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<u>A study to explore the parenting approaches at Khoj School in Govandi, Mumbai.</u>

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Abstract:

Parents play a crucial role in shaping a child's environment, which supports a child's physical, socio-emotional, and cognitive development. To understand this better, many studies have been carried out to explore the parenting style, however, most of them are in the context of Western countries. Therefore, this study attempts to understand the parenting approach in the Indian context; Is the parenting approach based on a parent's childhood experience, or is it based on the needs of their children? Parenting approaches were analyzed using 133-item (1995) parenting questions developed by Clyde C. Robinson, Barbara Mandleco, Susanne Frost Olsen, and Craig H. Hart from Brigham Young University, and both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. For this study, 20 parents were interviewed. The result reflects a significant shift in parenting approaches compared to practices followed by their parents. The approaches are mainly influenced by their immediate environment. Lastly, it reflects the active involvement of parents in schools, resulting in high awareness about child development.

Introduction:

Parents employ parenting style approaches in the upbringing of their children. It is a comprehensive process that supports children's development from birth through adulthood, encompassing physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth (Antawarti et al. 2019). These approaches are influenced by various factors, including culture, personality, and the parents' upbringing. Understanding parenting styles is crucial, as they significantly impact a child's emotional and social development. Parent-child interactions shape children's understanding of appropriate behaviors, values, cultural practices, and social norms (Srikandi 2020), as parents serve as primary social agents for children. This interaction forms the foundation for children's ability to trust themselves and others and their social-emotional and cognitive development (Hanifah et al. 2023).

'Lifespan Development', a book by Lally (2019), describes early childhood as a period of continued rapid cognitive development. During this stage, children gain greater control over their emotions and can pursue a variety of activities that reflect their interests. Parents play a crucial role in this phase as the child's emotional, social, and physical development is influenced by various factors, including nutrition, parenting, parental behavior, and environment, social and cultural factors (Pem. D 2016).

Parents play a pivotal role in the developmental trajectory of their children, necessitating an understanding of their parenting styles and their contributions to child growth. Numerous studies have demonstrated that parenting styles significantly influence a child's academic performance, interpersonal relationships, mental health, and behavior. Comprehending these styles is essential for understanding parental approaches and their impact on child development. This research aims to enhance parental awareness regarding the influence of their parenting styles on their children's development. The right of children to a safe and nurturing home environment underscores the importance of understanding parenting styles as a step toward achieving this goal. This study seeks to elucidate the parenting approaches of parents at Khoj school and explore strategies to support their efforts in promoting healthy child development.

Theoretical Framework:-

Why parentings matter:

Parents are among the most important people in the lives of young children. Parents include mothers and fathers, as well as other caregivers who act as parents. From birth, children rely on parents to provide them with the care they need to be happy and healthy and to grow and develop well. The growth of children depends on the parent-child interaction. When the needed care is not met, especially in the early years, it has effects on a child's health, growth, personality, adjustment, and cognitive capacity(Center of Bhutan Studies 2009). Caring behavior here is referred to as sensitivity and responsiveness. UNICEF conducted a study in 2018 to understand parenting practices and established that the lack of positive parenting, such as inadequate supervision and involvement with children, leads to risk in children's behavioral and emotional problems. Parents have a critical role in shaping the right environment for their children in the first five years of life

to establish their capacity to learn. In a nutshell, parents are the best teachers for every child. A child absorbs values, manners, discipline, and much more from their immediate surrounding, i.e., home. The parent-child relationship nurtures the physical, emotional, and social development of the child. This relationship lays the foundation for the child's personality and life choices. It can also affect their social, physical, mental, and emotional strength. A child builds their first relationship with their parents, and the quality of relationships a child has with their parents reflects the child's relationship with their surroundings. As we study child development, it is equally important to study parenting styles and child surroundings. While doing so, one can try various strategies by considering parenting practices, parenting dimensions, or parenting styles.

