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## The Need and Importance of Parenting Education

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**Abstract:** *Parents are the most responsible persons in the upbringing of the children. Positive parenting supports a child to become good person and citizen. We always think seriously about the value-based education, formation and training given to the children to be effective citizens of the society. However, we think less of the formation and education given to the parents who have to mould the behaviour and character of the children. In the modern society where the challenges to family life are more, where the parents struggle to meet the expectations of the children, a parent should be equipped to handle the responsibility of parenting with proper knowledge, attitude, aptitude and skills. If so, parents need proper training and education. Mixed methodology is used for the study. The result of this study shows that majority of the parents do not have any orientation or training in preparation to their marital life or parental responsibility. Hence, the study comes out with the most important suggestion of need and importance of parenting education in the modern society.*

**Key Words:** *Parenting, Parenting Education, Upbringing of the Children, Developmental Stages of the Children, Challenges Faced by the Parents.*

### 1. Introduction

Parenting definitely is an art of upbringing the children. Responsible parenthood has to be learned by any parent. Training and formation is inevitable to be a successful father or mother. Reynolds (2003) explores in her article about Mindful Parenting, that training and education in parenting can make positive changes in both the parent and the children. Couples and young adults rely on their inherent capacity to be a parent from the experiences of being a child, or observing their parents or others involved in parenting-related activities. It is perplexing that one of the most stressful and yet relevant roles a human beings have less formal training or programs to enhance their capacities of parenting. These beliefs in one's own abilities only get questioned if either the child or parents are affected due to the reciprocal impact of this role.

In common with many other cultures, Indian parents get blamed when children misbehave or when things go wrong. Then and only sometimes, parents are held responsible for the effectiveness of parental investments. Often parents try to search for answers within themselves, with their families or kinship, social media, internet or as a last resort with professionals who may or may not be trained in specific issues of parenting. Recent changes in the family – such as high rates of divorce, maternal employment – can have positive as well as negative effects on children (Joseph and John, 2008). In this context, it has become necessary to promote the idea of responsible and resourceful parenting. Capacitating the youth to become a mother or father, to lead a genuine family life, sensitizing them about the challenges of parenting, nurturing of the children, understanding them the roles and responsibilities of the parents, and to assume the responsible parenthood are the big challenges of today.

The normal question that anyone may ask is that, is parenting a profession to educate the parents? The answer is evident that parenting is a relationship and it is not a profession. Markham (2012) says it is basically a relationship. She says “Parenting is fundamentally about a relationship, much like marriage. The commitment and love involved in that relationship are not a “profession” in the way we normally understand the term. Vocational, yes; hard work, certainly. But professional? No”. The question here is that whether the parents, the new couples or the youth who are aspiring for marital life get a proper education regarding parenting, its various components, the responsible parenthood, the best parenting styles, the best child practices and the challenges and solutions to parenting in this modern era. It is for sure that parenting is not a mere traditional instinct to go ahead without any education and training. The training empower the parents to understand the problems faced by their children and helps to provide better support for overcoming the issues confronted by their children.

## **2. Review of Literature**

Churchill and Clarke (2015) write about the importance of investing in parenting education as a best solution to tackle social exclusion and social problems in England. Pinquart and Teubert (2010) speak of promoting effective parenting education during the transition to parenthood. Parenthood is life’s most interesting and challenging opportunity. Parent is the child’s first and

most influential teacher. The delight of the parents' experience in fostering the children's development and the satisfaction, derived from the interaction with them, are some of the positive aspects of parenthood. Parenthood also involves loss of sleep, restricted social life, increased expenses, noise and new routines (Knox, 1995). Parenthood is the most important responsibility of the human being as a social animal. Parenting is a central icon in cultures and religions from time immemorial. We have to doubt whether the joy and fulfilment of parenting has been lost nowadays and if it has become a matter of concern and fear. Parenting is from the inside out; only a deeper self-understanding can help you to raise children (Siegel and Hartzell, 2013).

