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Perceived Parenting Skills Among Parents of Children Undergoing Surgery: A Descriptive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Surgery can be difficult for children and their parents. Effective parenting skills help to reduce the surgery-related discomfort and promote wellness and, consequently, favorable psychosocial surgical experiences for children. Most parents have anxiety before a pediatric surgical procedure. Parental anxiety may impair the parents' ability to cope with new or stressful situations while their children are undergoing surgery. Hence, in this study, the investigator has tried to assess the perceived parenting skills among parents of children undergoing surgery. Methods: This study was conducted using a descriptive correlational design among 100 parents of children undergoing surgery who met the inclusion criteria and were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Tools such as the demographic variable proforma of parents and children, and a rating scale to assess the perceived parenting skills were used. Results: The findings of the study revealed that the mean and standard deviation of the perceived parenting skills ($M=32.93$ & $SD=3.30$), indicating that most parents had consistently high levels of parenting skills with minimal variation among them. The association analysis reveals that among all selected background variables, mother's occupation showed a statistically significant association with perceived parenting skills ($\chi^2 = 6.921, p = 0.008$). Overall, the study highlights the need for continued support and targeted interventions to further strengthen parenting skills and enhance child outcomes during surgery.

Keywords: Perceived Parenting Skills, Surgery, Children.

INTRODUCTION

Children undergoing surgical procedures often experience significant physical and psychological stress. The perioperative period (preoperative, intraoperative, and postoperative phases) is a critical time not only for the child but also for the parents, who play a central role in providing emotional support and care. Negative surgical experiences in adults may include anxiety, stress, guilt, and depression throughout the surgical period across differing surgery types from varying medical fields. The increased involvement of the family further adds to the sensitivity and complexity of pediatric surgery¹.

Hospitalization to any child is a very unpleasant and traumatic experience². Play therapy at the children's bedsides did help them feel less anxious in the hospital. Venipuncture is one of the most painful and frightening procedures for kids in hospitals, which makes them feel the most nervous³. Parents, as primary caregivers, significantly influence how children perceive and cope with surgical experiences. Parenting skills—such as emotional support, communication, reassurance, coping guidance, and involvement in care—are essential in reducing the child's anxiety and improving recovery outcomes. Parental anxiety represents an important target for interventions aimed at alleviating a child's anxiety.

Parents are crucial partners for healthcare personnel throughout the perioperative period, and are often present with the child in the waiting area, preoperative holding room, and post-anesthesia care unit. Empowering and equipping parents to most effectively manage their own (and their child's) anxiety could greatly improve care satisfaction for the family, child surgical outcomes, and the efficiency of care on the day of surgery⁴. Children undergoing surgery frequently experience perioperative pain and anxiety, which can hinder their recuperation, increase their need for analgesics, and alter their behaviour⁵.

Enhancing parenting skills through structured education, counselling, and supportive interventions has become a key focus in pediatric nursing care. Understanding parenting skills in this context is crucial to improve child outcomes, parental well-being, and overall quality of perioperative care.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A Descriptive Study to Assess the Perceived Parenting Skills among Parents of Children Undergoing Surgery at Selected Hospitals, Chennai.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To assess the perceived parenting skills among parents of children undergoing surgery
- ii. To find out the association between selected demographic variables and perceived parenting skills among parents of children undergoing surgery

HYPOTHESIS

H₁ - There will be significant association between selected demographic variables and perceived parenting skills among parents of children undergoing surgery (P<0.05)

MATERIALS & METHODS

A descriptive correlational design was adopted to conduct the study in Apollo Children’s Hospital, Chennai, India after obtaining proper permission from the concerned authorities. One hundred parents of children undergoing surgery were selected by purposive sampling technique. After the initial introduction, the researcher obtained consent from the subjects to participate in the study. An assurance was given regarding confidentiality before the data collection procedure.