Parenting approach:

Various researchers have explained the parenting practices taking various stances. Darling and Steinberg (1993) define parenting practice its the behavior of parents to support their children in building skills of socializing and problem-solving. According to Cummings et al. (2000), the parenting approaches are not only specific behaviors of parents but also parenting dimensions. Two dimensions of parenting are parental support and parental control. Parental support is all about showing involvement, acceptance, emotional support, and responsiveness. Parental control is the behavior of parents where they tend to control and regulate children's actions, which can be through strict rules and regulations (Kuppens, S, 2018). This tends to understand parenting approaches in specific ways in terms of behavior and psychological stance. Whereas, Baumrind, Maccoby, and Martin understand parenting in combinations of approaches with its impact on child development. This approach helps in understanding which parenting style a parent reflects and its influence on child development. For exploring the parenting approach in studies, we will be referring to the parenting style studied by Baumrind. The rationale behind using this approach is to understand various styles parents use and their influence on child development.

Diana Baumrind is considered a pioneer in the research of parenting styles. Baumrind introduced a typology with three parenting styles to describe differences in parenting behaviors: Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive parenting styles. Here theory posits that there is a relationship

between the parenting style used by parents and child development. Each style has its unique contribution to children's development.

This style is categorized based on two dimensions:

- Demandingness: Parents tend to possess a controlling and demanding behavior towards their children.
- Responsiveness: Parents are accepting and sensitive toward their children's emotional and developmental needs.

Based on these dimensions, Baumrind, Maccoby, and Martin(1993) came up with four parenting styles: authoritative (highly demanding and highly responsive); authoritarian highly demanding and low responsive); Permissive (low demanding and high responsive); and neglectful (low demanding and low responsive)

Parenting Style	Influence on children's development
Authoritative Parenting refers to a parenting style where parents have high expectations for achievement and maturity but are also warm and responsive. There are some rules and boundaries, but they are open for decision. Children are encouraged and have the autonomy to be equal participants in the family decision-making process.	Children tend to be happier and content. Not only have good cognitive development, but it also mental health. Able to make good decisions for self, and become competent in social skills.
Authoritarian Parenting refers to parents demanding blind obedience from children without providing reasons for following them. The parents are unresponsive to their children's needs and are generally not nurturing.	Children tend to have low self-esteem and poor social skills.
Permissive Parenting refers to parents not setting any rules and boundaries. Parents are	Children cannot follow rules and have worse self-control. Face difficulties maintaining

warm and indulgent, but they do not like to set boundaries.	relationships and social interaction.
Neglectful parenting refers to parents having less interaction with their children and also less involvement in their lives. Their uninvolvement in their child's life may be due to mental issues in their lives, such as depression, physical abuse, or being neglected when they were kids.	Children face difficulties in regulating self-emotion. That leads to increased mental issues and addiction problems.

It is not implied that parents are solely responsible for their parenting styles since in some cases, the parents' response or the parenting style itself is derived from the child's behavior. Studies have also shown how parenting differs and is influenced by the interaction between personal and environmental factors.

Parenting approach in India:

Indian Parenting approaches encompass distinctive practices as discipline, emotional bonding, educational and social integration that reflect collective values, extended family system, and spiritual tradition. Most of the parenting styles are rooted in cultural practices. The importance is given to interdependence, loyalty to the family, obedience, religious beliefs, and concern for academic achievement. This independence reflects in children seeking the support of their parents to make major decisions in life, even as adults. (Sood et al. 2023). Indian parenting is rigid and follows a hierarchical structure in families, where children's position is seen as subordinate to adults. That further gives them the authority to decide for children. (Sudarsan et. al 2022). Further, this approach acts as a guiding framework to establish strict guidelines for children, such as

obeying and working collaboratively with parents and elder family members. (Sudarsan et. al 2022). It does not lack in compassion but is deeply rooted in cultural and planting values.

When it comes to child-rearing practices, it's beyond parents. Children have multiple caregivers that equal contributions to child development. In many cultures other than parents, other family members decide for children as well as engage in taking care of children. (Parameswaran 2021).

