Original Research Article

Status of Socio Emotional Behavior among Preschool Children in Bangladesh

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Abstract: ***Background:*** Socio-emotional behavior problem is a serious health problem among pre-school children in the world. Bangladesh is no exception of this. Socio-emotional behavior problem has significantly negative impact at individual, familial and society level. There is a dearth of study regarding socio-emotional behavior among preschool children in Bangladesh. As a consequence, this study attempted to explore the status of socio-emotional behavior among preschool children in Bangladesh. ***Methodology:*** This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among 132 mothers having pre-school going children in the two selected schools in Bagherhat district, Bangladesh. Face to face interview was conducted for data collection by using a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed by using Pearson product correlation, t-test and ANOVA. ***Results:*** The findings showed that the average mean of socio-emotional behavior of preschool children was 1.25. The results presented significant positive correlation of child's socio-emotional behavior with mother's age (r= .188, p=0.030), family income (r=.225, p=0.009) and number of siblings (r=.179, p=0.039) respectively. On the other hand, a significant difference of child's socio-emotional behavior with mother's educational level (F=3.201, p=0.044), mother's occupation (F=2.792, p=0.043), and sex of the child (t= -2.481, p=0.014) was observed. ***Conclusion:*** It can be concluded that preschool children have socio-emotional behavioral problems. Socio-emotional behavior was also significantly associated with demographic characteristics.
Keywords: Socio-emotional Behavior, Health problem, Preschool children, Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

A child's ability to control their own feelings and behavior as well as to understand others' feelings and build relationship with another person is regarded as the social-emotional behavior [1]. Positive socio-emotional behavior motivates a child to learn critical skills such as the ability to communicate, connect with others, resolve conflict, self- regulate, display kindness and empathy and cope up with challenges [2]. On the other hand, children with socio- emotional behavioral problem impose negative effect not only at the individual level but also at the familial and societal level [3].

Socio-emotional behavior problem is considered as one of the serious health problem among preschool children [4], and is very common around the world since its prevalence was estimated to be 8.3% in 2014 [5]. A prior author reported the socio-emotional and behavioral (SEB) problems among preschool children in high-income countries ranging from 3% to 40% [6]. Existing literature suggests that lower middle income countries such as India and Pakistan show a prevalence of SEB problems of 24% and 41.4% of children respectively [7,8]. There is no accurate data on the number of preschool children suffering from SEB difficulties in Bangladesh. However, some studies show that there are 20.9% to 40.35% of school-going children with SEB problems in Bangladesh [4, 9]. Since children go to school after completing their preschool, it is conceivable that Bangladesh has many preschool-aged children with SEB problems.

Previous research discovered that children all over the world suffer from various types of socio-emotional behavioral problems. Ogundele (2018) classified socio-emotional and behavioral problems in two categories as "internalizing," which includes emotional disorders like depression and anxiety, and "externalizing," which includes disruptive behaviors like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and conduct disorder [10]. According to Charach, McLennan, Bélanger, and Nixon (2017), children's socio-emotional and behavioral functioning can vary significantly between the ages of 2 and 5 due to their developmental level, environmental, and family context [11]. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, conduct disorders, disruptive behavior problems, aggressive behavior, attention problems, and social problems were the most common socio-emotional behavioral problems among preschool children [12, 13].

Existing literature suggest that parental care, attention, love, jobs and mental health are associated with the development of SEB difficulties in the children to some extent [14-16]. In addition, children age, gender, number of siblings and religion were identified as the contributing factors for SEB problem [17]. Children with SEB problem show an increased risk of physical injury [18]. Physical and mental illness is not an uncommon scenario among these children [19]. It is reported that they tend to present poor academic performance and drooping out of school [17]. At the family level, this group of children may present poor occupational and psychosocial functioning [20]. On the other hand, at a larger scale, such as in society, SEB problems have been found to be associated with aggressive behavior, domestic violence, and unwanted pregnancies [21].

