

METHOD

The present chapter includes research design, sample, tools, procedure of data collection and plan of analysis.

Research Design

A descriptive research design was employed for the study with the aim of understanding the emergence of morality in young children. The naturalistic observations were carried out in the laboratory nursery school to examine the sharing and conflict resolution behaviours of children. A set of simulated tasks were formulated to know children's responses regarding sharing of favourite eatables and play materials. An experiment on perspective taking ability of children was done based on *Wimmer and Perner (In Ashtington, 1991)*. The interview of teacher was carried out to find out her general perception about sharing and conflict resolution behaviours of young children and to obtain information about teacher's observations of individual children's pattern of sharing and conflict resolution. The interviews of parents enabled knowing the perceptions of parents about the indicators of morality and their child rearing practices and aspirations about children.

Sample

The sample consisted of children, teacher and parents. The children comprised of 18 boys and 13 girls constituting a total of 31 children from the Younger Group of Chetan Balwadi, the Laboratory nursery school of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Faculty of Home Science, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara. The younger children between the age of 3 to 3 years 8 months were 20 and the older children between 3 years 8 months to 4 years 5 months age group were 11 in the class. In terms of the ordinal position there were 12 first borns, 18 second borns and 1 third born. Majority of children belonged to Hindu Gujarati families. There were 4 Marathi speaking and 3 Hindi speaking children in the class. However the parents had planned to continue their schooling in Gujarati medium because for more than two generations the families were residing in Gujarat. Also the parents were more comfortable to educate children in Gujarati as they had good command over Gujarati language. The Christian and Jain families too used Gujarati as their mother tongue (Appendix A).

Criteria for Sample Selection

The main criteria for sample selection was the age range of children from 3+ to 4+ years of age from the younger group of Chetan Balwadi. The total children were 32 in the class, however one subject dropped in the middle of the study as his father changed the job and shifted to another city. Therefore the sample size was 31 children from the cross section of society representing gender, religion in terms of Hinduism, Muslim and Christianity, mother tongue in terms of Gujarati, Marathi and Hindi and Family type both nuclear and joint families. The lab school also has representation in terms of family income, so children belonged to lower, middle and higher income families. Thus the sample was based on the admission criteria of the lab school. (Appendix A).

The main criteria for selecting the laboratory nursery school was that it follows the Progressive Philosophy and therefore the Playway Approach is practiced across all developmental levels. The indoor and outdoor free play sessions are the regular features of the lab school program. The literature in the socio-moral domain of development reveals that free play sessions in the preschool provide the ideal context for observing natural interactions of children. The two major indicators of morality in