Parent-child interaction also shapes children's development and future. A recent cross-sectional study done in one of the states in India reported that 62 % of the mothers were found to practice severe verbal abuse, and 50 % practice severe physical abuse to discipline their children. The study concluded that there is a high prevalence of normative and abusive practices in the community, with mothers playing a prime role in disciplining the child (Nair et al. 2009). In communities with poor socio-economic prospects, there is a high prevalence of child labor, and often, children are forced to work in hostile, exploitative, and unsafe conditions. More and more girls and boys are running away from their homes, and some come into conflict with the law. Further, in many resource-poor communities, child marriages are practiced and young girls enter into forced marriages, becoming vulnerable to rape and other forms of sexual abuse; adolescent girls and boys are trafficked for domestic work and forced prostitution. Sociological research has revealed that negative and violent parental behavior was a major reason for children's fleeing their homes and for the occurrence of emotional and behavioral problems in children belonging to economically poorer communities (Singh et al. 2012)

The research tends to answer the following questions:

Research Question:

1. Which parenting approach is common among Khoj parents?
2. What parenting looks like among Khoj parents is the same as their parents' style?

Methodology:

This research study is part of an Action Research Project that was carried out during the author's fellowship tenure as an SEL Fellow at the Apni Shala Foundation in Mumbai. The study uses the Empirical Research method to understand the parenting style of the caregiver. This study was conducted using a mixed approach, qualitative-quantitative and descriptive. To investigate parenting approaches, a 133-item parenting questionnaire was used. During the interview process, the interviewer explained the questionnaire to the caregivers to provide context and help them accurately respond to the questions. This qualitative component allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the caregivers' perspectives and experiences.

After collecting the data, the study is used to design an intervention process to raise caregivers' awareness of their parenting style and how it affects their child's development. The intervention is implemented, and a post-evaluation is conducted to assess the effectiveness of the intervention in helping caregivers understand their parenting style.

Sample:

The participants in this study were caregivers from Khoj School, an integrated school initiated by the Apni Shala Foundation. For this study, 20 caregivers participated, mostly from the nearby communities in Govandi, Mumbai. The age group of children whose caregivers participated in the study ranged from 3 to 12 years. Different age groups of caregivers were included in the study, from someone who has only one child to someone who has more than one child. Most of the caregivers were parents.

Data Collection:

For collecting data, the study used a modified version of a 133-item parenting questionnaire developed by Clyde C. Robinson, Barbara Mandleco, Susanne Frost Olsen, and Craig H. Hart from Brigham Young University. Further, this was modified considering the context of the participants.

Variables:

The questionnaire consisted of Authoritative Items, Authoritarian Items, and Permissive Items, each with specific parenting practices. The data analysis revealed four factors within the Authoritative Items, including Warmth and Involvement, Reasoning/Induction, Democratic Participation, and Good-Natured/Easy Going. The Authoritarian Items yielded four factors, including Verbal Hostility, Corporal Punishment, Non-reasoning Punitive Strategies, and Directiveness. Finally, the Permissive Items yielded three factors, including Lack of Follow Through, Ignoring Misbehavior, and Self-confidence. These factors helped to measure the parenting style of parents and further understand it in depth.

Intervention:

Based on the interview, the intervention was designed to create awareness among the parents by integrating Social-Emotional Learning Competencies. SEL refers to the skill of understanding and managing one's emotions, establishing positive relationships, practicing empathy, and making responsible decisions. The aim is to not only create reflective and safe spaces but also enhance their social skill. Additionally, an important aspect of the action research project, attempting to transition theoretical findings into practical action (praxis).

SEL competencies:
- Self Awareness
- Relationship
- Decision Making

The intervention was divided into four sessions:

1. Rapport-Building Session:

The objective of the session	Activities adhering to the objectives
1. To build rapport with the caregiver. 2. Create a space of reflection on the journey of their parenting. (relationship skills). 3. At the end of the session, the caregiver was able to redefine parenting as caregiving.	1. Giving yourself another name. 2. Through mindfulness, drawing the Journey of their parenting. 3. Mindmap on what parenting is for them. (The discussion will be based on what they think parenting means for them, and try to establish that it can also be called caregiving.)