INSTRUMENTS

Data was collected through interview method using tools such as background variables of parents and their children and rating scale to assess the perceived parenting skills developed by the researcher. This scale consisted of 20 items. It is a three-point scale. Each item score ranged from 0 to 2. The researcher had assigned the following values to each response; Not done - 0; Partially done – 1 and Done- 2. The obtainable score for the scale was 0-40. The total score was obtained by totaling the individual item score.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Background Variables of Parents of children undergoing surgery (N = 100)

Demographic Variables	f & %
Age in years	
< 40	56
> 41	44
Parents	
Father	67
Mother	33
Mothers’ Education	
Primary	9
Secondary	12
Higher Secondary	45
Graduate & above	34
Fathers’ Education	
Primary	10
Secondary	2
Higher Secondary	30
Graduate & above	58
Mothers’ Occupation	
Homemaker	53
Unorganized sector	17
Self-employment	21
Organized sector	9
Fathers’ Occupation	
Unorganized sector	14
Self-employment	38
Organized sector	48
Monthly Family Income (Rs.)	
≤ 40,000	6
40,001–60,000	22
60,001–100,000	50
> 100,001	22
Area of residence	
Urban	63
Rural	37
Type of Family	
Nuclear	68
Joint	32

The above table 1 represents the frequency and percentage distribution of background variables of parents of children undergoing surgery. More than half of the parents were aged below 40 years (56%), with fathers constituting the majority of respondents (67%). In terms of education, the largest group of mothers had completed higher secondary education (45%), while a notably high proportion of fathers were graduates and above (58%). Regarding occupation, more than half of the mothers were homemakers (53%), and fathers were employed in the organized sector (48%). The highest percentage of families (50%) reported a monthly income between ₹60,001 and ₹100,000, indicating a predominantly middle-income group. Additionally, most participants resided in urban areas (63%) and belonged to nuclear families (68%).

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Demographic Variables of Children Undergoing Surgery (N = 100)

Demographic Variables	f & %
Age (in years)	
< 9 years	42
> 9 years	58
Gender	
Male	64
Female	36
Education (Standard)	
2nd Std	19
3rd Std	11
4th Std	12
5th Std	10
6th Std	48
Previous Hospitalization	
Yes	24
No	76
Previous Surgery	
Yes	13
No	87
Duration of Present Illness	
Few Days	17
Few Weeks	43
Few Months	31
Congenital	9

Table 2 reveals the demographic profile of children. Nearly half of the children were aged above 9 years (58%) and were male (64%). In terms of education, nearly half of the children were studying in 6th standard (48%). Majority had no previous hospitalization (76%) and no history of previous surgery (87%). Regarding the duration of present illness, the highest percentage reported illness lasting a few weeks (43%), followed by a few months (31%).

Figure 1 illustrates that (38%) of the children undergoing genitourinary surgery.

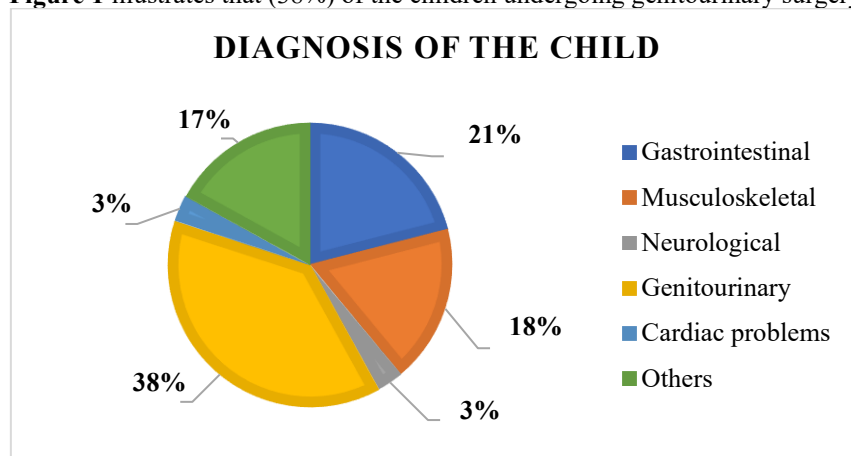


Table 3: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Perceived Parenting Skills among Parents of Children Undergoing Surgery (N= 100)

