

While Testing Behaviours and Handling Strategies in Parents of Children with Academic Problems

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This exploratory cross-sectional random survey obtains behavioral reactions of 85 parents under two conditions: (a) observations during testing of their children; (b) interview reports on how they handle academic problems of their children at home. Results reveal three major directional patterns of parent reactions targeting the child, themselves or outer-directed reactions against the school system. During testing, parents show both proactive and negative reactions towards their child. The reports on handling strategies for their children at home show the use of several ad hoc tactics, short-cuts to cure, panacea to heal and palliatives to ease along with self-abnegation techniques. The results are presented and discussed in the light of their unique cultural implications for initiating parent training programs for bettering the quality of lives for the affected children with academic problems in the country.

Keywords: While Testing Behaviors, Handling Strategies, Academic Problems

Children with academic problems referred for professional opinion need to undergo medical screening, psycho-educational appraisal, evaluation of current grade performance, neuropsychological testing and ecological mapping of their home and school affairs. Assessment of such children is an individualized, arduous and time consuming activity. It involves process as well as product evaluation of the child in a free-flowing, spontaneous and evocative milieu. The testing atmosphere should not be judgmental, intimidating, challenging or humiliating for the child. The role of examiner is to elicit what or how much the child knows in various areas than to demonstrate what the child does not know for the class of their study. From this stand point, it is vital to note not only the child's level of reading, writing and/or arithmetic; but also, how s/he attacks given academic problems during testing (Brosco et al. 2004).

Some examiners prefer testing children in isolation (Glutting, Oakland & Mc Dermott, 1989). Others recommend obtaining reactions of children (Saldana & Du Bois, 2006) or those of their parents (Tew, Payne, Laurence & Rawnsley, 2004) after testing. The option of testing children in the presence of a parent as moral support for the young subject being grilled with questions by a less known examiner is not yet fully explored.

Such an option is preferable provided the parents are pre-instructed against using the testing situation as an opportunity for teaching the child. It must be clearly communicated to them to remain mere observers during the testing situation. Despite such precautions, it is seen that parents differ in their type or amount of reactions during the testing situation. While made to observe the failing performance of their child, some parents feel hurt, helpless, resentful and disappointed. They feel a sense of inadequacy on observing that their child is unable to perform. Others are overt, demonstrative and even visibly upset. Nonetheless, it would be worthwhile to explore reactions of parents during testing of their own children with academic problems. There are studies on different perceptions about children with academic problems by different people (Forsyth, Story, Kelley & McMillan, 2009; Altrichter, Posch & Somekh, 2006; Fonseca & Conboy, 2006).

Among the few Indian studies available on academic problems (Shah, 2007; Shenoy, Kaput & Kaliaperumal, 1998), there is only one on the differential perceptions and attributions on reasons/causes of such problems in school children (Venkatesan, 2011). But, that study did not delve into handling strategies adopted by parents in their homes for their children with

academic problems. Parents are likely to have their wisdom on handling such children. Information on such practices can be useful in the overall understanding, or in planning their remediation. This, indeed, was the need and justification for undertaking this investigation with an objective to observe the 'during testing behaviors' of parents as well as to elicit reported strategies used at home for handling their children with academic problems.

Method

A cross sectional exploratory survey design combined with random sampling techniques was used in this study. The key terms used in this investigation are: 'children with academic problems', 'while testing behaviors' and 'handling strategies'. The term 'children with academic problem' denote referred clinical cases of students with scholastic problems from regular schools with no apparent sensory impairments, physical, multiple or intellectual disabilities, autism, chronic health problems, missed schooling, school/medium change, poor study habits or examination taking skills, absent teaching, first generation learners, impoverished or non-supporting educational environments at home or school, transient or long standing emotional/behavior problems or such other intervening factors. The term 'while testing behaviors' refer to any observed word, expression or action uttered or manifested by the subject of this investigation (parents of children with academic problem) for or on behalf of their child being evaluated for the supposed difficulty. The term 'handling strategies' as used in this study refers to any or all behavioral techniques, tactics or *practices reported as used by parents at home to meet the challenge of academic problems in their children.*

Sample:

The sample for this study comprised of 85 parents of about 45 children seeking diagnostic services at All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, Mysore, Karnataka. The services, run by a multidisciplinary team, covers individualized medical and sensory screening, case history taking, psycho-educational testing for intelligence, adaptive behavior and academic achievement, parent interviews and clinical observations of the

child. It is also within the purview of the institute activities to organize short and long term parent training programs which become an occasion to collect data from such respondents.

