between behavioural problems according to family size (p -Value < 0.05). Children coming from large family were having more behavioural problems. The higher prevalence rate of behaviour problems was found amongst children having either or both of parents illiterate. It was highest among children having only illiterate mother. This was statistically significant (p -Value < 0.001). The behavioural problems were observed least among children whose parents having caring attitude towards them, whereas the behavioural problems were higher amongst children who exposed to faulty parental attitudes (i.e. negligent, overprotective and strict).

Conclusion: The common needs in this group include affection and warmth by family members not only by being "taken care of" but also fulfilment of physical and emotional needs. Behaviour problems found amongst children depends upon various family factors. The attitude of parents towards children plays major role in causation and their prevention of behaviour problems. Parenting counselling will play a major role in reduction of prevalence rate of behaviour problems.

Key words: Slum dwellers, Behavioural problem, Illiterate, Counselling

INTRODUCTION

Over half the world's people – including more than a billion children – now live in cities and towns. Many children enjoy the advantages of urban life, including access to educational, medical and recreational facilities. Too many, however, are denied such essentials as electricity, clean water and health care – even though they may live close to these services. Too many are forced into dangerous and exploitative work instead of being able to attend school. And too many face a constant threat of eviction, even though they live under the most challenging conditions – in ramshackle dwellings and overcrowded settlements that are acutely vulnerable to

disease and disaster. The hardships endured by children in poor communities are often concealed – and thus perpetuated – by the statistical averages on which decisions about resource allocation are based.

In fact, hundreds of millions of children today live in urban slums, many without access to basic services. They are vulnerable to dangers ranging from violence and exploitation to the injuries, illnesses and death that result from living in crowded settlements atop hazardous rubbish dumps or alongside railroad tracks. And their situations – and needs – are often represented by aggregate figures that show urban children to be better off than their rural counterparts, obscuring the dispari-

ties that exist among the children of the cities. This all are resulted in the different kind of behavioural problems in children living in urban slum.

The behaviour problem is defined as “deviations from the accepted norms of behaviour on the part of the child, when the child is exposed to inconsistent social or cultural environment”.¹ Many of these problems are of transient nature and are often not even noticed or sometimes neglected. In USA in year 1995, there were 37.8% school children, involved in physical fights or aggressive behaviour.² The school based studies in India also quoted prevalence of behaviour problems up to 38% amongst primary school children.³

Various factors play role in causation of behaviour problems. The internal factors of child includes, child characteristics including neurobiological factors and genetic factors, emotions and intelligence. These interact with external factors like family environment or social environment. External factors also include nature of discipline given to children, attachment relationship, size and socioeconomic status of family or family stressors etc.³ Family or home environment is a micro-environment having direct effect on the psychological development of children. Some of the risk factors present in home environment can be modified if these are recognized earlier.

The present study was planned in the adopted slum field area of Government Medical College, Miraj to find out prevalence and factors associated with behaviour problems amongst slum dwellers of 6 – 18 years age.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present cross-sectional study was conducted in the urban slum field practice area of Government Medical

College and hospital, Miraj, Maharashtra. The study population was parents of the children in the age group of 6-18 years and permanent resident of the same slum area for last 5 years or more.

As the prevalence of behaviour problems found in literature was varied and most of the studies were at institutional level pilot study was conducted using same per-forma with 50 randomly selected children. The prevalence rate of 40% was found in pilot study, which was used to calculate sample size for the present study with the help of following formula.

$$n = Z^2 \frac{p(1-p)}{\epsilon^2}$$

Where p = 40%; ε (precision level) =10% and Z²_(1-α/2) = standard error of population proportion at 95% level i.e.1.96.the sample size worked out was 575.

Total 600 parents of children in the age group of 6-18 years were selected by simple random sampling method using random number table from the "Family survey register" of field workers of UHC. Their socio-demographic data and information regarding behaviour was recorded in pretested questionnaire. The ethical clearance was obtained from IEC before starting the study. The written informed consent of all parents was obtained by the investigator. The person not willing to give written consent was excluded from the study and next eligible person in the register was included. The data was entered in Microsoft excel sheet and appropriate statistical tests were used.

OBSERVATIONS

The data of interview of 600 parents living in urban slum shows results as below.

Table 1: Association between prevalence of behaviour problems and socio-demographic factors

Variables	Status of behaviour problems			p-Value
	Present (n=298) (%)	Absent (n=302) (%)	Total	
Age(Years)				
6-12	163 (46.57)	187 (53.43)	350	0.073
13-18	135 (54.00)	115 (46.00)	250	
Gender				
Male	189 (55.10)	154 (44.90)	343	<0.01
Female	109 (42.41)	148 (57.59)	257	
Family size				
Only child	18 (52.94)	16 (47.62)	34	<0.05
≤ 3 children	176 (46.56)	202 (53.44)	378	
>3 children	104 (55.32)	84 (44.68)	188	
Educational status of children				
primary+ middle	194 (46.19)	226 (53.81)	420	<0.01
High school +	104 (57.78)	76 (42.22)	180	

Table 1 show that, age of the children was not statistically associated with prevalence of behaviour problems amongst children.

