UNIT 3  CHILD REARING PRACTICES

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3.0  INTRODUCTION

In the globalised socio-economic milieu, the advancements in science and technology have changed the cognitive affective perceptions and motivations of the individuals, families and society at large.

The emergence of individualism, materialism, and consumerism has led to disintegration of the joint family system, degeneration of morals and values and psychological alienation. However, in such an arena, we need to know more and more about child rearing practices.

Why does Rahul hit and bite the nearest person when he cannot finish a jigsaw puzzle? Why does Rohit work on the puzzle for fifteen minutes and then shrug and try another? Why does Sushant concentrate on solving puzzle and solves it before time? Why are children so different in their responses to the same situation? Temperament is a factor, of course; but research suggests that child rearing practices do affect children’s competence in dealing with their world. Child rearing practice is an innate process of nurturing, protecting, guiding and rearing the child through its developmental stages. It is a synergistic interplay of “nature and nurture” between the “parent and the child” entangled with joys, sorrows and challenges.

Researchers who have focused most directly on patterns of child rearing practices have identified several major dimensions on which families differ and which seem
to be significant for the child. These include the emotional tone of the family, the responsiveness of the parent to the child, the manner in which control is exercised and the quality and amount of communication. The most influential proposal about styles of child rearing practices has come from Diana Baumrind (1973) who has looked into combination of various dimensions of parenting. In this unit you will read about the styles of child rearing practices. As you read this chapter, keep the following objectives in mind.

### 3.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- define parenting style;
- analyse each model of parenting and apply it in day to day observation;
- describe the different styles of child rearing;
- analyse your own family network and identify prevailing parenting styles; and
- list out the different styles of child rearing practices.

### 3.2 CHILD REARING PRACTICES: CONCEPT AND TERMINOLOGY

Child rearing practices are parenting practices which are the mechanisms through which parents directly help their children attain socialisation goals. A child’s mind is considered a tabula rasa in that it is a clean slate and the parents can mould the child in any way they feel like. This concept of tabula rasa was put forward by John Locke, the Seventeenth-century philosopher and physician.

Child rearing is a process. It involves planning, formulating, and implementing a programme of bringing up children in a certain way that is in line with the requirement of the family and society. In this process the child learns the moral values, ethical issues, expectations from him by the family and society, and a set of patterns of behaviour which are essential for the proper growth and development of the child that would contribute positively to the family and the society. This process involves inculcating in children certain values, attitudes, opinions and beliefs through direct teaching, modeling, and imitation. These acquired patterns of behaviour are reinforced by the parents by praise and reward and where the child learns wrong patterns of behaviour, the same is punished. Thus through the process of rewards and punishment the child rearing practices inculcate in children the required appropriate behaviours and conduct that are in line with the social norms and family norms.

Child rearing practices over a period of time become the styles of parenting practices. Parenting styles in the western literature is defined as aggregates or constellations of behaviours that describe parent child interactions over a wide range of situations and that are presumed to create a pervasive interactional climate.

Competent parenting has been found to be related to a warmer, more accepting, and more helpful styles of parenting. Competent parenting is competence-inducing in that it is characterised by sensitivity to children’s capabilities, developmental milestones and recognises the child’s need for control and individuality and views the rights and duties of parents and children as complementary.
According to the Indian view of child development, the notion of *Samskara* is unique of both innate nature of the individual and the time dimension in development, where in an individual’s actions and thoughts are believed to carry over their effects across lives (Kakar, 1999). In India each significant stage, from conception to cremation, is celebrated as a reminder that life is a gift from God which should be duly respected and lived according to His wishes. The Vedic seers prescribed a set of observances, known as Samskaras which are practiced in the Indian households though in the modern days a few are still being practiced while much of the practices have been given up. As one looks at the purpose of the sanskaras, it is seen that there are 3 major purposes, viz., (i) To help in the formation and development of personality (ii) To impart higher sanctity to life by eradicating the impurities by performing sanskaras and (iii) To transcend the bondage of samsara and cross the ocean of death.

There are in all 16 sanskaras in the Hindu scripture which are to be followed while bringing up children. It starts with the time of conception to the time of death.