The study of Carson, Chowdhury, Perry and Pati (1998) denotes that families that are less expressive, experience more conflict, and are more enmeshed are associated with antisocial adolescents. The families that children grow up in and the social environment in which they live can have major effects on their well-being (Barker, 2010). Many parents do not fully grasp their role as a teacher nor do they realize the influence they exert as parents on their children. When these vital lessons are not taught by the family, a child may collapse under the pressures of the outside world, with juvenile delinquency being an almost certain fate. "The relationship is so strong that if ways could be found to do it, a strengthening and preserving of family life, among the groups which need it most, could probably accomplish more in the amelioration and prevention of delinquency and other problems than any other single program yet devised" (Monahan, 1957).

As the World Summit Plan of Action (1990) states, "For the full and harmonious development of their personality, children should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Accordingly, all institutions of society should respect and support the efforts of parents and other care-givers to nurture and care for children in a family environment" (Annan, 2001). Under the traditional view, children originally were considered the virtual property of their parents, the position eventually evolved into a presumption that parents are the natural protectors of their children and act in their interests (Hegar, 1989). During the early childhood period, the child is completely cared for by the parents. The child cannot develop automatically into a full blown human being. She/he is to be provided planned care and adequate socialization opportunities in order to attain human status. Effective role of parents during childhood provides a child the best

possible inputs for maximum development of its potential as a human being (Bowlby, 2008). The various functions of the family include reproduction, socialization, nurturance and emotional support. Among these functions, reproduction is an important function. Procreation is the core process on which the survival of the species depends. Child rearing is the critical medium for the growth of infant into effective citizens.

Effective parenting is more important than ever before, to shape the coming generations affecting the world around them (Baumrind, 1991). Raising children serves many purposes like producing healthy and well-adapted children, ensuring support for parents as they grow older, providing protective social environment, transmission of values and skills to find meaning for their own existence through bringing up the children. The parents have to learn the ways and means of responsible parenthood to have a stable family and responsible children. The commitment towards children was enshrined in our constitutional provisions. Our policy ensures that every child in this country should have the environment that gives it opportunity to realize its inherent physical and cognitive potentials (NCERT, 2005).

The conceptual model of parenting prototypes of Baumrind (1991) deals with four main styles of parenting i.e. Authoritarian, Authoritative, Permissive and Neglecting. Maccoby and Martin (1983) indicate that these parenting styles capture two important dimensions of parenting: (a) parental acceptance (also known as parental warmth or supportiveness) and (b) parental control (also known as parental demandingness or behavioural control). The parents should have an awareness about these basics of parenting to be responsible parents. Though there are concerns in engaging parents in training programs and may need a clear recruitment process; good communication and liaison with stakeholders; incentives for recruitment and retention; active and creative outreach work; investment in building relationships with parents; making programs easily accessible and the like are inevitable (Axford, Lehtonen, Kaoukji, Tobin and Berry, 2012).

A study done by Axford et al., (2012) indicated that Engaging Parents in Parenting programmes examines why it is difficult to engage parents in parenting programmes which is indispensable to enhance child outcomes. Build relationships, make programmes accessible, address concerns of the parents, address particular needs of some parents are some of the solutions discussed in the study. Every parenting programmes can have a look into

those points dealt with for the better implementation and fruitful propagation of the programmes and trainings.

To conclude, the parents are to be trained in varied realms. Training parents as behaviour modifiers (O'Dell, 1974 ; Karolly and Rosenthal, 1977). Training parents as behaviour therapists (Berkowitz and Graziano, 1972), Training parents in child management like that of the hyperactive children (Dubey, O'Leary and Kaufman, 1983), Training parents in skills of child management (Kelley, Embry and Baer, 1979), training parents in behavioural self-management (Sanders and Glynn, 1981), are some of the areas of the training.

### **3. Objectives**

The following are the objectives set for the purpose of this study:

- i. To know the extent of participation of the parents in awareness programmes on responsible parenting
- ii. To understand the knowledge of the parents on the early developmental stages of the children
- iii. To examine the challenges faced by the parents in up bringing the children

### **4. Methodology**

The present study focuses on the awareness of parenting among the parents in Kannur and Kasaragod districts in Kerala. The researcher followed descriptive research design using simple random sampling method to collect the data from the selected parents from the above said districts who have a child in conflict with law. One of the parents from 160 different families who have two or more children of at least 13 years of age is being selected. After the data collection, it was verified and analysed with suitable statistical methods.