2. Understanding Different Approaches to Parenting:

The objective of the session	Activity is based on the objective.
1. At the end of the session, parents will be aware of different parenting approaches. 2. Identify their approach to parenting.	1. Recap of the last session, then after that one activity, and taking forward to the new activity, Messages you hear about parenting. 2. Short video [12] on the style of parenting followed by a discussion. 3. Take-home tasks to reflect on 'what is your style of parenting.'

After intervention:- Anecdote post-session:

"Me ye soch pai ki me kitna busy hoti hu mujhe mere bacche ko bhi time dena hoga."

"Mere ladki roj mujhe kuch naya shikati hai,Aur vo Mujhe bohot acha lagta hai."

"Didi ye session se mujhe ye pata chala ki , mere parenting ka tarika kitna different hai, aur mere sister ka kitna different hai".

A participant's response to 'Appko kya lagta hai kya Caregiving is all about parenting?' "Yess didi jab ye soch thi hu ki parenting m hum vohi things karte hai jab hum kiski care karte hai, agar parenting ko hum caregiving bolte hai, tho shayad merely parenting ki journey tho m chotti thi tab se chalu hai, taking care of my younger brother."

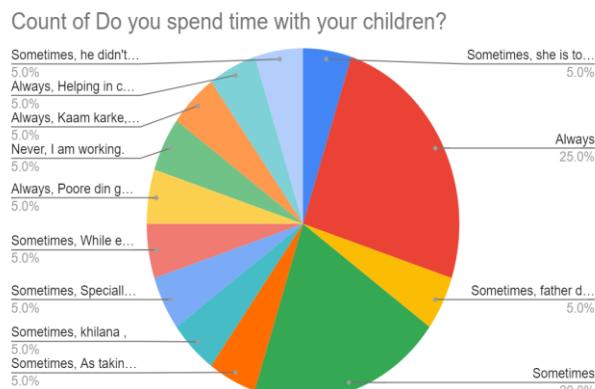**Finding and Discussion:**

1. <u>Authoritative:</u>

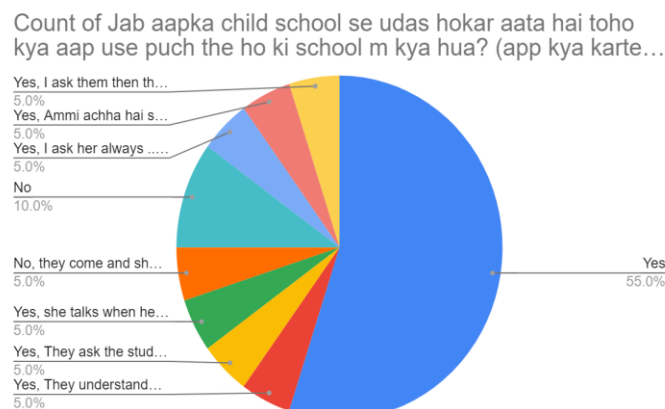*1.1 Factor 1 (warmth and engagement) (Relationship):*

This factor is used to understand the ways parents engage in their child's life. To understand this factor, various ways of studying variables were studied. Firstly, knowing the names of their children's friends- 40% of the parents know the names of the child's friends, whereas 25% of parents only know where they live, and 15% were unfamiliar with their child's friend circle. In this, 15% of the parents are working (mother as well as father). When it comes to spending time with children, 25% of parents, including fathers, also spend time with children. *As shown in Graph 1*, the parents who spend less time are mostly working parents. They get to spend time during meal time, helping children travel to school, and taking them to the park. Fathers are mostly engaged in taking the children to the park (an outdoor activity). The way parents spend time with their children

is also associated with gender roles. For instance, when it comes to going to the park or taking the children out, it is done by the father, and helping the children with getting ready for school is done by the mother.

