

## INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT TOWARDS HEALTH CARE OF THEIR WARDS

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the present study is to explore how parents are encouraging towards health care of their wards. A 'Survey Method' was used in the present study. A standardized 'Agarwal Parental Encouragement Scale (APES)' was used to collect information from the students. The sample consists of thousand and ninety five higher secondary students from Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Kanyakumari districts. Percentage analysis and 't' test were used for data analysis. Findings of the study indicate that, the male and female higher secondary students, significantly differed from their parental encouragement on health care. Similarly, the higher secondary students studying in Tamil and English medium, significantly differed from their parental encouragement on health care.*

*Keywords: Parental Encouragement, Health Care, Gender, Medium of Instruction*

### INTRODUCTION

A parent is a caretaker of the offspring in their own species. Parents are in a unique position to influence the health of their children. Parent has the duty to care for and nurture their offspring. The child has the right to receive this care and nurture and the obligation to yield reasonable parental guidance and supervision. Most parents know the basics of keeping children healthy, like offering them healthy foods, making sure they get enough sleep and exercise and insuring their safety. Providing quality and nourishing meals in child care is extremely important for young children. Children need healthy meals to maintain healthy lifestyle and to grow and develop (Lofton, K. & Nettles, M. F. 2010). Nutrition is an essential component of adolescent health care. Two important transformations occur during adolescents that may cause significant changes in a teenager's nutritional needs. Growth in height and weight and changes in body composition are greater and more rapid than at any other time in life, except during infancy (Neinstein, L. S., 2008). Encouragement is the act of supplying courage to someone else by the way of doing or saying something to inspire them (Lampert, R., 2011). Parental encouragement refers to the treatment originating from

parents towards the child with a view to enhance the possibilities of future occurrences of good behavior by care, approval and guidance (Tamanna, K., 2014).

### Need for the Study

The parents are the child's first teacher. The child's first place of contact with the world is the family (Janet, K. 2001). The child requires initial education and socialization from parents and other significant persons in the family. The role of the parent is to provide encouragement, support and access to activities that enable the child to master key developmental tasks. Family system is a significant factor in the holistic development of children. Now-a-days due to the influence of western culture, urbanization and breakdown of joint family system into nuclear families, the healthy environment of the families have been disturbed (Sekar & Mani, 2013). Adolescent growth and development are deeply affected by the family environment in manifold and enduring ways-for good or for ill. The interactions of siblings, grandparents, and other significant individuals in a variety of family structures are clearly important for adolescence health.

Parents have an important role in making decisions about

their child's health. Parents should know about the strength and weakness of their wards. Parents must provide nutritive and balanced diet during the adolescence stage. Creating opportunities for parents and caregivers to develop parenting skills and to develop an environment in the home meets the basic family needs of health and safety and supports learning; protect children from serious diseases, through screening and immunization. Reducing childhood obesity by promoting healthy eating and physical activity is another importance. When both parents are alive and they provide a good environment for the child, the personality of the child grows well. Having healthy home cast, healthy impact on the growing body, mind and heart of the child.

In this study, the investigator made an attempt to know the influence of parental encouragement on health care of their wards between age group of 15 and 18 years. Early adolescents need right direction and consistent encouragement from their parents for better development of their health.

### **Review of related literature**

A literature survey among parental encouragement shows that the influence of parental encouragement to health care of early adolescents is scanty. According to Bodhale, P., et al. (2014), a study on parents has been an important role in making decisions about their child's oral health. Awareness among parents was significantly lower in low socio-economic group. Parent's attitude towards dental treatment differed significantly in which only 53% parents from high socio-economic group preferred going to the pediatric dentist. Coveney, J. (2002) has investigated that food did not merely serve a biological function; it also served a social function. Biologically, our need for daily intake of nutrients means that food is important for nutritional status, growth and development, and health. However, food represents more than just nutrition and health; for many people it is an important part of our relationships with others. Research on the relationship between family and food has been shown that well-functioning families had better overall health and well-being than poorly functioning families reported by Rhee et-al. (2008). Rhee et-al. also suggested that,

when families are not functioning well, parents, children and others are at an increased risk for poor nutrition, being overweight, or developing other health-related problems like diabetes. Laura Nicholls (2014) has identified that the higher levels of parental encouragement, compared to low encouragement, were positively associated with higher global health-related quality of life scores, particularly in the physical functioning domain. To a lesser degree, high parental encouragement was also associated with higher scores on the psychosocial domain. Obese weight status showed a significant association with lower health-related quality of life on all scales. Parental encouragement significantly moderated the inverse relationship between overweight status and physical well being. Parents might be directly or indirectly influencing their children's food preferences at home, which in turn affect energy intake. The age range of focus is from the time solid foods are introduced until children enter primary school (around age five or six). There is an association between children's food preferences at these ages and their risk of obesity. Eating habits developed when young influence lifelong eating behaviours (Gibson EL et al. 2012). Parents can strongly influence on children's food choices, because they have increased control over children's actions at this age, and outside influences (school, peers) are usually minimal. Once children begin schooling most have already developed their food preferences (likes and dislikes); and achieving behaviour change is more difficult. Parents' positive influences are vital for establishing healthy lifestyle behaviours in their children. Elsa Maria et al (2014) analyzed the involvement of parents in the healthcare among hospitalized children. Three dimensions of involvement were highlighted such as daily care provided to children, opinions concerning the involvement of parents, and continuity of care with aspects related to the presence and participation of parents, benefits to the child and family, information needs, responsibility, right to healthcare, hospital infrastructure, care delivery, communication between the parents and health services, shared learning, and follow-up after discharge. The involvement of parents in the care provided to their children had many meanings for