Tools:

The following three tools were prepared for this study: (a) Demographic Data Sheet; (b) Observation Protocol; and, (c) Interview Probes. The first tool was intended to elicit personal and background details of respondents. The next two instruments were meant to elicit data on reactions or strategies commonly available to parents for handling academic problems in their children. These tools were intentionally kept open-ended and semi-structured to elicit an exhaustive over-inclusive response list from the respondents. Further, they were made to be handy, easy-to-tick, expand or add-on notes taking kind of schedules, such that one could even insert new entries into it while making tally-ticks of existing reactions and/or fresh observations (if any) emerging during or outside the testing situations. All these tools were field tested initially on a sample of 15 cases through a pilot study before their use on a fresh sample in the final study.

Procedure:

Data collection involved individualized observation of parent/s during assessment situations. Recording of observed reactions was carried out immediately in the open-ended 'Observation Protocol' with prior permission, informed consent and open knowledge of the parents. Details were taken on how they behaved, what they commented, or even otherwise as their child underwent assessments in examination rooms during case history taking, medical or sensory examinations and/or psycho-educational testing. The observers were at least a post graduate degree in psychology or speech and hearing. The scoring of while testing behavior of the parents was carried out on all-or-none basis. For example, in a test situation, if a father was noticed to 'pass a comment', 'smirk', or 'prompt', it was immediately recorded as such with three tallies against his account. Similarly, if the accompanying mother of the same child was observed to 'prompt', 'sob' or 'fault teachers', three tallies were given against those respective heads

into her account. The protocol also had an item on 'no response' to indicate parents who showed no reactions at all during the testing situations.

Individual in-depth interviews was also carried out on all parents in this sample, while another small group discussions covering 8-10 parents per cluster was carried out through two separate sessions by a moderator and record-keeper. The group discussion was carried out for 1-2 hours each on the theme of handling strategies in parents used at home for their children with academic problems. In a presumably open-ended, free-flowing, unstructured, permissive, flexible and barrier-free milieu, during group discussion, the participating parents were to address on two questions: (1) *how do parents view and what do they understand of the academic problems in their children; and, (2) what kind of strategies or handling practices they have to meet the challenge of academic problems in their children. Responses were noted verbatim before three independent and mutually blinded observers with post graduation in psychology transferred the frequency counts from the corpus of collected transcripts against what they deemed was the appropriate heading or category of a given reaction. Further, to determine the nature or extent of agreement or disagreement between observers on or about their perceived reports on handling of academic problems in children, Cohen's Kappa measures of concordance was used (Cohen & Manion 2000; O' Donoghue & Punch 2003). All analysis was done on SPSS/PC (George & Mallery 2003).*

Results and Discussion

The core data generated in this study was a corpus of observation notes elicited by examiners while testing children; and also, verbatim statements of parents on or about 'handling techniques' for their children with academic problems. This data on observed responses of parents during testing was categorized into three heads: (a) Child Directed; (b) Self Directed; and, (c) Other Directed. The child directed positive responses included prompting, correcting, guiding, or teaching and negative responses were like scolding, reprimanding, staring or smirking. Reactions like admitting own limitations, crying or confessing ones ignorance, blaming or looking

away while testing was deemed as self directed responses. Actions like blaming others, the school, text books, teachers or syllabus while testing of their children was construed as outer or other directed. This classification, categorization and cataloging of raw data on reported response directionalities of the parents for academic problems in their children was carried out by two independent raters (not below the rank of pre-doctorates in clinical psychology) for two reliability sessions across a sub-sample of 20 cases each. In each session, the two raters independently classified the reported 'handling strategies' for academic problems for the same 10 cases into the three designated categories. The initial reliability session was conducted for the first 10 cases of parent reports and the final session was carried out on last 10 cases of parent respondents. The percentage of inter-observer reliability agreements revealed ranges between 94.4 and 97.8 across the two sessions and over the two respondents. For ease of explanation, the results of this study are presented as frequency counts and cross tables in two sections: (a) Parent reactions during testing situations; and, (b) Parent reports on child handling strategies

(a) Parent Reactions during Testing Situations:

For the overall sample (N: 85), a total number of 682 parent reactions (Mean: 8.02; SD: 2.11) were observed during testing of their children with academic problems. Out of them, there were 309 (45.31 %) reactions directed at the child, followed by 199 (29.18 %) reactions toward others and 174 (45.31 %) reactions turned toward themselves as parent respondents. Among the reactions directed against the child during testing, it was observed that they were inclined to 'smile' (N: 69/85; 81.2 %), 'prompt' (N: 53/85; 62.4 %) or 'correct' (N: 42/85; 49.4 %) as also 'reprimand' (N: 14/85; 16.5 %), 'scold' (N: 13/85; 15.3 %), 'smirk' (N: 9/85; 10.6 %) or even 'hit' (N: 5/85; 5.9 %). During testing, outer directed parent reactions included 'faulting teachers' (N: 57/85; 67.1 %), 'blaming school' (N: 51/85; 60.0 %) or to 'alleging deficient school facilities' (N: 34/85; 40.0 %), complaining on the 'heavy syllabus load' (N: 24/85; 28.2 %). Some reactions directed to

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Parent While Testing Responses in relation to various variables

Parent/Caregiver Responses	Overall (N: 85)		Sample		Sample Age		Child Schooling			Child Stream		Child Gender	
	Father (N: 45)	Mother (N: 40)	< 30 Yrs (N: 41)	> 30 Yrs (N: 44)	Primary (N: 26)	Middle (N: 31)	High (N: 28)	Central (N: 38)	State (N: 47)	Boys (N: 44)	Girls (N: 41)		
Child Directed													
No Response	8	3	3	8	1	3	7	5	6	4	7		
Prompt	16	37	38	15	18	18	17	25	28	21	32		
Correct	14	28	27	15	19	13	10	18	24	17	25		
Guide	9	18	16	11	13	8	6	13	14	10	17		
Teach	3	8	7	4	7	3	1	6	5	4	7		
Smile	35	34	28	41	22	23	24	33	36	39	30		
Giggle	3	15	12	6	7	8	4	7	11	10	8		
Comment	15	10	12	13	4	10	11	13	13	17	8		
Stare	7	5	4	8	2	6	4	7	5	8	4		
Smirk	5	4	3	6	1	4	5	5	4	6	3		
Scold	8	5	3	10	2	7	4	6	7	8	5		
Reprimand	8	6	4	10	1	5	8	7	7	9	5		
Hit	4	1	2	3	1	2	2	3	2	4	1		
Sub-total	135	174	159	150	98	110	103	148	162	157	152		
Self Directed													
Should Spend More Time	11	32	21	22	18	16	9	20	23	16	27		
Must Guide More	4	28	17	15	12	17	3	17	15	10	22		
Don't Know	2	12	4	10	2	4	8	8	6	7	7		
Sob/Cry	2	10	8	4	6	5	1	5	7	8	4		
Cover a Tear	2	7	4	5	3	5	1	5	4	6	3		
Blame Self	15	12	17	10	12	9	6	15	12	21	6		
Defend Self	7	9	6	10	2	7	7	8	8	9	7		
Distract Self	6	8	4	10	2	6	6	7	7	8	6		
Leave Room	5	2	2	5	1	2	4	4	3	5	2		
Sub-total	54	120	83	91	58	71	45	89	85	90	84		
Outer/Other Directed													
Blame School	27	24	22	29	18	16	17	32	19	29	22		
Fault Teachers	29	28	20	37	15	19	23	29	28	28	29		
Allege Deficient School Facilities	18	16	15	19	9	13	12	15	19	17	17		
Attack on Heavy Syllabus	10	14	4	10	3	9	12	17	7	14	10		
Declares no Spousal Support	3	15	4	12	4	7	7	8	10	7	11		
Blame Education System	9	6	5	10	3	6	6	12	3	7	8		
Sub-total	86	103	70	17	52	70	77	113	86	102	97		
TOTAL	275	397	312	258	208	251	225	350	333	349	333		

(Note: Responses are multiply classified)

themselves included confessions that they should have probably 'spent more time with their child' (N: 43/85; 50.1 %) or that they must 'guide them more' (N: 32/85; 37.7 %). Few parents in this sample also showed tendencies to 'blame' themselves (N: 27/85; 31.8 %), 'defend' (N: 16/85; 18.8 %), 'cover a tear' (N: 9/85; 10.6 %) or even 'leave the room' (N: 7/85; 8.2 %) when confronted with the performance of their children during testing situations.