### **5. Results and Discussion**

Parenting education is essentially an important element in the current society due to several factors, like upcoming parenting challenges, the complexity in child management strategies, increasing child crimes and behavioural aberrations, loosening of joint family system and presence of nuclear families and changing social, cultural, educational scenario. This study examines some of the important aspects of parenting through a structured questionnaire and survey.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by their Socio-demographic Characteristics**

Characteristics		Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
		(TotalParticipants-160)	
Gender	Father	55	34.4
	Mother	105	65.6
Age	<30	11	6.9
	30-40	47	29.4
	40-50	86	53.8
	>50	16	10
Religion	Hindu	57	35.6
	Muslim	79	49.4
	Christian	24	15
Education	LP	18	11.3
	UP	43	26.9
	HS	44	27.5
	HSS	24	15
	Graduation	31	19.4
Occupation	Govt.	15	9.4
	Private	26	16.3
	Business	23	14.4
	Coolie	42	26.3
	Self-Employment	22	13.8
	Other	32	20

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Family Income	<5000	5	3.1
	5000-15000	21	13.1
	15000-25000	35	21.9
	25000-35000	27	16.9
	35000-55000	38	23.8
	55000-75000	13	8.1
	75000-1 Lakh	13	8.1
	>1 Lakh	8	5
Type of	Joint	20	12.5
Family	Nuclear	140	87.5
Marital Status	With Partner	124	77.5
	Widower	4	2.5
	Divorcee	6	3.8
	Widow	6	3.8
	Separated	10	6.3
	Remarried	10	6.3
Locale	Rural	110	68.75
	Urban	50	31.25

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The Table reveals the fact that, female parents constitute 65.6% and male parents comprises of 34.4%. The age of the participants shows that most of the parents (53.8%) belong to the age group of 40 to 50 and 10% of the participants are above the age of 50.

The Religious factor reveals that from 160 samples, 35.6% are from Hindu religion. The majority from the sample are Muslim, that is, 49.4% and the lower participation in the sample in terms of Christian religion, i.e. 15%. The Table also is giving a clear picture of participant's education. 11.3% of participants have only lower primary education. 26.9% of the participants have upper primary education, 27.5% have high school education and 15% of them completed higher secondary education, while 19.4% of the participants completed their graduation. Hence, education level is varied from lower primary to graduation.

Analysing the occupational status of the respondents, 9.4% are employed in government services, 16.3% are in private sector, 14.4% of them engage in business and 26.3% are coolie workers, while, 13.8% are self-employed and 20% of them belong to other occupation category.

The Table 1 also explains the different family income levels of the respondents in the study area. 3.1% of the respondents fall in the category of below Rs. 5000. 13.1% of the sample are in Rs. 5000 to 15,000 income segment. 21.9% are between 15-25 thousand and 16.9% having an income of 25 to 35 thousand. 23.8% of people coming under 35 to 55 thousand. 55 thousand to 75 and 75 thousand to one lakhs are 8.1% each. Only 5% of respondents are in the income group of above one lakh. The Table also examine the occupational structure of the respondents from the sample. 9.4% of the respondents are employed in government services. 16.3% are in different private business concerns. 14.4% of them are doing business and 26.3% are coolie workers. 13.8% are self-employed and 20% of them are engaged in other occupation category.

Finally, the Table shows that majority of the parents from the sample are living with the partner (77.5%). The lower percentage carries for widower 2.5 and divorcee, widows are 3.8% each. Separated and remarried category also brings 6.3% each. About the locale, the majority of the parents are from rural area (68.7%) and 31.25% are from urban area.



**Table 2: Participation of the Parents in any Sensitisation or Awareness Programmes on Parenting.**

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Category	Yes	No	Total
Father	19 (34.5%)	36 (65.5%)	55 (100%)
Mother	11 (10.5%)	94 (89.5%)	105 (100%)
Total	30 (18.8%)	130 (81.2%)	160 (100%)

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Table No. 2 explains the participation of the parents in any sensitisation or awareness programmes in preparation for the marriage or parenting. A majority of the respondents, i.e. male parents (65.5%) and female parents (89.5%) have not attended any of the sensitisation or awareness programmes in preparation to the marriage or parenting. It is evident that, 34.5% of the male parents respondents and 10.5% of the female parents have attended such programmes. Considering both, only 18.8% of the parents have attended any such programme and 81.2% have not attended the same.