55% of parents understand their child's emotions and try to acknowledge them. Whereas 30% of parents have different ways of understanding it, such as by asking them about their day, looking a,t and observing their behavior. Parents seem to support their children not only in acknowledging their emotions but also in understanding their ways of working on them. The support that children get from their parents further supports in social and emotional domain of children's development. An astonishing aspect of parenting approaches, as per the finding, also supports social-emotional development; not only are the girls allowed or encouraged to express their emotions but also equal importance is given to the boys. *(graph3)*
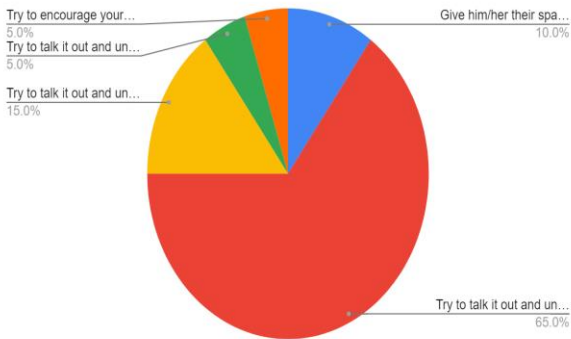
Count of Do you spend time with your children?

Sometimes, he didn't… 5.0%	Sometimes, she is to… 5.0%
Always, Helping in c… 5.0%	
Always, Kaam karke,… 5.0%	Always 25.0%
Never, I am working. 5.0%	
Always, Poore din g… 5.0%	
Sometimes, While e… 5.0%	
Sometimes, Speciall… 5.0%	Sometimes, father d… 5.0%
Sometimes, khilana , 5.0%	
Sometimes, As takin… 5.0%	Sometimes 20.0%

Graph 1

Count of Jab aapka child school se udas hokar aata hai toho kya aap use puch the ho ki school m kya hua? (app kya karte…

Yes, I ask them then th… 5.0%	
Yes, Ammi achha hai s… 5.0%	
Yes, I ask her always ….. 5.0%	
No 10.0%	Yes 55.0%
No, they come and sh… 5.0%	
Yes, she talks when he… 5.0%	
Yes, They ask the stud… 5.0%	
Yes, They understand… 5.0%	

Graph 2

Count of When your child/children seem to be sad how do you handle that situation?

Try to encourage your…
5.0%
Try to talk it out and un…
5.0%
Try to talk it out and un…
15.0%

Give him/her their spa…
10.0%

Try to talk it out and un…
65.0%

Graph 3

1.2 Factor 2 (Reasoning/Induction):

This factor serves to understand the comfort level of parents to provide the reasons for following a specific instruction. 50% of parents believe that rules serve as guiding principles for children. It promotes the children's well-being. They have basic rules such as having a timely scheduled sleep and meals, not wasting food, and limiting the use of mobile phones.

Giving reasons behind the rules supports children in understanding the importance and purpose behind them. This supports children in learning dispositions. Whereas 45% of parents believe that in certain situations, they feel giving reasons is not necessary *(graph 4)*.
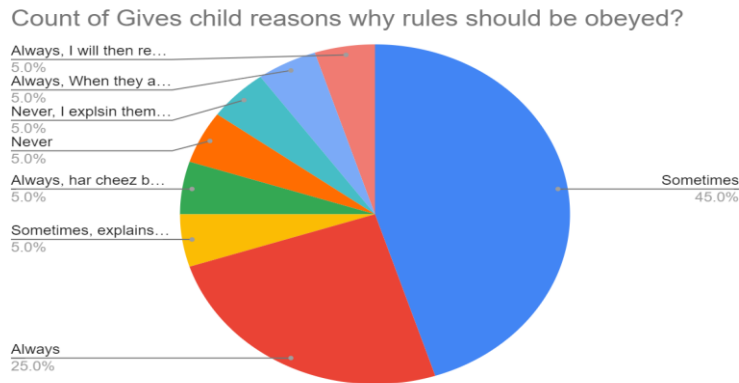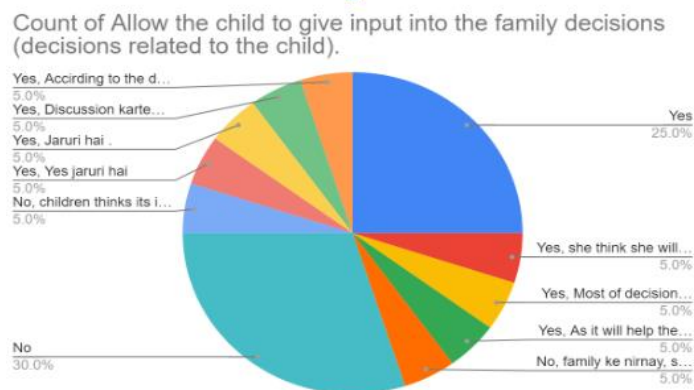
Graph 4

