



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

## Psychology

### BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS AMONG AUTISTIC MENTALLY CHALLENGED CHILDREN

**KEY WORDS:** Behavioural Problems, Autistic Mentally Challenged Children

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#### ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at examining the sociodemographic profiles and behavioural problems in a sample of autistic mentally challenged children in the age group of 6-12 years, living in urban and rural areas of Ranga Reddy District. Sociodemographic profiles and psychological needs were analyzed by using a structured schedule. Results show that certain behavioural problems were high in intensity. The need for parental counselling and behaviour modification techniques were suggested to manage behavioural problem with mild intensity.

#### INTRODUCTION

Autism, a developmental disability affecting verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3 that adversely affects a child's overall performance. The interest in the rehabilitation of autistic mentally challenged children since mid 1960's research provided evidence of a genetic component to autism and refined the symptoms of autism. Accordingly the individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IWDE) (1997) added Autism as disability.

Till 1990's Autism was supposed to be a rare syndrome with incidence rate of one in 10,000. Numerous studies have placed the occurrence of autism at a rate approximately 1 in 500 people at India's current population (Ahluwalia 2003). Difference in incidence may be due to varied diagnostic criteria. Such high incidence rates make it into a very common condition now, it is on the rise, and that these disorders are no longer rare. In spite of gradual rise of disorder, in India, yet the diagnosis is slow and there are no supportive services for these special need children. Prenatal factors such as intrauterine rubella, tuberous sclerosis, chromosomal abnormalities viz., fragile x-syndrome, and brain abnormalities (eg., hydrocephalus) and some post-natal conditions viz., phenyl ketonuria, infantile spasms and herpes encephalitis were found to be associated with autistic disorder. These conditions account for about 10% of autistic cases. Researches on this special children indicate that certain behavioural problems are the major source of stress in their caregivers. Though several behavioural expressions in these are stressful to the caregiver and cause severe distress to the child and to the caregiver with a difficulty in the management of daily activities. Such behaviours are considered as behavioural problems in this special need children. There is a dearth of data on this topic which are essential to design individualised behavioural intervention. Such intervention would not only improve quality of life in these children but also promote well being in their caregivers. In view of its significance, present study has been planned to identify and assess the characteristics of autistic mentally challenged children and to examine common behavioural problems among autistic mentally challenged children.

The study aims at examining the characteristics and common behavioural problems in the autistic mentally challenged children.

#### Method

##### Sample and Measures used

The sample for this study comprises 12 children with Autism and Mental Retardation of which 9 were male and 3 were female were drawn from the age group of 6-12 in Ranga Reddy District.

Sample was identified from the records of Census SADREM (Software for Assessment of Disabled for Access Rehabilitation and Empowerment), A.P State govt., Online portal as phase wise assessment status as on 26/5/2015/9/2013 and state department of Disabled Welfare. By using a set of inclusion criteria the sample for the study were included. The criteria were 1. children in 6-12 years; 2. Children with Mild / Moderate / Severe MR and autism; 3. Children living with their parents (not in the special schools); 4. Children with below IQ of 70 (on the basis of coloured Raven's Progressive Matrices. Subjects with mild and moderate mental retardation having autism were included in the study. The subject's parents (specifically mother) in the present study were individually contacted, their consent was obtained and tests were administered in one session. Personal Details of these children were obtained through Personal Data Form and Behavioural Problems Inventory, which was standardized afresh (Anitha, Saroj Arya & Jamuna, 2013). Apart from these tools, the children were observed and details on their behaviour patterns were recorded. Data were subjected to Descriptive statistical analysis.

#### Results and Discussion

Children having below IQ 70 were administered Indian Scale for Assessment of Autism (ISAA). Accordingly 14 MR children having autism (different levels) were identified and of which only 12 children were included (9 males and 3 females) in the present study. The subject were mostly hailed from urban areas of Ranga Reddy District. Their sociodemographic profiles are reported in Table.1

**Table 1: Sample Characteristics of Autistic Mentally Challenged Children**

S.No	Personal Data Variables	No.	%
1	<b>GENDER</b>		
	Boys	9	75
	Girls	3	25
2	<b>AGE</b>		
	6-9Yrs	5	41.6
	9-12Yrs	7	58.3
3	<b>Education-Schooling</b>		
	No School	5	41.6
	Regular School	7	58.3
4	<b>Severity of MR</b>		
	Mild MR with Mild Autism	2	16.6
	Mild MR with Moderate Autism	2	16.6
	Moderate MR with Mild Autism	3	25
	Moderate MR with Moderate Autism	2	16.6
	Severe MR with Mild Autism	1	8.3

	Severe MR with Moderate Autism	1	8.3
	Profound MR with Moderate Autism	1	8.3
<b>5</b>	<b>MOTHER'S AGE</b>		
	20-35Yrs	7	58.3
	35-45Yrs	5	41.6
<b>6</b>	<b>MOTHER'S EDUCATION</b>		
	No formal education/ below 5th	2	16.6
	5th-10th	3	25
	Intermediate	2	16.6
	Graduation, PG and above	5	41.6
<b>7</b>	<b>MOTHER'S OCCUPATION</b>		
	Casual labour	1	8.3
	Private service	1	8.3
	Government service	1	8.3
	Home makers	9	75
<b>8</b>	<b>FAMILY INCOME(per month)</b>		
	5000 and Below 5000 (per month)	5	41.6
	Above 5000 (per month)	7	58.3
<b>9</b>	<b>FAMILY TYPE</b>		
	Nuclear	9	75
	Joint	3	25
<b>10</b>	<b>Consanguinity in marriage</b>		
	Consanguinity	7	58.3
	Father married his sister's daughter	1	8.3
	Father married to maternal uncle's daughter	2	16.6
	Father married to paternal uncle's daughter	1	8.3
	Any other relation	1	8.3