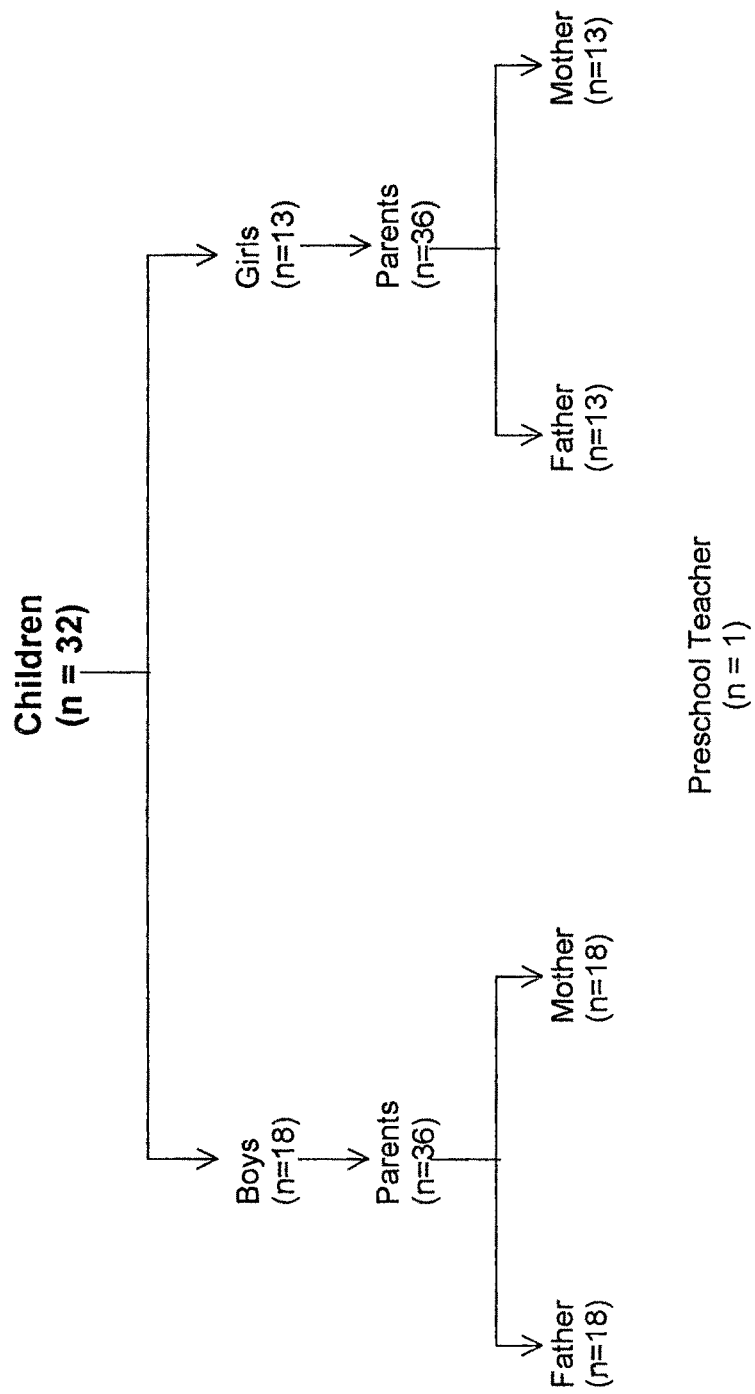


Figure 2 Sample (N=94)

the early years being sharing and conflict resolution behaviours of young children, in free play situations these behaviours occur naturally, thus creating the appropriate context

Therefore all the children of younger group of Chetan Balwadi constituted the sample for the present study. Prior permission was obtained from the supervisor of the Younger Group. The class teacher was also consulted to verify the data of the cumulative records about the background information of children

The sample of parents included 31 fathers and an equal number of mothers constituting 62 parents of children (Figure 2)

The class teacher formed the third part of the sample. The class teacher had the Post Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education with two years' experience of working in the preschool

Tools

The tools for data collection were

- Observational Guidelines
- Simulated Tasks
- Experiment on Perspective Taking

- Interview Schedule for Teacher
- Interview Schedule for Parents

Description of Tools

The description of all the tools employed for the study is presented in this section.

Observational Guidelines

The observational guidelines on sharing and conflict resolution behaviour were developed by Shah (2003) in consultation with the investigator who was also the research guide. The main aim was to sensitize the investigator with the naturally occurring behaviour across indoor and outdoor free play situations. The guideline about the sharing behaviour consisted of nature and type of sharing, the context and also the outcome of sharing. The guideline about conflict resolution behaviour consisted of nature of conflicts among children, sources of conflicts, reaction of children, strategies of conflict resolution and the final outcome with reference to the focal child as well as peers and the role of adults during conflicts.

Simulated Tasks

The simulated tasks were formulated with the aim of eliciting responses of young children, mainly to know their

views about sharing. There were mainly 4 tasks about eatables, favourite toys or play materials and objects (Appendix G).

The first two tasks were about favourite eatables, that is ice cream and chocolate. In these tasks each child was individually shown first the photograph of a cup of ice cream. The investigator and child sat in one the corners of the classroom. After the initial warming up exchanges, the investigator asked the child whether the child would like to share the ice cream with anyone. If the child responded in affirmative then the next question was to know with whom in the preschool and subsequently in the home context. In the same manner the second picture of one chocolate was shown to the child and the similar sequence of interaction took place as the first task.