In order to minimize or prevent the burden due to SEB problems at the individual, familial and societal level, early identification along with comprehensive management strategies is necessary. There is a dearth of study regarding socio-emotional behavior among preschool children in Bangladesh. As a consequence, this study attempted to explore the status of socio-emotional behavior among preschool children in Bangladesh which could act as a baseline data to develop a health education program for preventing socio-emotional behavior problem among preschool children.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among 132 mothers of pre-school children in Bagherhat, Bangladesh. Two schools namely Sheikh Helal Uddin Academy and Azizul Haque Ideal Academy in Chitalmari upazila of Bagherhat district in Bangladesh was selected conveniently as the study place. On the other hand, the sample size of this study was estimated by using G power analysis software. The sample size was calculated for an accepted minimum significance level (α) 0.05, an expected power of 0.80, and an estimated population effect size of 0.25 as the medium effect size used in the nursing studies. Sample size was produced 120. In considering 10% attrition, the final sample size was 132 [22]. Mothers of 3-6-year-old children studying in Sheikh Helal Uddin Academy and Azizul Haque Ideal Academy in Chitalmari Upazila of Bagherhat District, Bangladesh who were physically and mentally healthy and able to communicate in Bengali language were included in this study. In contrast, mothers who were single and unwilling to consent, and who had adopted children or lived away from the family were excluded from this study. This study was commenced in July 2019 and finished in June 2020.

In order to collect data, a face-to-face interview was conducted upon the selected participants during their children school days at the school premises through using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire had two sections. First section was designed to extract demographic information about the mothers and their children. This section was again divided in two parts. The first part included demographic data of mothers which consisted of eight items including age, religion, educational level of mothers, occupation of mother and father, monthly family income, family type and the second part included demographic data of children which consisted of three items namely age, gender and number of siblings of children. The second section had Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Socio-emotional behavior of preschool children was measured by using the

parent-fill version of the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire, which was developed by Robert Goodman in 1997. The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire is composed of 25 items on 3 point Likert scale which covers five scales/domains of behavior. Among these domains, four were negative scales (emotional symptoms, behavioral problems, hyperactivity and problems with peers) and one was positive scale (prosocial behavior). Each item has three response categories such as (0) = not true, (1) = somewhat true' and (2) = certainly true. The highest score indicated the child had a significant problem. Based on cultural context of our country, these instruments were validated by three panel experts, two PhD faculty of National Institute of Advanced Nursing Education and Research (NIANER) and one is a Physician, Department of Pediatrics in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

Necessary permission was taken from the participants before proceeding to data collection. After data collection was completed, it was checked, verified, and edited for consistency to reduce the data error. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used to analyze the data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. To examine the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and socio-emotional behavior among preschool children, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, median, and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics such as t-test, one-way ANOVA (Analysis of variance), and Pearson's product moment correlation were used. Prior to begin the study, approval was sought from the Institutional Review Board of National Institute of Advanced Nursing Education and Research, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University. The researcher had also taken permission from authority of Sheikh Helal Uddin Academy and Azizul Haque Ideal Academy in Chitalmari upazila, Bagerhat district, Bangladesh.

RESULTS

Table 1: Distribution of mother and children demographic data (N=132)

Variables	Categories	n	%	Mean±SD
Mothers' Characteristics				
Age of Mothers (18-40) years				27.64±5.434
Religion	Muslim	88	66.7	
	Hindu	44	33.3	
Mothers' Education Level	School	55	41.7	
	College	38	28.8	
	University	39	29.5	
Mothers' Occupation	Govt. Service	11	8.3	
	Private	28	21.2	
	Service			
	Worker	30	22.7	
	Housewife	63	47.7	
Fathers' Occupation	Service	76	57.6	
	Worker	38	28.8	
	Others	18	13.6	
Family income (6000-50000) BDT				20765.15±9693.67
Types of family	Nuclear	106	80.3	
	Joint family	26	19.7	
Number of family members (3-13) person				4.77±1.84
Child's Characteristics				
Age of Child (3-6) years				4.939±0.65
Sex of the child	Boy	85	64.4	
	Girl	47	35.6	
Number of Sibling (1-5) person				1.74±.83

Table 1 shows the mothers' mean (± SD) age was 27.64 (±5.434) years where most of the mother (66.7%) was Muslim and maximum (41.7 %) had completed their school. In terms of occupation, the highest (47.7 %) mother was house wife and the maximum (57.6%) father was service holder.