On an average, mothers (N: 40; Total: 397; Mean: 9.9) in this sample show more number of reactions compared to the fathers (N: 45; Total: 275; Mean: 6.1) towards their children with academic problems in the testing situations. The major themes of difference in reactions towards their children between the parents are found to be with respect to mothers using more 'prompting' (N: 37/40; 92.5%), 'guiding' (N: 28/40; 70.0%), and/or 'correcting' (N: 18/40; 45.0%), compared to fathers 'smiling' (N: 35/45; 77.8%), 'commenting' (N: 15/45; 33.3%), or 'scolding' (N: 8/45; 17.8%) and 'reprimanding' (N: 8/45; 17.8%) during testing situations. Mothers tend to show greater 'self directed reactions' (N: 40; Total: 120; Mean: 3.0) followed by 'other/outer directed reactions' (N: 40; Total: 103; Mean: 2.6) compared to fathers reflecting a reverse sequence of more 'other/outer directed reactions' (N: 45; Total: 86; Mean: 1.4) followed by 'self directed reactions' (N: 45; Total: 54; Mean: 1.2). This implies that, probably, the mothers are protective and shielding of their children compared to fathers who are overtly exasperated with their children having academic problems ($X^2: 9.66$; $df: 2$; $p: 0.008$) (Table 2).

The analysis of reactions in relation to age show that younger parents (≤ 30 years) manifest greater 'child directed' (N: 41; Total: 159; Mean: 3.9) and 'outer directed' reactions (N: 41; Total: 70; Mean: 1.7) contrasting older parents (> 30 years) with greater 'self directed' reactions (N: 44; Total: 91; Mean: 2.1). This mirrors a sense of acquiescence and acceptance of their child with academic problems by the older parents. The young parents are seen to 'prompt' (N: 41; Total: 38; Mean: 0.9) and 'correct' (N: 41; Total: 27; Mean: 0.7), just as the older ones 'smile' (N: 44; Total: 41; Mean: 0.9), 'comment' (N: 44; Total:

13; Mean: 0.3) and confess 'don't know' (N: 44; Total: 10; Mean: 0.2) over the performances of their children with academic problems in testing situations ($X^2: 28.1$; $df: 2$; $p: 0.001$) (Table 2).

In terms of child variables, figures indicate that parents of children in middle schools (N: 31) show slightly more 'child directed' (N: 31; Total: 110; Mean: 3.6) and 'self directed' (N: 31; Total: 71; Mean: 2.3) than 'other directed' (N: 31; Total: 77; Mean: 2.5) reactions as compared to parents of children in high schools although these differences are statistically insignificant ($X^2: 7.54$; $df: 4$; $p: 0.110$) (Table 2). Similarly, other child variables like the streams or curriculum of their study (CBSE/ICSE/Central or State Syllabus) ($X^2: 3.97$; $df: 2$; $p: 0.138$) and gender ($X^2: 0.004$; $df: 2$; $p: 0.981$) show no differential impact on the parent reactions to their children with academic problems in testing situation. In other words, presumably, the parents themselves rather than the child per se is the source of all differential perceptions and while testing behaviors as seen for the respondents in this study.

Even as the child struggled to answer, some parents were observed to approve, favor or compliment the child's efforts during test performance. Others offered active assistance, prompts, cues and hints for the child to perform on test tasks. The examiners had to repeatedly restrain such parents from overtly helping their children by gently reminding them to remain as passive observers. A few parents became apologetic with confessions like: 'Oh! He must be tired!' or 'You know... This is one of those bad days for him!' Some parents showed explicit behaviors during the testing situation. They appeared bewildered, shocked or stunned, particularly those who had probably never been a direct witness to their child's academic struggles. It came as rude alarm for some parents to observe their middle or high school child unable to count numbers serially beyond hundreds or write correct spellings of four letter words in their usual medium of instruction.

