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## PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOLERS (3-6 YEARS) BELONGING TO GUJJAR TRIBE

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### Abstract:

*The present study focuses on the psychosocial development of preschoolers belonging to Gujjar Tribe from Udhampur district. The total sample for the study comprised of 30 preschooler-mother dyads selected from settled Gujjar families. All sample preschoolers were aged 3-6 years; half of them were boys and rest were girls. Five major areas of psychosocial development, namely: Gross Motor; Vision and Fine Motor; Hearing, Language and Concept Development; Personal Skills and Social Skills of the preschoolers were assessed by using ICMR Developmental Screening Test. This tool was used for the early detection of developmental disabilities in children under 6 years of age and to assess the age of attainment of developmental milestones in children belonging to Gujjar Tribe. The results of the study revealed that overall (93.33%) majority of the children achieved all the developmental milestones 'in time'. This trend continued for both male (93.33%) as well as female (93.33%) children separately. Only 2 cases of delayed developmental milestones were noted. None of the male or female sample children had 'very delayed' developmental milestone. The results highlight that in spite of their disadvantaged living condition most Gujjar children tend to show no major developmental delays.*

### KEY WORDS:

Psychosocial development, Preschoolers, Gujjar Tribals, Developmental profile.

### INTRODUCTION

Early years of childhood form the basis of personality, social behaviour, and capacity to learn and nurture oneself as an adult. Many psychologists believe that three to six years in the life of an individual is the most important period of development especially for gross motor development, vision and fine motor development, hearing, language and concept development, self help skills and social skills. These milestones are extremely important in laying the foundation for a healthy and wholesome development of the personality of a child. Especially the preschool years demand new adaptations within the family as the child moves rapidly through a highly significant series of changes (Jose, 1997). Positive stimulation during this period not only promotes optimal development but will also enable the child to thrive and survive in adulthood. This knowledge is supported with increasing research and evidence from natural and social sciences, historical studies, genetics, epidemiology and neurosciences (Mustard, 2000).

Psychosocial development plays important role in early years of child development as overall growth and development of children forms a major area of research in almost all parts of the developed as

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well as in developing world. It is a multistep process in which children learn to trust others, communicate their needs and develop distinct identities. Major developmental characteristics identified in some of the studies are mentioned as children ability to identify with their same sex parent and see them as role models, children are increasingly able to accomplish tasks on their own, and begin to make choices about what activities to pursue during preschool years (Dailey, 2008).

The preschool years are characterized by striking physical and psychological changes. Traditionally, scientists have sorted these changes into separate categories- motor, language, physical and social development. Development in each of these areas, however, affects and interacts with every other type. For example, motor development creates the need for more sophisticated speech in order to express new knowledge. There are significant advances in motor control during the preschool period. These advances depend both on physical maturation of brain and body systems and on the increasing skill that comes through practice (Erikson, 1996). Language development leads children to master new words that capture new ideas. Physical development allows them to perform more complicated tasks than they could earlier, bringing them into greater social contact with others. It results from the interaction between individual factors of heredity and environmental forces. Abnormal growth patterns often reflect this interaction. Physical developments are found to be affected by the environment no less than psychological ones. A healthy environment is necessary for normal growth of the body, brain, and nervous system of preschoolers (UNICEF, 2013). It is evident that the psychosocial development of children are affected by different sets of factors including parent-child interaction, their home environment, paternal involvement with child, taking child for outings and behaviour of the child were found to be positively associated with adequate psychosocial development (Vazir, 1998).

Tribals are one of the most exploited and deprived section of the population in Indian society. On all indicators of development, they remain the most excluded despite the fact that various policies and programmes have been pursued for their upliftment in the post-independence India (UNICEF, 2010). The tribal life has an impact on the tribal child's overall development. It has been reported that urban children have better adaptive behaviours than rural and industrial children and concluded that social skills develop earlier in urban children than the rural children (Jose, 1997).

With this as assumption the present study focuses on determining the psychosocial development of preschoolers (3-6 years) of Gujjar Tribe from Udhampur district. Studies focusing on the developmental profile of Gujjar Tribe are rare and hence significant database on the development of children of this Tribal group has been generated through the present research.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**SAMPLE DESCRIPTION:** The total sample size for the study comprised of 30 preschooler-mother dyads. All the selected preschoolers were aged 3-6 years, selected from settled Gujjar families of Udhampur District. Half of the sample preschoolers were boys and rest were girls.

**LOCALE OF THE STUDY:** The entire sample was selected from different areas of Udhampur district, having high concentration of settled Gujjar tribe.