The socio-demographic characteristics of the sample (Table 1) shows that, in a total sample of 12 subjects with mental retardation having autism, 75% were boys and 25% were girls with 41.6% of female children having autism were in the age group of 6-9yrs and 58.3% were in 9-12yrs. In the sample, 41.6% the sample had no formal schooling but 58.3% of children (mild level) are attending regular school. Regarding the severity of Mental Retardation having autism, majority of children (16.6%) were having mild MR with mild autism, 16.6% were having mild MR with moderate autism, 25% were having moderate MR with mild autism, 16.6% were having moderate MR with moderate autism and 8.3% of the sample were severe MR with moderate autism.

The data on parental characteristics of the sample shows that 58.3% of mothers were in 20-35Yrs age group and 41.6% were in 35-45Yrs. The educational status of parents indicates that 16.6% of mothers had no formal education or studied upto 5th class, 25% of them studied up to high school, 16.6% studied upto Intermediate and 41.6% were studied upto graduation / post graduation and above. In terms of details on mother's occupation data indicates that majority (8.3%) of mothers were casual labours, 8.3% were in private service, 8.3% were in Government service and 75% of mothers were home makers. Income status of families of the sample indicate that family having income of Rs.5000 per month and Rs. 5000 and below were 41.6% and 58.3%, respectively. The details on family type shows that 75% of children were from nuclear families and 25% of children were from joint families.

Apart from the above, further the parental consanguinity in marriage was examined. It is noticed that 58.3% of parents of the sample were in consanguinity, 8.3% of fathers married to their sister's daughter and 16.6% of fathers married to their maternal uncle's daughters. 8.3% of fathers married to paternal uncle's daughters and 8.3% married to other relation. Evidently, majority of mothers in the sample seems to had consanguinity in their marriage.

The aforementioned data suggest that in the sample (n = 12) majority of children were boys and higher proportion of sampe

were in 9-12 yrs age group and most of them (children) are attending regular school. Details on parental characteristics states that majority (58.3%) of mothers (of MR children having autism) were in the age group of 20-35 yrs and were graduates / post-graduates. The details on mothers occupation indicates that higher proportion of mothers were homemakers. Most of these children in the main sample (N=12) belong to the income level of Rs. 5000 and below (per month). About 75% of children are living in nuclear family setting and most parents had consanguinity in their marraiges.

Behavioural problem is defined as behaviour that causes distress to the child and to the caregiver and distrust the day-to-day activities that is disruptive or incompatible with learning, or incompatible with what the child is suppose to be doing. Review of studies on MR children having ASD reported that some behavioural problems are very salient in MR children having ASD. In view of this, an attempt was made to examine the nature of behaviour problems noticed in the present sample. Behavioural problems that were noticed in fifty percent or more in the sample are reported in Table – 2. Since it is.

**Table 2: Behavior Problems in the Autisitic Mentally Retarded Children (N=12)**

Behavior Problem	Reported	
	N	%
Violent and destructive behavior	8	66.6
Temper Tantrums	6	50
Violent and destructive behavior	8	66.6
Temper Tantrums	6	50
Repetitive behaviors	5	41.6
Odd behaviors	5	41.6
Hyperactivity	10	83.33

Majority of children in the study (N=8) i.e. 66.6% with autism having MR reported to have violent and destructive behaviors, 50% of children reported to have temper tantrums. 41.6% of children reported certain odd and repetitive behaviours. Out of 12 children 10 children were reported to be hyperactive (83.33%). The above mentioned behavioural problems are in concurrent with the previous research which showed that children with ASD commonly engage in aggressive and hyperactive behavior. Particularly when compliance is requested, outwardly aggressive behavior (hitting, biting, kicking, head banging) are common and most frequent. Manifestation of extreme social fears toward strangers, crowds, unusual situations, new environments and loud sounds (barking dogs, street noises) in these type of children can result in unusual or fearful reactions. Temper tantrums are found to be yet another behavioural problem which result in disruption to the individual child and to significant others in the family. From the details in table-2 it can be summarized that six different intense behavioural problems were noticed in the sample of 12 autistic children having mental retardation. From the protocols recorded during the field study suggest that hypertension in the mothers during pregnancy (prenatal stage) and delayed birth cry in the post-natal stage of these children were also found to be salient risk factors among children. Many behavioural problems viz., violent behaviour, temper tantrum, odd behaviours and hyperactivity were noticed in higher proportion of the sample who were cesarean babies. Among these, hyperactivity is found in majority of the sample (48.6%). The findings are in concurrence with earlier researches on autism with MR children. Results suggest that suitable behaviour modification strategies are to be recommended to reduce the intensity of behavioural problems and to promote wellbeing of primary caregivers.

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