(adapted from the web site http://www.daivajna.org/daivajna/html/Samskaras.html)

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<tr>
<th>Pre-natal Samskaras</th>
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<td>1) Garbhadan (Conception)</td>
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<td>2) Pumsavana (Engendering a male issue)</td>
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<td>3) Simantonayana (Hair-parting)</td>
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<td>4) Jatakarma (Birth rituals)</td>
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<td>5) Namakarana (Barso/Name-giving)</td>
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<td>6) Nishkrama (First outing)</td>
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<td>7) Annaprashana (Dantolyo / First feeding)</td>
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<td>8) Chudakarma (javal kadche/Shaving of head)</td>
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<td>9) Karnavedh (Kan topap / Piercing the earlobes)</td>
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<td>10) Vidyarambha (Learning the alphabet)</td>
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<td>11) Upanayana (Munj/Sacred thread initiation)</td>
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<td>12) Vedarambha (Beginning Vedic study)</td>
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<td>13) Keshant (Godaan) (Shaving the beard)</td>
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<td>14) Samavartan (Sodmunj / End of studentship)</td>
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<td>15) Vivaha (Lagna / Marriage Ceremony)</td>
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<td>16) Antyeshti (Maran Saouskar / Death rites).</td>
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**Self Assessment Questions**

1) What is child rearing practices?  
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2) What are Sanskaras and how are they important to child development?  
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### 3.4 THE INTERACTIVE MODEL

The interactive model of socialisation effectively illustrates the Indian perspective of child development, that is the child is born with innate predispositions “samskaras” and the family must nurture the child such that his potential is actualized. The traditional child rearing practices are guided by the principle of child centeredness, with mother as the primary socialiser and father as the provider and disciplinarian.

The early infancy/childhood is characterised by “**palna and posna**”, that is protecting and nurturing. The child is ideologically considered valuable and the adults are expected to give their protection, affection and indulgence. A close and intimate mother child bonding is the hallmark of child rearing in India (Konantambigi, 1996). However mothering experienced for the boy child is significantly more favorable than experienced for the girl child perhaps because of preference for a male progeny (Pande & Malhotra, 2006). Models of parenting include the following: (i) Trait model (ii) Child effect model (iii) process model (iv) Transactional model (v) Contextual model.

#### 3.4.1 Trait Model (Holden and Miller, 1999)

The most prominent is the trait model of parenting which postulates stable, recurrent enduring pattern of behaviour embodied by parents consistent across time, situations and children as the essence of parenting.

The trait theories, have an interesting implication for the question of parental influences on personality. If personality is defined in terms of personality traits, and if traits are thought to be inherited, then parental styles of child rearing would appear to have little influence on children’s personality. The only influence parents would have on their children’s personality is a biological one. They pass their genes on to their children. According to the trait theories, parents interpersonal interactions with their children would exert little effect on the child’s personality development.

A very different view is put forth by proponents of phenomenological theories of personality. The primary focus of the phenomenological theories is the individual’s subjective experience of their world, that is, their phenomenological experience
According to Robert R McCrae (2004), trait structure, age and gender differences and cross observer agreement are all universal and this supports the view that traits are biologically based characteristics of human species. Aggregate levels of traits may lead to features of cultures as for example individualism / collectivism.

3.4.2 Child Effect Model (Bell, 1968)

In contrast to trait model of parenting is the child effect model of parenting. This model conceptualises child rearing as determined by characteristics of the child, such as temperament, age, gender, behaviour, appearance and activity level. This model was criticised for its one sided perspective of parent child dynamics.

According to this model it is not just the parents who influence the child but the child also influences the parent by their typical behaviours. Child effect model of socialisation, the child is the actor and the parent is the reactor. Children’s individual differences in age, gender, and personalities can evoke different behaviours and treatment from parents in addition to other socialisation agents. An example of research based in this tradition is Alexander Thomas and Stella Chess’s (1977) classic work in child temperament. Children can be classified as easy, slow-to-warm-up, and difficult based on nine dimensions of temperament (e.g., activity level, emotional intensity), with easy children being the most compliant to parental requests and difficult children the least. Subsequently, many researchers have focused on qualities of infants and children that evoke different responses in parents, or different parental outcomes.