**TOOLS FOR THE STUDY:** The following tools were used for data collection.

**Psychosocial Assessment Scale:** Development of preschoolers was assessed through the use of Psychosocial Assessment Scale developed by ICMR (1999). This scale provided data on dimensions namely; Gross motor development; Vision and fine motor development; Hearing, Language and Concept development; Personal skills and Social skills. Mothers of the preschoolers were the providers of information related to development of their children.

**On Spot Observations:** Observations were carried out to supplement information related to home environment of sample tribal preschoolers and their physical wellbeing and activities.

**DATA ANALYSIS:** Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed for data analysis. Appropriate statistical techniques were used where ever applicable to support the results.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Results of the present study are presented as follows:

**1.GROSS MOTOR DEVELOPMENT**

**Table 1. Gross motor development**

	Male (n=15)	Female (n=15)	Total (n=30)
In time	13 (86.66%)	12 (80%)	25 (85.33%)
Delayed	02(13.33%)	03(20%)	05(16.66%)
Very delayed	--	--	--

The term “gross motor” development refers to physical skills that make use of large body movements, normally involving the entire body. Preschool development offers a distinctive window of opportunity for acquiring and practicing gross motor skills. Table 1 depicts the gross motor development of preschoolers. Results reveal that majority (86.66%) of male child had ‘in time’ gross motor development. 13.33% males were found to have ‘delayed’ gross motor development. In case of females, majority (80%) preschoolers achieved this milestone ‘in time’, 20% had ‘delayed’ gross motor development. None of the male or female sample children had ‘very delayed’ gross motor development. Overall, most of the sample gujjar children showed adequate ‘in time’ gross motor development. Similar results were noted by Lansdown et. al (1996) who studied culturally appropriate techniques for monitoring of child psychosocial development in China, India and Thailand. On the contrary, a study carried by Vazir et al (1998) when assessed the psychosocial development of children aged 0-6 years reported that malnourished children attained developmental milestones at a later age.

**2. VISION AND FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT**

**Table 2. Vision and fine motor development**

	Male (n=15)	Female (n=15)	Total (n=30)
In time	13 (86.66%)	14 (93.33%)	27 (90%)
Delayed	02(13.33%)	01(13.33%)	03(10%)
Very delayed	--	--	--

During preschool years, children develop fine motor skills and visual motor skills required for carrying out various activities such as reaching for objects, attempts imitation of scribble, draw a straight line in imitation etc. Results on vision and fine motor development of preschoolers indicates that overall (90%) majority of them showed ‘in time’ vision and fine motor development. This trend continued for both male (86.66%) as well as female (93.33%) children. In only 3 cases delayed vision and fine motor development was noted. These children failed especially in copying complex geometrical designs on paper and in controlling their eye movements. Similar results were forwarded by Vazir et al (1994) in a multicentric cross sectional collaborative study carried on 13,000 children from 3 centres in India.

**3. HEARING, LANGUAGE AND CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT**

**Table 3. Hearing, language and concept development**

	Male (n=15)	Female (n=15)	Total (n=30)
In time	14 (93.33%)	12 (80%)	26 (86.66%)
Delayed	01 (6.66%)	03 (20%)	04 (13.33%)
Very delayed	--	--	--

Hearing, language and concept development skill continues to accelerate during preschool years in children and plays an important role in their overall growth years. The items where some of the children had problem were “points two parts of body”, “points to four parts of body” and “sings two lines of

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song/folklore". Table 3 depicts hearing, language and concept development. Results reveal that majority (93.33%) of male child had 'in time' hearing, language and concept development. 6.66% males were found to have 'delayed' hearing, language and concept development. In case of females, most (80%) preschoolers had 'in time' hearing, language and concept development, 20% had 'delayed' hearing, language and concept development. None of the male or female sample children had 'very delayed' hearing, language and concept development. However, Lansdown et. al (1996) had noted that there was a delay in attainment of this milestone in rural tribal children aged 0-6 years.

**4. SELF HELPSKILLS**

**Table 4. Self help skills**

	Male (n=15)	Female (n=15)	Total (n=30)
In time	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	30(100%)
Delayed	--	--	--
Very delayed	--	--	--

During preschool years, self help skills develop when children have a drive to be independent and do things on their own. As children grow, they learn to do more and more tasks independently. The results highlight that all sample preschoolers had adequate self help skills and performed most of the tasks on their own. All preschoolers achieved this milestone 'in time'. None of the male or female sample children had 'delayed' and 'very delayed' self help skills. Within the chronological age group, children performed their self care activities efficiently such as bathing, washing hands, combing, changing clothes etc. Contrary results were reported by Vazir et al (1998) which indicated that malnourished children aged 0-6 years attained this milestone at a later age compared to the average age of attainment of the sample children.