A few parents burst into accusations between themselves, or on the child, their teachers, school or at times, even the educational system in defense of the observed difficulties exhibited by

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Parent Reported Handling Strategies for Children with Academic Problems in relation to various variables

Parent/Caregiver Responses	Overall (N: 85)	Sample		Sample Age		Child Schooling				Child Stream		Child Gender	
		Father (N: 45)	Mother (N: 40)	< 30 Yrs (N: 41)	> 30 Yrs (N: 44)	Primary (N: 26)	Middle (N: 31)	High (N: 28)	Central (N: 38)	State (N: 47)	Boys (N: 44)	Girls (N: 41)	
Child Directed													
Abacus and brain gyms	46	17	29	26	20	24	13	9	27	19	28	18	
Abandon	8	6	2	2	6	2	2	4	4	4	6	2	
Advise	57	36	21	26	31	9	21	27	25	32	31	26	
Attend personality development courses	13	7	6	8	5	2	5	6	8	5	9	4	
Check with physicians or doctors	34	12	22	26	8	17	12	5	18	16	21	13	
Coax, Cajoled, Plead or Beg	42	16	26	28	14	7	16	19	25	17	29	13	
Give impositions	18	12	6	6	12	5	6	7	11	7	11	7	
Hit or Beat	14	9	5	4	10	4	5	5	9	5	9	5	
Hypnotism	7	4	3	5	2	2	3	3	4	3	4	3	
Indifference	5	4	1	2	3	-	2	3	1	4	2	3	
Induce by Incentives	43	19	24	29	14	12	18	13	27	16	27	16	
Leave to begging	8	6	2	2	6	2	3	3	5	3	6	2	
Lock in room	4	3	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	3	1	
Put in residential home	16	12	4	6	10	4	8	4	9	7	11	5	
Reprimand	14	10	4	6	8	3	5	6	9	5	9	5	
Seek gods interventions	32	8	24	12	20	7	16	9	13	19	24	8	
Send for crash courses/tutorials	14	6	8	4	10	3	4	7	9	5	9	5	
Sermon by Family Heads	8	2	6	3	5	1	3	4	6	2	6	2	
Take away cell phone/cut pocket money	17	12	5	7	10	1	4	12	11	6	12	5	
Threaten Verbally	31	19	12	16	16	6	15	10	19	12	21	10	
Try brain tonics	12	4	8	8	4	6	4	2	8	4	8	4	
Try food/nutrition supplements	14	5	9	7	7	7	4	3	8	6	9	5	
Try grapho-therapies	16	6	10	9	7	4	8	4	11	5	11	5	
Undress and leave on the streets	2	2	-	-	2	-	2	-	1	1	2	-	
Warn about handing over to police	3	3	-	-	3	1	2	-	2	1	3	-	
Self Directed													
Offer to die or commit suicide	4	1	3	1	3	-	2	2	2	2	3	1	
Refuse Eating/Talking	8	2	6	3	5	2	4	2	5	3	5	3	
Threaten to Leave Home	6	2	4	2	4	1	3	2	3	3	4	2	
Undertake fasting or religious vows	11	2	9	3	8	3	5	3	7	4	7	4	
Outer/Other Directed													
Approach vastu experts, astrologers	14	4	10	5	9	4	7	2	9	5	8	6	
Argue/fight with school/teacher	12	8	4	4	8	4	7	1	7	5	7	5	
Blame ones or child's fate	6	2	4	2	4	1	2	3	3	3	4	2	
Change houses	5	2	3	2	3	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	
Change name of self or child	2	-	2	-	2	2	-	-	2	-	2	-	
Change schools	19	8	11	6	13	10	6	3	11	8	12	7	
Change tuition teachers	17	8	9	4	13	4	6	7	9	8	13	4	
Check internet for better study habits	6	4	2	4	2	3	2	1	4	2	4	2	
Request school to fail	4	3	1	1	3	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	
Shout at friends to keep away	2	2	-	-	2	-	-	2	2	-	2	-	
TOTAL	594	288	306	281	314	167	231	195	340	254	387	207	

Table 2. Summary on Domain wise Distribution of Parent Responses in relation to various variables

Parent/Caregiver responses	Sample ¹		Sample Age ²		Child Schooling ³			Child Stream ⁴		Child Gender ⁵		
	Overall (N: 85)	Father (N: 45)	Mother (N: 40)	< 30 Yrs (N: 41)	> 30 Yrs (N: 44)	Primary (N: 26)	Middle (N: 31)	High (N: 28)	Central (N: 38)	State (N: 47)	Boys (N: 44)	Girls (N: 41)
Child Directed	309	135	174	159	150	98	110	103	148	162	157	152
Self Directed	174	54	120	83	91	58	71	45	89	85	90	84
Other Directed	199	86	103	70	17	52	70	77	113	86	102	97
TOTAL	682	275	397	312	258	208	251	225	350	333	349	333

