

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Problems related to bad parenting practices in Sri Lanka are on the rise. Early identification of mothers who are practicing bad parenting and carrying out structured interventions by the grass root level healthcare staff would prevent further damage to the child, family and the society. Therefore it is important to screen the mothers having very young children with regards to their level of parenting in order to correct the poor areas.

Objectives

The aim of this study was to assess the level of provision of emotional care and discipline control by the mothers having children aged 1 to 3 years visiting the well baby clinics of Medical Officer of Health area Kaduwela and to find out socio-demographic and other factors of the mothers related to parenting.

Method

This was a clinic based descriptive cross sectional study. Systematic sampling technique was used to select the study units (N=400). An interviewer administered questionnaire was used to assess the level of emotional care and discipline control by the mothers and related socio-demographic and selected factors. Principal Investigator and four Pre Intern Medical Officers collected the data.

Results

A response rate of 98.76% was achieved. Majority of mothers were Sinhalese (97.8%) and Buddhists (93.2%) while other ethno-religious groups represented a minority. More than half the mothers (55.8%) had two or more children. Majority of mothers had a child of either two years (42.0%) or three years (42.8%).

Eighty percent of the study sample was house wives and 43.5% were educated upto A/L and another 42.2% were educated upto O/L. Majority were earning approximately Rs.20,000.00 per month.

Half of the mothers (50.2%) lived as a nuclear family and 61.2% were receiving husband's support to look after the child, but 5.5% didn't receive any support.

The level of provision of emotional care was 'Good' in more than half the study sample (56.2%) while another 43.8% had a 'Poor' level of provision of emotional care according to the scale measured. Age of the mother ($p=0.001$), Number of living children ($p=0.001$), Pattern of living ($p=0.034$) and the type of support received by the mother to look after the child ($p=0.000$) were found to be having statistically significant association with the level of provision of emotional care by the mothers in this study.

Results did not have any statistically significant associations between level of provision of emotional care and factors like maternal level of education, state of employment, family income and current health status of the mother. But these factors had remarkable differences in the level of emotional care.

Level of discipline control was 'Poor' in a majority (61.2%) of the study sample according to the scale measured. Only 38.8% had a 'Good' level of discipline control. The age of the child was found to be significantly associated with the level of discipline control ($p=0.000$). The level of 'Good' discipline control was seen among majority of mothers among 41 years and above category than those who were in 26 to 30 years category even though the difference was not significant.

Minority (4.3%) punished their children frequently by ways such as spanking, hit with a stick (1.7%) and shaking the child in anger (1.8%). Verbal and psychological punishment was commoner. Consistency in discipline control was unsatisfactory among 35.7% of the mothers.

Conclusions and recommendation

Gaps in ways of provision of emotional care and discipline control were identified and it is recommended to emphasize on these measures in the existing maternal and childcare programme in this country in order to uplift the quality of the parenting practices by the mothers.