It is important to note that participation in training programmes in preparation to marriage and introduction to parenting are very minimal. It could be due to the absence of such planned programmes from the part of the society, less number of institutions offering such trainings, young people are not motivated to attend such trainings and lack of accessibility and affordability to such programmes.

Even in this modern society, the participation in any awareness programme by the parents are very less. The child rearing being the most important factor of parenting and this finding is of great relevance.

**Table 3: Awareness of the Developmental Stages of the Child.**

Category	Yes	No	Total
Father	39 (70.9%)	16 (29.1%)	55 (100%)
Mother	81 (77.1%)	24 (22.9%)	105 (100%)
Total	120 (75%)	40 (25%)	160 (100%)

Table 3 exposes the awareness of the parents on the developmental stages of the child. It is evident that 70.9% of the male parents and 77.1% of the female parents are aware of the stages of development of their children. 29.1% of the male parents and 22.9% of the female parents are still unaware of the developmental stages of their children. It is a good sign that majority of the parents are aware of the developmental stages of the children. However, a little more in-depth examination is needed to know what these parents know about the developmental stages of their children.

**Figure 1: The Challenges Faced by the Parents in Upbringing the Children**

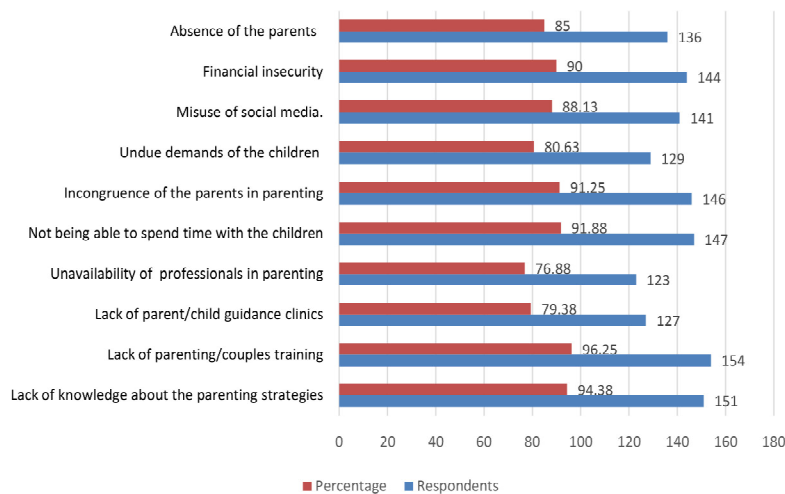


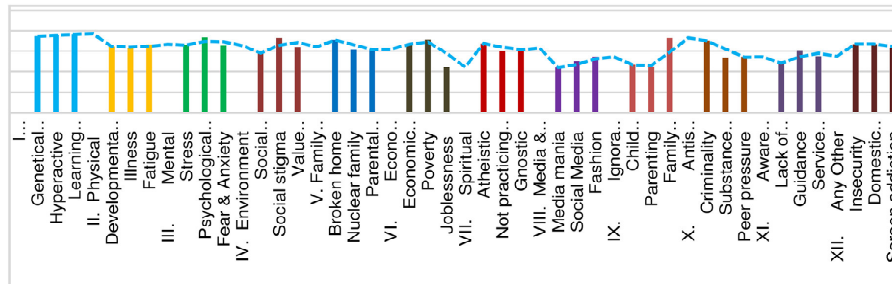
Figure 1 concludes that there are many challenges faced by the parents in the process of upbringing the children. A majority of the parents, i.e. 136 respondents out of 160 agree that, absence of the parents at home is one of the challenges they experienced. While 90% of them agree with financial insecurity, 88.13% of them opine that the misuse of social mediaby the children is the challenge. The figure shows that 80.63% of the parents say that the case of undue demands of the children raising unnecessary needs as the challenge. It is also evident in the figure that 91.25% thinking about incongruence of the parents in parenting as the challenge, while 91.88% agree with not being able to spend time with the children as the challenge. Majority of the respondents, 76.88%, emphasized the unavailability of the services in the area by the professionals in parenting as the challenge. 79.38% of the respondents pointed out the need of parent/child guidance clinics as the challenge in parenting. The vast majority (96.25%) admitted the absence of parenting/couples training is the challenge. Finally, 94.38% of the parents agreed upon the lack knowledge about the parenting strategies as the challenge.