Participants family monthly mean (± SD) income was 20765.15 (±9693.67) Bangladeshi Taka. Nuclear was mentioned as the type of family by the sheer number of mother (80.3%). The mean ± SD family member was 4.77±1.84. On the other hand, children mean (± SD) age was 4.939 (±0.65) years where

64.4% was boy and 35.6 % was female. Children

mean (± SD) siblings' number was 1.74 (±.83).

Table 2: Distribution of pre-school children according to their socio-emotional behavior

	Items	Not True (0) n(%)	Somewhat True (1) n(%)	Certainly True (2) n(%)	Mean± SD
Hyperactivity					
Total mean of Hyperactivity					**1.06±.43**
1.	Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	37(28)	44(33.3)	51(38.6)	1.11±.81
2.	Constantly fidgeting or squirming	72(54.5)	35(26.5)	25(18.9)	.64±.78
3.	Can stop and think things out before acting	42(31.8)	50(37.9)	40(30.3)	.98±.79
4.	Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	30(22.7)	48(36.4)	54(40.9)	1.18±.78
5.	Easily distracted, concentration wanders	65(49.2)	35(26.5)	32(24.2)	.75±.82
Conduct Problems					
Total mean of Conduct Problems					**1.31± .39**
6.	Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers	38(28.8)	45(34.1)	49(37.1)	1.08±.81
7.	Generally obedient, does what adults request	28(21.2)	49(37.1)	55(41.7)	1.20±.77
8.	Often fights with other children or bullies them	100(75.8)	17(12.9)	15(11.4)	.36±.68
9.	Can be spiteful to others	96(72.7)	20(15.2)	16(12.1)	.39±.70
10.	Often argumentative with adults	98(74.2)	19(14.4)	15(11.4)	.37±.68
Emotional symptoms					
Total mean of Emotional symptoms					**1.47± .60**
11.	Often complains of headaches, stomach aches or sickness	82(62.1)	35(26.5)	15(11.4)	.49±.69
12.	Many worries, often seems worried	97(73.5)	21(15.9)	14(10.6)	.37±.67
13.	Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	96(72.2)	23(17.4)	13(9.8)	.37±.66
14.	Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	63(47.7)	41(31.1)	28(21.2)	.73±.79
15.	Many fears, easily scared	60(45.5)	34(25.8)	37(28)	.97±1.87
Peer relationships					
Total mean of Peer relationship					**.94± .45**
16.	Rather solitary, tends to play alone	79(59.8)	18(13.6)	35(26.5)	.67±.87
17.	Has at least one good friend	24(18.2)	29(22)	79(59.8)	1.42±.78
17.	Has at least one good friend	24(18.2)	29(22)	79(59.8)	1.42±.78
18.	Generally liked by other children	12(9.1)	35(26.5)	85(64.4)	1.55±.66
19.	Picked on or bullied by other children	81(61.4)	23(17.4)	28(21.2)	.60±.82
20.	Gets on better with adults than with other children	37(28)	50(37.9)	45(34.1)	1.06±.79
Pro-social behavior					
Total mean of Pro-social behavior					**1.47± .54**
21.	Considerate of other people's feelings	29(22)	47(35.6)	56(42.4)	1.20±.78
22.	Share readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils, etc.)	19(14.4)	33(25)	80(60.6)	1.46±.73
23.	Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	16(12.1)	35(26.5)	81(61.4)	1.49±.70
24.	Kind to younger children	8(6.1)	25(18.9)	99(75)	1.69±.58
25.	Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children).	15(11.4)	35(26.5)	82(62.1)	1.51±.69
Total mean of Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire	**1.25±0.24**				

Table 2 pictures the socio-emotional behavior of preschool children. The total mean score of socio-emotional behavior was found to be 1.25 (SD=0.24) which was calculated on the base of 3 point Likert scale. The total mean score of socio-emotional behavior was the average score of five domains of Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire. Of these, hyperactivity, conduct problems, emotional problems, peer relationship and pro-social behavior's total mean score was 1.06±.43, 1.31± .39, 1.47± .60, .94± .45 and 1.47± .54, respectively.