The third task was regarding the favourite toy or play material in the classroom. The investigator asked this question and accompanied each child to the play area where it was located or displayed. The children expressed their preferences verbally or nonverbally by either picking up the play material or pointing or touching it. The next step was to ask the child whether he or she would share the favourite toy with anyone and if the child gave positive response then further probing was done to find out with whom the child would share in the classroom.

The fourth task was about a crayon colour which was shown to the child. The child responded whether he or she would share it and if so with whom in the preschool context. The responses of children were recorded verbatim for each task.

The simulated tasks aimed to know how children responded in terms of positive or negative responses, the speed in terms of prompt or delayed response, the preferences of names of peers and adults with whom they would share in the preschool and at home. The body language of children also helped in knowing whether children were prompt or reluctant about sharing the object in question. Another intended outcome of the simulated tasks was to know the extent to which the sharing behaviour of children assessed through naturalistic observations and children's own responses at the end of the observations matched in terms of the overall group profile. An attempt was made to find out the reason for sharing or not sharing and with whom children preferred to share and why as evident from their responses.

Experiment on Perspective Taking

The experiment by *Wimmer and Permer* (in Ashtington, 1991) was done to assess the perspective taking abilities of children. The investigator took each child to the music room

which had minimum distractions. The child was shown the doll and told that a small story will be narrated. The child would listen to the short story translated in the local language Gujarati (Appendix H) and respond to the question regarding the placement of chocolate in the bowl. If the child answered that the doll would look for chocolate in bowl 'A', where it was first placed, the response was considered as correct implying that the child was able to take perspective on the basis of the experiment. If the child responded that the doll would look for the chocolate in bowl 'B' the changed position in the doll's absence, the response was incorrect indicating the inability to take perspective. The frequencies were computed by giving a score of 1 for the correct response and '0' for incorrect response.

Interview Schedule for Teacher

The interview schedule for the teacher of Younger Group of Chetan Balwadi was prepared to find out her perception about sharing and conflict resolution behaviours of children. Also it aimed to know how teacher visualized her role as an adult during sharing and conflict episodes. Another major purpose was to seek information about each child in terms of the sharing and conflict resolution behaviours as observed by

the teacher during her day to day interaction with children. This data facilitated the interpretation of the information obtained from observations of children in the free play and art sessions. (Appendix I).

Interview Schedule for Parents

The interview schedule for parents aimed to examine the perceptions of parents regarding morality, their definition of a moral being, their understanding about 'Sanskars' the ideal qualities of individuals in the Hindu family context, the role of parents in guiding children on socio-moral and social conventional issues at home. The sharing and conflict resolution behaviours of children and parental practices during these episodes were examined. The experts from the field of Early Childhood Development from the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Faculty of Home Science, The M.S. University of Baroda validated the content of the interview schedule. Based on the feedback of experts the modifications were done in the interview schedule. The interview schedule was field tested on four parents of one girl child and one boy in the age range of 3 years six months to four years. The aspirations of parents regarding the ideal son or daughter on attaining adulthood were also known. (Appendix J)

The Procedure of Data Collection

The data for the present study was collected in two stages.

Stage 1

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted to test out the methodology conceptualized for the study through on field applicability of the tools Secondly to understand and sensitize the investigator to the process of data collection and refining the observational skills, spontaneity and sensitivity in interviewing parents and the teacher and conducting simulated tasks and experiment on perspective taking by adopting to the reality context and children's reactions and temperament

The sample for the pilot study comprised of two children one boy and one girl randomly identified from the nursery class of the local private school Alembic Vidyalaya

The children were observed within the period of 10 days in the indoor and outdoor free play sessions for 30 minutes in three slots The total observations for indoor free play were for 60 minutes and outdoor free play were for 30 minutes with a total of 90 minutes observations for each child. The simulated tasks and the experiment on perspective taking were conducted after

completing the observations of children. The interview of teacher was conducted in the preschool after children went home. The parents were interviewed separately at their residence.

The pilot study thus created greeter insights about essential skills required and the challenges of data collection. The necessary modifications were done in the tools and the procedure of data collection, before initiating the main study. The observation of the art session for a period of 30 minutes was included based on the feedback from the pilot study.