The behavioural problems were identified in 189(55.1%) male children out of total 343 male chil-

dren. For female gender, it was observed in 109 (42.41%) out of total 257 female children. This difference was statistically significant (p-Value < 0.01).

There was statistically significant difference between behavioural problems according to family size. (p-Value

<0.05) Children coming from large family were having more behavioural problems. Accordingly, lower educational status of a child was also associated more with behaviour problems and the observed difference was found statistically significant. (p-Value <0.01)

Table 2: Association between prevalence of behaviour problems and literacy status of parents

Literacy status of parents	Status of behaviour problems	
	Present (n=298) (%)	Absent (n=302) (%)
Both illiterate	49 (57.65)	36 (42.35)
Only father illiterate	16 (59.26)	11(40.74)
Only mother illiterate	52 (63.41)	30 (36.59)
Both literate	129 (38.51)	206 (61.49)

Chi-square=24.03;p<0.01

In the study group 71 children had one or another real parent absent, so to avoid confounding effect these were excluded for association of parental educational status and parental attitude analysis.

The higher prevalence rate of behaviour problems was found amongst children having either or both of parents illiterate. It was highest among children having only illiterate mother. This was statistically significant. (p-Value <0.01)

Table 3: Association between prevalence of behaviour problems and attitude of parents towards child

Attitude of parents towards child	Status of behaviour problems	
	Present (n=298) (%)	Absent (n=302) (%)
Caring	129 (38.51)	206 (61.49)
Negligent	16 (59.26)	11 (40.74)
Over protective	52 (63.41)	30 (36.59)
Strict	49 (57.65)	36 (42.35)

Chi-square = 12.62; p < 0.01

Table 3 demonstrate that attitude of parents play significant role for behaviour of child. The behavioural problems were observed least among children whose parents having caring attitude towards them, whereas, the behavioural problems were higher amongst children who exposed to faulty parental attitudes (i.e. negligent, overprotective and strict).

DISCUSSION

The present study was aimed to find out presence of behavioural problems among children of age between 6 to 18 years residing in urban slum and their association with various socio-demographic factors.

It was found that out of 600 children from urban slum, 298 (49.67%) were having behaviour problems. Previous studies reported the prevalence of behaviour problems up to 38%. The slum dwellers were exposed to

adverse behaviour pattern of adults. This may be responsible for the higher prevalence of behaviour problems among their children.

In the present study significant association was found between prevalence of behaviour problems and gender of child, with male preponderance which was consistent with studies conducted by M.Bhalla et al¹⁴ at Kanpur, in psychiatric children attending child guidance clinic of paediatric O.P.D. Similarly, Sarita Bhargava et al¹ also found significant influence of gender on overall prevalence of behaviour problems. Most of the times behaviour problems of male children are neglected in earlier stage or labelled abnormal for their gender. This may contribute for increased prevalence among male children.

There was statistically significant association between family size and behavioural problems among children. The study result was found consistent with studies by R. Shrinivas Murthy et al⁵ and Abraham Vergese et al.⁶ In large families, the physical and emotional needs of child are not fulfilled which may divert these children towards problem behaviour.

The children with high school or above education exhibit higher prevalence rate, 104 (57.48%) of behaviour problems. The studies by Gregory I and Emilly Simon-off⁷ reported the consistent results with present study. As the children enter in the high school, they are more exposed to outer environment. The interaction occurs between child characteristics, home environment and outer environment, which plays major role in causation of behaviour problems.

Present study revealed higher prevalence of behaviour problems amongst children whose mothers were illiterate. Similar result was found by Shobha Srinath et al⁸ A. K. Tondon⁹ and S.abdelgalil et al.¹⁰ The literacy level of parents mainly mother's literacy status is more important in recognition of behaviour problems in earlier stage of child development. Early recognition will prevent further development of behaviour problems among children and will reduce the prevalence. Children coming from families with over protective parental attitude were having high prevalence rate of behaviour problems which was statistically significant. Thus parental attitude affects prevalence of behaviour problems.

In one study by B. B. Sethi¹¹ also mentioned that faulty parental attitude was associated with increased psychological morbidity in children. Jyothi Shenoy et al¹² mentioned that inconsistent disciplining and poor parental interaction found associated with scholastic backwardness amongst children. Parental attitude towards child is important in psychological development of child. This will ultimately affect behaviour formation of children.

CONCLUSION

Age group of 6-18 years is vulnerable age group for behavioural problem, slum dwellers are in particular, at high risk of it. This group is exposed to and affected by

various biological, social and family factors which may directly or indirectly lead to behavioural problems. In this study we conclude that behavioural problems are common in slum children and adolescent, which mainly depend upon various familial factors. The common needs in this group include affection and warmth by family members not only by being "taken care of" but also fulfilment of physical and emotional needs.

The attitude of parents towards children plays major role in causation and their prevention of behaviour problems. Early recognition of behavioural problems in children, parenting counselling and mental health services in school could be realistic steps for reduction of behaviour problems.

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