(1X: 9.66; df: 2; p: 0.008; 2X: 28.1; df: 2; p: 0.001; 3X: 7.54; df: 4; p: 0.110; 4X: 3.97; df: 2; p: 0.138; 5X: 0.004; df: 2; p: 0.981)

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Parent Reported Handling Strategies for Children with Academic Problems in relation to various variables

Parent/Caregiver Responses	Sample ¹		Sample Age ²		Child Schooling ³			Child Stream ⁴		Child Gender ⁵		
	Overall (N: 85)	Father (N: 45)	Mother (N: 40)	< 30 Yrs (N: 41)	> 30 Yrs (N: 44)	Primary (N: 26)	Middle (N: 31)	High (N: 28)	Central (N: 38)	State (N: 47)	Boys (N: 44)	Girls (N: 41)
Child Directed	478	240	238	244	235	130	183	165	272	206	311	167
Self Directed	29	7	22	9	20	6	14	9	17	12	19	10
Other Directed	87	41	46	28	59	31	34	21	51	36	57	30
TOTAL	594	288	306	281	314	167	231	195	340	254	387	207

(1X: 7.52; df: 2; p: 0.023; 2X: 13.6; df: 2; p: 0.001; 3X: 5.63; df: 4; p: 0.228; 4X: 0.112; df: 2; p: 0.945; 5X: 0.0084; df: 2; p: 0.996)

their child during testing situation. The testing occasion often became an arena for some parents to indulge in comparisons with their better performing children, a neighbor peer or a distant cousin of the child being tested. Rarely, mothers of poorly performing kids burst into tears. Some parents exploded into spell of hilarious joke and laughter at the mistakes made by their child. They smiled, laughed or giggled at the child. It looked funny and amusing to watch their kid wrestling unproductively with the test questions. Even if the overt expression of such parents appeared as amusement, it revealed their unseen sadness and an unspeakable helplessness at the plight of their children. Occasionally, parents indulged in concealed or open physical hitting-apparently in friendly banter. But, definitely, it was a tip of the iceberg. Obviously, the child must be having more in store back home during the teaching sessions.

While testing behaviors of some parents slipped into forceful forms like questioning or interrogating. They interrupted and questioned the kid even as they struggled to perform on the test tasks. On their part, the children felt threatened. Other serious forms of parental reactions included scorn, disdain, open criticism and expression of contempt. At an extreme, they reacted with anger at the child, or put up an appearance of stony silence, indifference or no reaction at all. There were also instances of an odd parent viewing the whole testing experience as a personal indignity; and hence, seeking to walk out by excusing themselves or sauntering away.

(b) Parent reports on child handling strategies:

The second part of this study covered analysis of details elicited through individual or group interviews on *handling strategies followed by parents to meet the challenge of academic problems in their children*. Based on data generated, once again, it was found convenient to categorize them broadly into the same three headings: (a) Child Directed; (b) Self Directed; and, (c) Other Directed strategies. Their child directed handling techniques included activities like sending them to abacus or brain gym classes, tuitions or tutorials, personality development programs, giving sermons or advising

them, coaxing, cajoling, pleading or begging them to study, threatening them, reprimanding or inducing them by incentives, etc. Their self directed handling techniques included self abstinence, undertaking fasting and prayers, or threatening to leave home. Outer directed handling strategies are illustrated by attempts to seek professional advice on the problem or seeing blessings or services from family gurus, changing schools or tuition teachers.

From the overall sample of 85 parents and the total of 594 responses gathered, a mean of 7.0 strategies emerged from perusal of the individual interview and group discussion protocols as possible ways for handling children with academic problems. Out of them, majority of the mentioned handling strategies (N: 85; Total: 478; Mean: 5.1) were directed at the child, followed by (N: 85; Total: 87; Mean: 1.0) those directed toward others and the remaining (N: 85; Total: 29; Mean: 0.3) to be implemented for and by parents themselves. Among the varied options for tackling the academic problems in their children, the option of 'advising' (N: 85; Total: 57; Mean: 0.7), sending their wards to 'abacus or brain gyms' (N: 85; Total: 46; Mean: 0.5), 'inducing by giving incentives' (N: 85; Total: 43; Mean: 0.5), 'coaxing, cajoling, pleading, begging' (N: 85; Total: 42; Mean: 0.5), and/or 'checking with physicians or doctors' (N: 85; Total: 34; Mean: 0.4) are considered. Contrasting these, some low priority options like 'shooing friends away', 'changing the name of child or parents themselves', 'refusing to eat' or 'threatening to leave home', 'consulting astrologers', 'trying brain tonics', 'using food/nutritional supplements' or seeking help from 'hypnotism' and 'grapho-therapies' display the desperation of parents to somehow improve the scholastic performance in their children. Even though underplayed, note must be made on the mention about use of several callous and cold hearted handling practices against the child like threatening to 'undress and leave them on the streets', 'abandonment' or leaving them to 'begging', 'hitting or beating', the like of which cannot be underestimated in Indian settings.