Stage 2

The Study

The laboratory nursery school Chetan Balwadi was the context for the present study.

Description of the location and setting of the study

Chetan Balwadi is a laboratory nursery school of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Faculty of Home Science, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. The main facets include a quality early child development program for children, training of professional and para professional personnel, research and advocacy.

Chetan Balwadi follows the progressive philosophy of John Dewey. The developmentally appropriate curriculum is based on children's experiences, interest and needs felt by teachers. The child centred program encourages exploration of the environment and provides opportunities for self expression, hands on concrete activities and experiences within a meaningful and thematic context. The emphasis is on the process rather than the product. The experiences are offered individually in small and large groups. These strategies encourage child child, child material and child adult interaction. Children in the age range of 3 years to 4 years are admitted representing different socio economic groups, occupations, religions and languages spoken at home and are screened through the computered process.

The classroom is equipped with the developmentally appropriate resources. The environment is designed to facilitate and support learning and development. The central area of the classroom is generally used for large group sessions. The dollhouse, block, manipulative, language and science centres are located in the adjoining areas. This arrangement encourages free play and creates opportunities for self learning.

The music room, art room are located near the office cum reception area. The outdoor play ground has essential equipments for enhancing gross motor skills. It is an enclosed area surrounded by the faculty building. There is a large area for vigour movements and free play with adequate greenery and shades of trees

The team of supervisor with doctoral and post graduate degrees in Human Development and the teacher with post graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education is attached to each program. The supervisors are mainly responsible for the curriculum and training of students. The teacher is generally child friendly, has autonomy in decision making and has scope for innovation and experimentation. The context of the program is flexible and contextual.

The Younger Group is the reception class of the lab school. The focus is on facilitating a smooth transition from home to preschool. The parents are oriented a few weeks in advance to provide a sound start to children. The program is offered for two hours in the beginning which gradually increases to 3½ hours for children. The indoor and outdoor free play, music, art, group and story sessions are the regular features of the program.

The general observation was done during the indoor and outdoor free play session with the main aim of familiarizing with the Younger Group in terms of the program, children and teacher in the first week. The feasibility of the observation was also assessed especially in terms of time and the overall schedule

The data collection was facilitated by the observational guidelines. The data collection began Eight weeks after the children began their preschool, mainly to ensure that the transition process was completed and children had adjusted in the routine program for minimum four weeks. This would enable the observation of naturally occurring behaviour and interactions of children. Each child was observed for 90 minutes in the free play sessions and for 30 minutes in the art session organized regularly in the art room. The free play sessions included 60 minutes of indoor free play and alternately 30 minutes of outdoor free play for each child. The running observations were recorded for each focus child. The interactions of peers and adults with the focus child were also recorded in details to understand the sharing and conflict resolution behaviours of children. The total duration of observation for each focus child was for 120 minutes amounting to 3720 minutes of total observation for 31 children (Figure 2).