Interpretation	Scores	f & %
Adequate skill	31- 40	73
Moderately Adequate Skill	21- 30	27
Needs improvement	< 20	-

The findings in the above table 3, shows that majority of parents (73%) demonstrated adequate parenting skills, and moderately adequate skills (27%). Overall, the results indicate that most parents possessed a satisfactory level of parenting competence in supporting their children during the surgical experience.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Perceived Parenting Skills among Parents of Children Undergoing Surgery (N= 100)

Variables	Obtainable Score		Mean	SD
	Minimum	Maximum		
Perceived Parenting Skills	0	40	32.93	3.303

It can be inferred from Table 4 that mean and standard deviation of perceived parenting skills among parents of children undergoing surgery was (M = 32.93, SD= 3.30). This indicates that most parents had consistently high levels of parenting skills with minimal variation among them.

Table 5: Association of Selected Background Variables with Perceived Parenting Skills among Parents of Children Undergoing Surgery (N=100)

Variables	Upto mean	Above mean	χ^2 & p value
Age of the parent			
≤ 40 years	26	30	0.125
> 41 years	22	22	0.722
Parents			
Father	36	31	2.672
Mother	12	21	0.102
Mothers' Education			
Higher Secondary	30	36	0.503
Graduate & above	18	16	0.477
Fathers' Education			
Higher Secondary	19	23	0.221
Graduate & above	29	29	0.638
Mother's Occupation			6.921
Homemaker	32	21	0.008
Employed	16	31	
Father's Occupation			
Unorganized sector	25	27	0.0003
Self-employment	23	25	0.987
Age of the child			
< 9 years	19	23	0.221
> 9 years	29	29	0.638
Gender			
Male	33	31	0.903
Female	15	21	0.341
Duration of Present Illness			
Few Days to Few Weeks	29	31	0.006
Few Months & Congenital	19	21	0.934

Tab 5 infers that, there was a significant association of selected background variables, mother's occupation with perceived parenting skills ($\chi^2 = 6.921, p = 0.008$), indicating that employed mothers had higher parenting skill scores compared to homemakers. However, there was no significant association of selected background variables with perceived parenting skills ($p > 0.05$). Hence the hypothesis **H₁** There will be significant association between selected demographic variables and perceived parenting skills among parents of children undergoing surgery ($P < 0.05$) was rejected except with regard to the background variable mother's occupation.

Surgery can be emotionally distressing for children, and subsequently their parents and caregivers, this distress can cause profound adverse impacts on children. Parents frequently accompany their children in the waiting room, preoperative holding room, and post-anesthesia care unit, making them essential partners for medical staff during the perioperative phase. The family's satisfaction with care, the child's surgical outcomes, and the effectiveness of care on the day of surgery could all be significantly enhanced by empowering and preparing parents to effectively manage their own (and their child's) anxiety⁴.

Parents' practices will improve with proper education, awareness, and support⁶. The use of a Clinical Nursing Pathway enhances patient satisfaction by promoting consistent care, improving understanding of treatment processes, and supporting patient-centered nursing practices⁷. Additionally, dignified care is essential for encouraging health-seeking behaviours⁹.

Parents give a lot of importance to receiving preoperative information regarding their children and some parents do educate their children as well. In a cross-sectional survey 95.8% of parents indicated that they informed their child in advance about the reason for the hospital stay; 78.9% explained that a surgical intervention would be done; 46% of parents felt that they received adequate information by hospital staff; and 56.3% of parents considered that a booklet with pictures and text would be a useful means of informing their child about surgical intervention⁸. There is a need for targeted psychological support to reduce the parental anxiety¹⁰. Parental anxiety significantly affects child outcomes. Effective parenting skills can reduce anxiety and improve recovery. Interventions like education, play therapy, and parental involvement are beneficial.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the majority of parents of children undergoing surgery demonstrated adequate parenting skills, indicating good competence in supporting their children during the perioperative period. The findings emphasize the importance of supporting and enhancing parenting skills to improve child outcomes during surgical experiences.

Conflict of Interest: Nil

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