**5. SOCIALSKILLS**

**Table 5. Social skills**

	Male (n=15)	Female (n=15)	Total (n=30)
In time	13 (86.66%)	14 (93.33%)	27 (90%)
Delayed	02 (13.33%)	01 (6.66%)	03 (10%)
Very delayed	--	--	--

It is important for children to learn socialization skills in their surrounding environment including school and at home. Children must learn to interact with others in a healthy, positive, and productive manner during preschool years. Results related to social skills reveal that majority (86.66%) of male child had achieved 'in time' social skills. 13.33% males were found to have 'delayed' social skills. In case of females, majority (93.33%) preschoolers had achieved this milestone 'in time' and (6.66%) had 'delayed' social skills. None male or female sample children had 'very delayed' social skills. However, some of the children had problems in following and understanding the rules of games. Similar results were highlighted by Jose (1997) who studied psychosocial development of tribal preschool children in comparison with that of their rural and urban peers and the results revealed that the preschoolers achieved social skills 'in time' equally as their rural and urban peers.

**6. OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL STATUS OF TRIBAL CHILDREN**

**Table 6. Overall developmental status**

	Male (n=15)	Female (n=15)	Total (n=30)
In time	14 (93.33%)	14 (93.33%)	28(93.33%)
Delayed	01 (6.66%)	01 (6.66%)	02 (6.66%)
Very delayed	--	--	--
	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	30 (100%)



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Table 6 depicts overall developmental status of tribal preschoolers. Results reveal that overall (93.33%) majority of them achieved all the milestones 'in time'. This trend continued for both male (93.33%) as well as female (93.33%) children. In only 2 cases delayed developmental patterns were noted. None of the male or female sample children had 'very delayed' developmental milestone. The young children of the Gujjar community were able to perform adequately on various tasks pertaining to their developmental status. Similar results were revealed by Vazir et.al (1994) who did a multicentric cross sectional collaborative study on 13,000 children from Chandigarh (rural), Jabalpur (tribal) and Hyderabad (rural) and results revealed that majority of children attained all the milestones in time irrespective of their diverse living conditions. The findings of the present study also highlight that the tribal children inspite of their deprived conditions tend to have adequate developments.

#### CONCLUSION:

The importance of adequate psychosocial development cannot be discounted for any child. The period of early years is especially crucial for laying the foundations of a later healthy and well developed adult. One development is significantly related and dependent on another developmental domain and vice-versa. Preschool years find a special mention in researches as a stage of rapid and significant developmental attainments. Many variables have further been noted to affect the developmental status of the children directly and indirectly (Dailey, 2008). The home environment both in terms of the physical environment and resources as well as the human interaction especially the nature and quality of stimulation available are extremely high predictors of a child's developmental status (Vazir, 1998).

Gujjars are one of the most marginalised tribal populations of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. They usually occupy the upper mountainous reaches of the state and are either nomadic or settled. The harsh living conditions of nomadic group can be easily adjudged, however, the quality of life of the settled segments of gujjars is no better. They usually settle on the outskirts of a town in self created small units and are mainly involved in animal rearing. They have only a few material and monetary resources available and infact, have a limited contact with other communities and people. They are strongly governed by their unique socio-cultural variables. Seldom their children attain education and attend school; their days being spent in random activities. Earlier researches conducted by Kaur et al (2003) and UNESCO (2011) on living conditions of Gujjar Tribe also support this fact.

The findings of the present study highlight that inspite of their disadvantaged environment, the sample gujjar preschoolers showed adequate development. Majority of these children achieved all the developmental milestones 'in time'. This trend continued for both male as well as female children separately. Also none of the male or female sample children had 'very delayed' developmental milestone. This piece of work also suggests that there can be improvement in their overall psychosocial development by providing them more stimulating environment to live and by carrying out some effective interventional programmes for the welfare of tribals comprising of children and parents/caregivers.

Since, the development of the children progressed smoothly and coherently with no major delays or disorders; this points to the fact that human development is to a larger extent a maturational process which seems resistant to inadequate environmental conditions. Even though environmental influences are very important in shaping development, none the less the present study highlights that most children can develop adequately fighting against the deprived environment.

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