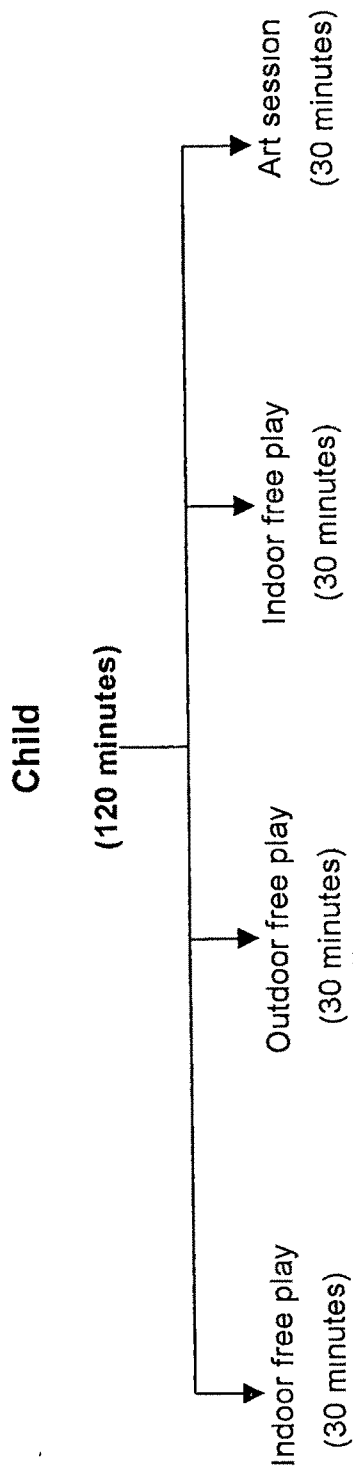


Figure 3 The Pattern of Observation at a Glance

Note Total 3720 minutes of observations (n = 31)

The naturalistic observations were done to analyze the occurrence of behaviour during day to day interaction. Also to find out the effects of environmental resources on the behaviour of children during sharing and conflict episodes. The data was collected only on the routine days. It was ensured that no special arrangements were made in the classroom in terms of time or experiences to avoid any interference in the program.

The simulated tasks supplemented the information on sharing with major emphasis on the kinds of responses given by children, their explanations and reasons for sharing or not sharing favourite eatables, toy and crayon. The simulated tasks were administered individually to each child after the observations were done for all the children.

The experiment on perspective taking was done individually for each child in the preschool after collecting the data for the four simulated tasks on sharing. The data on perspective taking abilities of children was collected within one week for all children.

Toward the end of the data collection from children, the teacher was interviewed in about three sessions of approximately one hour each. The first session was planned to find out her views

on sharing and conflict resolution behaviours of young children. In the next two sessions she was requested to share her observations about sharing and conflict resolution behaviours of each child and the role of adults during the ongoing episodes

The parents were interviewed toward the end. The perception of parents enabled the investigator to know how children were guided at home. It also gave greater insight in interpreting children's behaviour with reference to sharing and conflict resolution in the preschool context. The fathers and mothers were interviewed separately with an interval of minimum fortnight for the same child. The fathers were interviewed during summer break when many children and mothers were at child's grand parent's home out of city and also within the city for a few days. This is a common practice in Gujarati families hence the timing was appropriate for interviewing fathers. The fathers were interviewed in Chetan Balwadi in an informal, interactive environment. The mothers were interviewed at home. An active attempt was made to talk to mothers individually although in some cases other family members like grandmothers were present in the same room, viewing television, talking with a relative or doing domestic chores like

cutting vegetables or folding clothes. The appointment of parents was taken in advance to suit their convenience. In case of majority of mothers afternoon time was considered convenient and the investigator thus interviewed mothers in the afternoon at their homes. All the interviews were conducted in the local language Gujarati and the responses of parents were recorded on the interview schedule separately for each parent.

Analysis

The data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The observational data was analyzed by formulating the master code sheet based on the observation guideline, the actual data obtained from the study and the review of literature. The running observations were transcribed and coded in the specific categories and sub categories. The analysis was done in relation to gender, age and ordinal position of children and the family variables in terms of family typology. Also monthly income, occupation of father and the education of parents were considered for selected aspects of observations. The multiple responses emerged due to overlapping situations and responses and reactions of children. Therefore the analysis of sharing and conflict resolution behaviours of children observed in the preschool context was done in terms of frequencies and

percentages. The inter coder reliability was established at 0.85 level.

The data obtained through simulated tasks was also analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively in terms of frequencies and percentages to gain deeper insight about children's responses on sharing.

The data obtained from teacher was analyzed qualitatively and frequencies were computed to understand the overall behaviours of children as perceived by the teacher.

The perspective taking abilities of children were analyzed in terms of frequencies and percentages and the reactions and verbatims of children were analyzed qualitatively.

The data obtained from the parents was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively in terms of frequencies and percentages in view of the multiple responses of parents.

The analysis of the data obtained from children and parents attempted to gain deeper understanding by establishing link between the major trends emerging from observations, simulated tasks, teacher's responses and parent's perceptions and aspirations about children.