3.4.3 Process Model (Belsky, 1984)

Belsky (1984) pioneered theories of the processes of competent parental functioning. His model focused on factors affecting parental behaviour and how such factors affect child-rearing, which in turn influences child development. At the family level, Belsky’s interest is primarily on interpersonal interactions between parent and child. Through an intensive literature search, Belsky drew the following conclusions regarding the determinants of parenting (Belsky 1984, 84)

Parenting is multiply determined by characteristics of the parent, child, and contextual subsystems of social support. These three determinants are not equally influential in supporting or undermining parenting. Developmental history and personality shape parenting indirectly, by first influencing the broader context in which parent child relations exist (i.e., marital relations, social networks, occupational experience).

Belsky found that parental personality and psychological wellbeing were the most influential of the determinants in supporting parental functioning. When two of three determinants are in the stressful situation, he stated that parental functioning is most protected and the parental personality and psychological well-being still function to promote sensitive caring.

The influence of contextual subsystems of social support is greater than the influence of child characteristics on parental functioning. On the basis of his review of the literature, Belsky determined that risk characteristics in the child are relatively easy to overcome, given that either one of the other two determinants is not at risk.
Belsky’s model does not give special attention to the importance of the family’s material resources, while the family’s social resources are conceptualised impersonally as the contextual subsystem of support. Belsky’s work is most useful in exonerating the child of blame for poor outcomes.

The model of parenting contains three domains of determinants:

1) the personal psychological resources of the parents;

2) the characteristics of the child; and

3) contextual sources of stress and support, that include the marital relations, the social networks, and the occupational experiences of parents.

Determinants of parenting are marital relationships and social networkings, developmental history of parent, parents personality, parenting as such, child’s characteristics, work and child development.

3.4.4 Transactional Model (Sameroff, 1975)

This model highlights the bidirectional reciprocal influences of both parents and children in parenting and child development. The children’s risks may begin with aversive behaviour by either member of the dyad (parental insensitivity or temperamentally difficult child) that eventually develops into cycles of increasing negativity and distress in the parent child subsystem.

3.4.5 Contextual Model (Darling and Steinberg, 1993)

In this model Parenting style is viewed as a context that facilitates or undermines parent’s efforts to socialise their children. To understand the processes through which parenting style influences child development, one must disentangle three different aspects of parenting, that is,

i) the goals towards which socialisation is directed,

ii) the parenting practices used by parents to help children reach those goals,

iii) the parenting style or emotional climate within which socialisation occurs.

3.4.6 Parenting Style

The parenting style is the most useful concept that moderates the effectiveness of the child rearing practices. It changes the child’s openness to socialisation. Darling and Steinberg (1993) are of the view that parenting style and parenting practices are the mechanisms through which parents directly help their child attain their socialisation goals. It must be kept in mind that the primary processes by which parenting style influences child development are indirect. Baumrind (1971) viewed the socialisation process as dynamic and pointed out that the parenting style used actually altered how open children are to their parent’s attempts to socialise them. She in fact stated that authoritarian style produced competent children.

Thus the models of parenting identified three characteristics of parents that determine the processes through which parenting style influences child development. These were:

i) values and goals parents have in socialising children

ii) parenting practices employed by them

iii) attitudes that they express towards their children.
Thus parenting style alters the parents’ capacity to socialise their children by changing the effectiveness of their parenting practices. Thus parenting style can be considered as a contextual variable that moderates the relationship between specific parenting practices and specific developmental outcomes.

### Self Assessment Questions

1. Discuss the various models of parenting.

2. In what ways each model of parenting help is children’s growth and development.

3. How does parenting style moderate the effectiveness of child rearing practices?

### 3.5 CHILD REARING PRACTICES: PARENTING STYLES AND PARENTING DIMENSIONS

Researchers have uncovered convincing links between parenting styles and the effects these styles have on children. During the early 1960s, psychologist Diana Baumrind conducted a study on more than 100 preschool age children (Baumrind, 1967). Using naturalistic observation, parental interviews and other research methods, she identified four important dimensions of parenting:

- Disciplinary strategies
- Warmth and nurturance
- Communication styles
- Expectations of maturity and control

Based on these dimensions, Baumrind suggested that the majority of parents display one of above parenting styles.