1.3 Factor 3 (Democratic Participation):

It is the right of the children to be part of the decision-making process in the family, especially when the decision is been taken for them. *Graph 5* shows that 60% of the parents feel it is important to involve children in the decision-making process. It gives them a feeling of belongingness as they are part of the family and their point of view matters.

In consultation with parents, it was established that, in parent-teacher meetings, teachers support them in understanding the importance of involving children in the decision-making process. This supports the children to learn the skill of making a responsible decision by involving each member of the team or family.
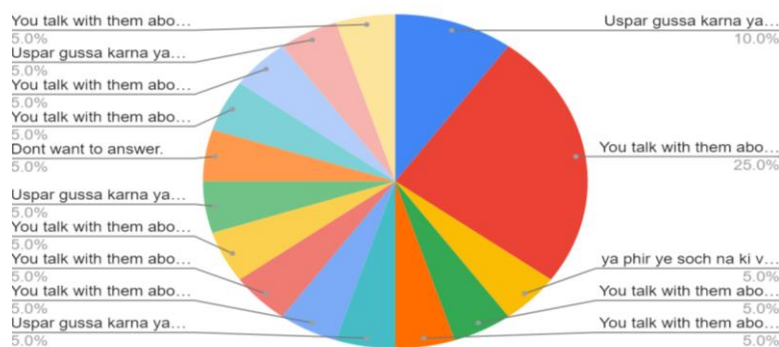

Graph 5

2. <u>Authoritarian Items:</u>

2.1 Factor 1 (Corporal Punishment):

The data suggest that 25% of parents use verbal communication instead of corporal punishment. When children are not listening to given instructions, such as doing homework on time, waking up early, etc., 60% of parents prefer to help the children understand ethics (right and wrong) *(graph 6)*, rather than punishing them. Because giving punishment does not help the children to realize their mistakes. The school social worker and teachers have played a crucial role in creating this awareness among parents.
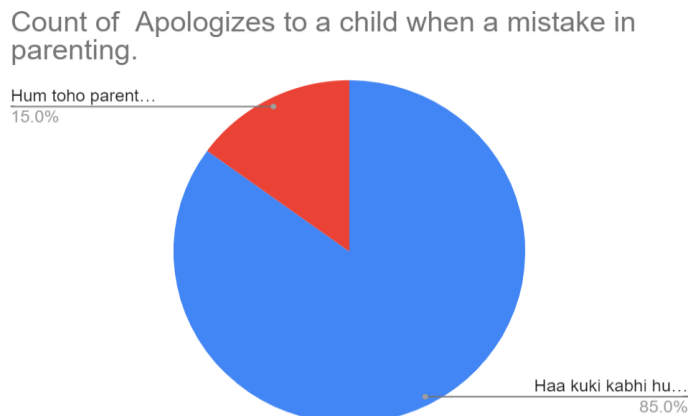

Graph 6

2.2 Factor 2 (Non-reasoning Punitive Strategies):

As we saw, *Graph 4* talks about giving reasoning to children, which they prefer more rather than asking them to blindly follow the instruction. We also tried to understand if parents feel that they are always right. As per *graph 7,* 85% of parents make sure they apologize to their children when they are at fault. They believe that just because they are parents does not mean they cannot make mistakes. Whereas, 15% of parents believe that as parents, whatever they do is for their

children's well-being. The findings highlight the importance of parents taking responsibility for their action, which also support the children to do the same. Children learn through their surroundings.

Count of Apologizes to a child when a mistake in parenting.