The analysis of the data clearly shows that majority of the parents faced varied challenges in up bringing the children. All the challenges raised by the parents need critical identification strategies and creative solution plans. The challenges really are the hurdles in up bringing the children or in parenting process as a whole, the speedy solutions will definitely lead to effective parenting strategies.

## **6. Reflections on Educating the Parents**

The importance of parenting education is quite evident from the analysis of the data collected from the sample population. Three broad ways can be used to reflect the significance of educating or training the parents viz. 1. The awareness of parents on parenting, 2. The availability of parenting education in the current society, 3. The challenges faced by parents in the process of parenting. Firstly, from the awareness part of parenting, participation in any sensitisation or awareness programmes, participation in programme on upbringing the children, awareness of the developmental stages of the child are the variables treated and the results show that 38.1%, 81.2%, 82.5%, 25% respectively are not aware of the important ingredients of parenting. This shows that, majority of the parents from our study are

**Figure 2: The Challenges Faced by the Parents in the Process of Parenting**



unaware of the tools and techniques as well as methods of parenting. Secondly, regarding the availability of parenting education in the current society, 76.88%, emphasized the unavailability of the services in the area of the professionals in parenting. 79.38% of the respondents pointed out the felt need of parent/child guidance clinics, 96.25% admitted the absence of parenting/couples training, 94.38% of the parents agreed upon the lack of knowledge about the parenting strategies. The data clearly communicate that, our current society imparts a very low priority to parenting education. Most of the parenting issues are the byproduct of ignorance. Therefore, it is essential to provide necessary training or awareness on parenting through various institutional channels of the society. Finally, the challenges faced by the parents in the process of parenting is clearly mentioned in Figure 2. For a powerful society, parenting is the most significant factor which requires special attention and care, so that, society can positively and productively grow towards its desired goals and objectives. In this endeavor, parenting education or training is an inevitable input. If parents are trained enough, having sufficient awareness about their role in parenting, most of the social issues in connection with children are curable.

## 7. Suggestions

1. The Local Self-Government and the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) like Kudumbashree, and NGOs have to come up with regular community awareness programmes on parenting, as the knowledge, attitude and practices associated with positive parenting, child interactions and child development are most essential to the society.

2. In every district, the Health Department-National Health Mission (NHM) and District Medical Officer-can take up the responsibility of training the youth on pre-marital training, couples and parents on parenting through the personnel of CHC, PHC, Family welfare Centre (FWC) JPHN, JHI and ASHA Workers.
3. Media based and online sensitization programmes are to be developed for parenting education.
4. Reality Shows on best parenting strategies and tips could be designed and broadcasted by Television Channels.
4. Online and off-line short term and long term courses on parenting and child rearingpractices could also be developed and disseminated for the aspirants of marital life, young couples and parents.
5. Government and NGOs can come with Parent/Child clinics to guide the parents and the children.
6. A Public, Private and Community Partnership is to be initiated to work up on the various issues of parenting and family wellness. This partnership can establish Parental Guidance Clinics and Child Clinics and Common Guidance Centres where the experts from these three sectors can render their voluntary service for the same.
7. Social workers can organize various parent training programmes and responsible parenting through marriage preparation programs and couple trainings.

## **8. Conclusion**

Responsible parenthood is a holistic concept; not only on parenting but also related to various themes like child rearing, family life, child guidance and integrated planning of the family matters. It is the basis of any family for its stable existence and smooth functioning. The study shows that the training need of the parents and the possibility of accessing proper guidance and awareness not properly met in the society. Moreover, proper preparation for a marital life, which is the most important responsibility of the human beings as a social being is very less thought of in our culture. It is a fact that while the nuclear family took up the social scene and the joint family system has been disappeared, the responsibility of the new generation couples and parents

became more complicated. The youth, young couples and parents are to be empowered with proper training and proper guidance. Children need care that promotes their overall mental health, including a positive sense of self, as well as the ability to cope with stressful situations, temper emotional arousal, overcome fears, and accept disappointments and frustrations. Parents are essential resources to develop an emotional, social and cognitive competence of the children. In this context only trained and empowered parents in positive and responsible parenthood, can manage the whole show of family life and child rearing, to mould the future responsible citizens of the society.

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