### Types of Parenting Styles

The four parenting styles are authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved styles.
3.5.1 Authoritarian Style

In this style of parenting, children are expected to follow the strict rules established by the parents. Failure to follow such rules usually results in punishment. Authoritarian parents fail to explain the reasoning behind these rules. If asked to explain, the parent might simply reply, “Because I said so.” These parents have high demands, but are not responsive to their children. According to Baumrind, these parents “are obedience- and status-oriented, and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation” (1991).

Also, in authoritarian parenting, called also as strict parenting, the style of parenting is characterised by high expectations of conformity and compliance to parental rules and directions, while allowing little open dialogue between parent and child. Authoritarian parenting is a restrictive, punitive style in which parents pressurise the child to follow their directions and to respect their work and effort.

Authoritarian parents expect much from their child but generally do not explain the reasoning for the rules or boundaries. Authoritarian parents are less responsive to their children’s needs, and are more likely to blow a child rather than discuss the problem. Children with this type of parenting may have less social competence as the parent generally tells the child what to do instead of allowing the child to choose by him or herself.

3.5.2 Authoritative Style

Like authoritarian parents, those with an authoritative parenting style establish rules and guidelines that their children are expected to follow. However, this parenting style is much more democratic. Authoritative parents are responsive to their children and willing to listen to questions. When children fail to meet the expectations, these parents are more nurturing and forgiving rather than punishing. Baumrind suggests that these parents “monitor and impart clear standards for their children’s conduct. They are assertive, but not intrusive and restrictive. Their disciplinary methods are supportive, rather than punitive. They want their children to be assertive as well as socially responsible, and self-regulated as well as cooperative” (1991).

In addition the parent is demanding and responsive. Authoritative parenting, also called balanced parenting, is characterised by a child-centered approach that holds high expectations of maturity. Authoritative parents can understand their children’s feeling and teach them how to regulate them. They often help them to find appropriate outlets to solve problems. Authoritative parenting encourages children to be independent but still places limits and controls on their actions. Extensive verbal give-and-take is allowed, and parents are warm and nurturant toward the child. Authoritative parents allow the child to explore more freely, thus having them make their own decisions based upon their own reasoning.

Authoritative parents set limits and demand maturity, but when punishing a child, the parent will explain his or her motive for their punishment. Their punishments are measured and consistent in discipline, not harsh or arbitrary. Parents will set clear standards for their children, monitor limits that they set, and also allow children to develop autonomy. They also expect mature, independent, and age-appropriate behaviour of children. They are attentive to their children’s needs and concerns, and will typically forgive and teach instead of punishing if a child falls short. This is supposed to result in children having a higher self esteem and independence because of the democratic give-take nature of the authoritative
parenting style. This is the most recommended style of parenting by child-rearing experts.

### 3.5.3 Permissive Style

Permissive parents, sometimes referred to as indulgent parents, have very few demands to make of their children. These parents rarely discipline their children because they have relatively low expectations of maturity and self-control. According to Baumrind, permissive parents “are more responsive than they are demanding. They are nontraditional and lenient, do not require mature behaviour, allow considerable self-regulation, and avoid confrontation” (1991). Permissive parents are generally nurturing and communicative with their children, often taking on the status of a friend more than that of a parent.

The parent is responsive but not demanding. It is also called indulgent, nondirective or lenient parenting. It is characterised as having few behavioural expectations from the child. It is a style of parenting in which parents are involved with their children but place few demands or controls on them. Parents are nurturing and accepting, and are responsive to the child’s needs and wishes. Permissive parents do not require children to regulate themselves or behave appropriately. This may result in creating spoiled brats, or spoiled sweet, children depending on the behaviour of the children.

Children of permissive parents may tend to be more impulsive, and as adolescents, may engage more in misconduct and drug use. Children never learn to control their own behaviour and always expect to get their way.

### 3.5.4 Uninvolved Style

An uninvolved parenting style is characterised by few demands, low responsiveness and little communication. While these parents fulfill the child’s basic needs, they are generally detached from their child’s life. In extreme cases, these parents may even reject or neglect the needs of their children. This is also called neglectful parenting.

The parent is neither demanding nor responsive. The parents are low in warmth and control, are generally not involved in their child’s life, are disengaged, undemanding, low in responsiveness, and do not set limits. Parents are emotionally unsupportive of their children, but will still provide their basic needs.