Hum toho parent…
15.0%

Haa kuki kabhi hu…
85.0%

Graph 7

2.3 Factor 3 (Directiveness):

It refers to highly demanding parents. As the above *graphs 4, 6, and 7* suggest, participants do not show demanding behavior towards their children. Instead, they are more open to listening and communicating their expectation to children. This helps the children to express themselves, developing a sense of security and emotional well-being. Parents become children's safe space to be who they are and to share their feelings. It highlights that building a safe space at home for children and promoting healthy emotional development is important to have a positive child-parent relationship.

3. Permissive Items

According to this parenting style, parents exhibit practices of minimal rules and boundaries for children. As per the findings of this study, parents have a balanced set of rules and a set of expectations, not that they are allowing children to do what they feel.

3.1 *Factor 1 (Self-Confidence):*

Parents believe that scolding children will not impact the bond they have with their children. A few parents shared, 'We have faith in our practices, whatever we do it is making sure the well-being of the children.' *Graph 8* represents parents having self-confidence in what they do. 65% of parents do not feel setting-up boundaries will affect their relationship. They believe having balanced rules and regulations will foster a positive and loving parent-child relationship.

Count of Aapko lagta hai ki agar me aapne baache ko jada chilaya toho ko mujhe pasand nhi karega.

No, as she feel sad so... 5.0%
Yes, sometime they fe... 5.0%
Yes, If i talk to them tu... 5.0%
Yes 10.0%
Yes, Acchi mummy pa... 5.0%
No, She thinks in good... 5.0%
No 65.0%

Graph 8

The parents in this study understand the significance of discipline in teaching and guiding children's behavior. They also believe that discipline implemented in a caring and constructive manner promotes children's growth and does not impact their bond. These findings support the idea that discipline, is used appropriately, with warmth and open communication, can contribute to a healthy parent-child relationship based on trust respect, and mutual understanding. The study also shows that there is a significant role of the parent in creating a social well-being space at home.

Limitations:

1. The gender representation was unequal. Hence, this study mainly offers perspectives on mothers.

2. Since it was part of a fellowship, and given the time constraint, the sample size was limited. So this study could not establish a generalized statement on parenting practices.

3. The study only focuses on one set of parents, coming from similar communities. Including participants from a diverse range of schools will enhance the representation of the study.

Overall, while this study contributes valuable insights into parenting approaches, it is essential to consider these limitations when interpreting the findings, and future research should address these limitations to further advance our understanding of parenting practices.

Conclusion and Future Work:

The finding shows a huge shift in parenting approaches among the participants compared to practices followed by their parents. Based on the result, there is no significant evidence that supports participants following the same practices that their parents used to have. Whereas, it shows that the parents '(participants') experience is different from that of their parents. The practices they are using are based on the needs of the current time and based on the child's needs. This indicates that parenting approaches have evolved over the period. This change is influenced by factors such as societal change, cultural shifts, and growing awareness of child development and well-being. It also shows that parenting approaches are not static, its influenced by the context of the parents. Adding to this study, parental approaches do not only have a psychological aspect to them but also a sociological one. As its practices are equally influenced by communities and surroundings. Studying parenting approaches can also be conceptualized using Bronfenbrenner's ecological system to understand how social factors shape parenting approaches.

As the study took place in a school where SEL is integrated into parent meetings, parents were highly aware of their children's needs and mental well-being. This led to parents having an Authoritative approach. This highlights that schools' parent-teacher meeting plays a pivotal role in parent-child interaction.

The intervention sessions provided safe and reflective spaces for parents to share their meaningful moments with their families. It also helped in reflecting on their parenting approaches at an individual pace. As a practitioner, it helped us to understand a child's environment in a home setting and also gave us insightful learning about children's context. One common theme that emerged in everyone's response is that they want to provide the best opportunity and experience to their children.

Recommendation:

This intervention can be incorporated into parent-teacher meetings by integrating with the PTM. Re-imagining the parent-teacher meeting is more than just sharing the progress of children, it helps to bring awareness about child development, explore different ways of parenting as most of the children were first-generation learners, and lastly supports working and nonworking parents by creating a space that allows them to spend time with their children. As educational institutions, schools have more things to offer children beyond quality education.

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