While fathers (N: 45; Total: 7) in this study appear to have fewer self-directed handling strategies than mothers (N: 40; Total: 22) when it

comes to tackling academic problems of their children, evidently, they score consistently high on practices like 'advising', 'reprimanding', 'threatening to abandon or put away into hostels', 'giving impositions', and 'hitting or beating'. On the other hand, mothers appear to prefer soft handling like 'checking with physicians', 'coaxing, cajoling, pleading or begging', 'inducing by offering incentives', 'changing schools', 'undertaking fasting or religious vows' or even 'seeking intervention of gods' for improvement of their child. The parental practices of handling their children with academic problem at home between fathers and mothers are diverse ($X^2: 7.52$; $df: 2$; $p: 0.023$).

In relation to age variable, older parents (> 30 years) show greater number and variety of self directed (N: 44; Total: 20; Mean: 0.5) as well as other directed (N: 44; Total: 59; Mean: 1.3) handling strategies at home with their children having academic problems than younger parents (≤ 30 years) (N: 41; Total: 9; Mean: 0.2; N: 9; Total: 28; Mean: 0.7) ($X^2: 13.6$; $df: 2$; $p: 0.001$). For example, the older parents 'undertake fasting or religious vows', 'seek gods intervention', 'argue/fight with school and teachers', 'change schools and/or tuition teachers', or even 'blame own or their child's fate', 'give impositions', 'hit or beat', 'send them for tutorials or crash courses' to tackle the academic problems in their children.

An attempt to ascertain the role of child variables, such as, their class/grade grouping (primary, middle or high school) ($X^2: 5.63$; $df: 4$; $p: 0.228$), stream or curriculum of study (CBSE, ICSE or State Board) ($X^2: 0.112$; $df: 2$; $p: 0.945$) and gender (boys or girls) ($X^2: 0.0084$; $df: 2$; $p: 0.996$) does not emerge as statistically significant variables in influencing parent choice of strategies to handle academic problems in children at home. In other words, irrespective of class, type of syllabus or gender of child, parents generally agree on their various handling strategies to manage academic problems in children.

On the whole, and in sum, parents in this study display variety of in-clinic and while-testing behavior responses which must be made a matter for detailed observation and interview apart from and along with the clinical child observations carried out usually in clinics. Broadly, the corpus of data collected on parent reactions for

academic problems in their wards reveal three major directional patterns of either targeting the child, themselves or against the school system. Thus, during testing situations, parents show both child-directed proactive reactions like prompting, teaching or correcting errors; as well as negative reactions like giggling, commenting, taunting, reprimanding or occasionally hitting the poorly performing child. Some self directed reactions include hiding their tears, openly crying, defending, or confessing their inability to rear the affected child. Alternatively, they also fault teachers, school, or the education system while confronting the academic deficiencies in their child.

The analysis of verbal reports on parent reactions to their poorly performing child outside testing situations reveal use of several tactics like sending the child to tuitions or quick remedy programs, using medicines, tonics and food supplements, consulting experts or family gurus, trying self-abnegation techniques like fasting and prayers, or even other-directed strategies like changing houses, altering spellings of their names or that of the child in search of solution to what they probably deem as family crises (Perimutter, 1985). These intimate confessions of aggrieved parents are similar irrespective of gender, type of curriculum being studied and class level of their study. In the context of limited literature available on this subject these findings have unique cultural ramifications. The parent responses typically reflect desperation to convince themselves and others that their child is indeed alright, has minimal or no problem at all. It also reflects a latent dread that nothing should turn out to be terribly wrong in their poorly performing or failing child. These findings highlight the need to initiate reflective discussions on these often ignored issues during parent training programs for bettering the quality of lives for the affected children with academic problems in the country.

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