Table 3: Relationship between Socio-demographic Characteristics and Socio- emotional Behavior among Preschool Children (N=132)

Variables	Categories	Mean ± SD	t/F/r	P value
Mothers' Characteristics				
Age of Mothers			.188*	**0.030**
Religion			1.466	0.145
	Muslim	31.88 ±6.011		
	Hindu	30.25±5.989		
Mothers' Education Level			3.201	**0.044**
	School	31.29±6.468		
	College	29.63±6.109		
	University	33.05±4.861		
Mothers' Occupation			2.792	**0.043**
	Govt. Service	28.36±5.104		
	Private Service	33±5.185		
	Worker	29.57±7.947		
	Housewife	31.95±5.163		
Fathers' Occupation			.120	0.887
	Service	31.55±5.451		
	Worker	31.08±7.179		
	Others (Businessman)	30.94±6.034		
Family income			.225*	**0.009**
Types of family			-.193	0.847
	Nuclear	31.28±5.766		
	Joint family	31.54±7.129		
Number of family members			.065	0.456
Child's Characteristics				
Age of Child (3-6) years			-.077	0.383
Sex of the child			-2.481	**0.014**
	Boy	30.47±6.564		
	Girl	32.89±4.584		
Number of Sibling			.179*	**0.039**

* Correlation Coefficient

Table 3 depicts the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and preschool children's socio- emotional behavior. The results show a significant positive relationship between the mother's age and the child's socio- emotional behavior (r=.188, p=.030). There was also a significant relationship between mothers' educational level and their children's socio- emotional behavior (F=3.201, p=.044). There was a significant relationship between mothers' occupation and child socio-emotional behavior (F=2.792, p=0.043). Furthermore, there was a significant positive correlation between participant family income and child socio-emotional behavior (r=.225, p=.009). Furthermore, there was a significant difference between the child's sex and socio-emotional behavior (t=-2.481, p=0.014) as well as there was a positive correlation between the number of siblings and socio-emotional behavior (r=.179, p=.039).

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to examine the socio-emotional behavior of preschool children through interviews with 132 mothers in two selected schools of Bagerhat district, Bangladesh. In terms of socio-demographic data, the age and educational qualifications of the mothers of the children in this study were lower than some similar type of study participants [15, 9]. In contrast, this study finding found a high average monthly family income of participants compared to Trading Economics global macro models and analysts' expectations in Bangladesh [23]. The possible reason for high monthly family income was that the majority of the fathers were service holders. The present study observed that the mean socio-emotional behavior was 1.25 which indicates that the children have significant socio-emotional behavioral problems. Although, there is no such previous study among pre-school children in Bangladesh to verify this finding but a previous study conducted in Malaysia [24] supports this finding of this study.

Inferential analysis between socio-demographic characteristics of participants and socio- emotional behavior among preschool children shows that there was a significant positive relationship between the mothers' age and socio-emotional behavior of preschool children which is supported by a previous author [24]. Similar to several studies [15, 24], the current study found that maternal education level to be associated with socio-emotional behavior of preschool children. In this research, children of highly educated mothers had more socio-behavioral problems. However, Jahan *et al.,* (2019) and Divya (2020) did not find any relationship between maternal academic qualification and pre-school children socio-emotional behavior [9, 25]. Likewise, a prior author [25] reported no significant association between mothers' occupation, and emotional and behavioral problems among children which is inconsistent to this study result. Although, Idris *et al.,* (2019) [24] found that there was a significant association between working mothers and child socio-emotional behavior. The possible reason could be that the working mothers work outside or are engaged in professional work and higher educational qualifications assign more responsible work, which results in less or more educated working mothers not being able to allocate enough time to look after their children.

A conflicting result was found in this study regarding the relationship between child's age and number of siblings on child's socio-emotional behavior. The present study, like some previous studies [25, 26], found a significance difference in this area, whereas some previous studies did not [9, 24]. In addition, this study showed a significant positive correlation between monthly family income and child socio-emotional behavior which is suspicious since some previous studies [9, 24, 25] did not notice any relationship among these two variables. Further, no significant difference between religion, father's occupation, types of family, number of family members, and socio-emotional behavior among pre- school children was found in the running study. As opposed to, religion and family types was found to be associated with the emotional and behavioral problems among children in a prior study [25]. Therefore, a population based study focusing on socio-demographic characteristics in this regard is suggested to carry out.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that there is a presence of socio-emotional behavior problem among pre-school children in Bangladesh. This problem is associated with the mother's age, education and occupation, family income, and gender and siblings number of children.

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