Children whose parents are neglectful develop the sense that other aspects of the parents’ lives are more important than they are. Children often display contradictory behaviour, and are emotionally withdrawn from social situations. This disturbed attachment also impacts relationships later on in life. In adolescence, they may show patterns of truancy and delinquency.

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2) Discuss which parenting style is most suited for child growth and development and why.

3) Differentiate between authoritative and authoritarian styles of parenting.

3.6 THE IMPACT OF PARENTING STYLES

What effect do these parenting styles have on child development outcomes? In addition to Baumrind’s initial study of 100 preschool children, researchers have conducted numerous other studies than have led to a number of conclusions about the impact of parenting styles on children.

Authoritarian parenting styles generally lead to children who are obedient and proficient, but they rank lower in happiness, social competence and self-esteem.

1) Authoritative parenting styles tend to result in children who are happy, capable and successful.

2) Permissive parenting often results in children who rank low in happiness and self-regulation. These children are more likely to experience problems with authority and tend to perform poorly in school.

3) Uninvolved parenting styles rank lowest across all life domains. These children tend to lack self-control, have low self-esteem and are less competent than their peers.

3.6.1 The Reasons for Differing Parenting Styles

After learning about the impact of parenting styles on child development, you may wonder why all parents simply don’t utilise an authoritative parenting style. After all, this parenting style appears to be the most likely to produce happy, confident and capable children. What are some reasons why parenting styles might vary? Some potential causes of these differences include culture, personality, family size, parental background, socio-economic status, educational level and religion.

Of course, the parenting styles of individual parents also combine to create a unique blend in each and every family. For example, the mother may display an authoritative style while the father favors a more permissive approach. In order to create a cohesive approach to parenting, it is essential that parents learn to cooperate as they combine various elements of their unique parenting styles.

Child rearing

Don’t touch those!” the mother commands as her child plays with the decoration pieces kept on a shelf in the drawing room at her host’s house. A few seconds later, the mother looks up from her conversation with her host, and the child is...
Development During Early and Late Childhood

still playing with the decoration piece. “I told you not to touch those!” the child’s mother repeats. A few seconds later, the mother looks up and sees her child still playing with the pieces. The mother says nothing and continues her conversation with the host.

It happens all the time. Children are given orders, and when they don’t obey, the parent simply goes back to her conversation and forgets.

What should parents do in this situation? Some parents would say that we should punish him (Authoritarian), others that he is just a child, we should absolutely ignore him (Permissive), and others that we should make him understand that decoration pieces are not to play with (Authoritative).

The authoritative parenting style is considered to be the healthiest and most balanced approach to parenting. Authoritative parents set and enforce limits, but they do so to protect their children. They also engage their children with reasoning when enforcing those limits.

Authoritative parents create balance between authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. For example, there are times when a parent needs to have their child obey them, regardless how they feel about it, and there are also times when a parent needs to allow their child to make mistakes and take chances without their interference.

Children imitate and learn much more from their parents than most parents realise. Even the slightest behavioural nuances are picked up by children, and acted out in their own lives. Styles of conflict, and the way parents carry themselves will be imitated to some extent in their children’s lives. Therefore, it’s important for parents to pick a parenting style that best fits how they would like their child to behave now, and later when they become an adult. After all, it’s a parent’s responsibility to prepare their children to survive in this world without them.

3.7 LET US SUM UP

It is perhaps time for parents to understand that parenting is not about power exercising duty. It is a duty concerned with and oriented towards empowerment and development of child through unconditional love and acceptance, open and consistent communication, autonomy granting, regulation, inductive rationalisations for parent-child bonding and internalisation of moral, social and cultural values. In word of Kochansksa and Thompson (1997) Moral internalisation – taking over values or attitudes of the society as one’s own so that socially acceptable behaviours is motivated not by anticipation of external consequences but by intrinsic factors, is thought to underlie the development of children’s social and emotional competence, which is enhanced in children by minimal parental power assertion, promotion of choice and autonomy and providing explanations for desirable behaviours and explaining consequences of undesirable behaviours.

The final word is, Parenting definitely matters!

3.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Critically evaluate each parenting style.
2) Which style you think is the best and why?
3) Design one case each for every parenting style.
4) In your view which is the most prevalently used parenting style in India?
3.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES


References