parents, nurses and doctors. Specific strategies need to be developed with and for parents in order to mobilize parental competencies and contribute to increasing their autonomy and decision-making concerning the care provided to children.

### Objectives of the study

1. To find the level of parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with regard to gender and medium of instruction.
2. To find whether there is any significant difference in parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with respect to gender and medium of instruction.

### Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference in parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with respect to gender.
2. There is no significant difference in parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with respect to medium of instruction.

### Research Design

The investigator adopted the survey method to study the influence of parental encouragement towards health care of their wards. The survey method gathers data from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time. It attempts to describe and interpret what exists at present the conditions, practices, processes, trends effects, attitudes and beliefs for which the survey type of research would be more relevant and useful.

### Population and Sample

The population for the present study consists of the higher secondary students among Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Kanyakumari districts. The total number of higher secondary schools in three districts are three hundred and one (301). The sample for the present study comprises thousand ninety five XI and XII standard students of tirunelveli (390), tuticorin (377) and kanyakumari (328) districts in Private, Government and Aided schools. The sample has been collected by using 'Simple Random Sampling Technique'. The investigator collected the data

from male, female, tamil medium and english medium students.

### Instrument used for the study

The investigator used the 'Parental Encouragement Scale (PES)' which was prepared and validated by Kusum Agarwal (1999). This scale consists of 80 statements. Each statement was set against five point scale, such as Always, Most often, Frequently, Sometimes and Never.

### Validity

The Parental Encouragement Scale was given to 100 parents and 100 students belonging to those parents respectively. The separate responses were correlated and when correlation was found high (.73), it was assumed that the scale measures what it designs to measure. In order to establish internal validity, the responses of each item were correlated with the total responses, which have shown satisfactory correlation (.64).

### Reliability

In the Parental Encouragement Scale, its reliability was determined by Kuder Richardson Method (.79) and test-retest reliability (.80).

### Administration

The investigator administered the Parental Encouragement scale with prior permission from the head of the schools situated in Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Kanyakumari Districts. The questionnaire has been distributed to the XI and XII standard students with proper instructions. Whenever they asked doubt regarding the questionnaire, the investigator clarified the doubts immediately.

### Data Analysis

The investigator used the mean, standard deviation, t-test for analyzing the data. The collected data have been analyzed and the results are given in the Tables 1 - 4.

Table 1 reveals that, 36.7% and 38.3% of male and

Demographic Variable	Categories	Parental Encouragement on Health Care					
		Low		Moderate		High	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender	Male	183	38.9	115	24.4	173	36.7
	Female	183	29.3	202	32.4	239	38.3

Table 1. Level of parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with regard to gender

female students have high level of parental encouragement in the dimension of health care respectively. Figure 1 shows that female students receive high level of parental encouragement on their health care than the male students.

Table 2 reveals that, 37.7% and 37.6% of students studying in Tamil and English medium have high level of parental encouragement in the dimension of health care respectively. Figure 2 shows that, students those who were studying Tamil medium received high level of parental encouragement on health care, than the students those who were studying English medium.

The results presented in Table 3 shows that, there is statistically significant difference in parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with regard to gender, since the obtained calculated value (4.994), is greater than minimum value for significance at 0.05 level of confidence.

The results presented in Table 4 revealed that, there is statistically significant difference in parental

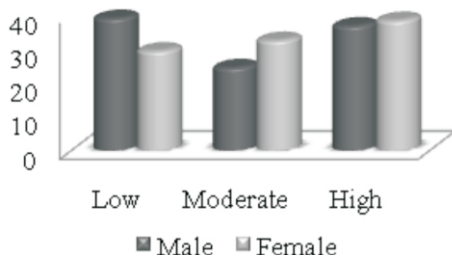


Figure 1. Level of parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with regard to gender

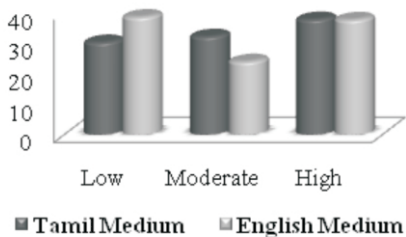


Figure 2. Level of parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with regard to medium of instruction

Demographic Variable	Categories	Parental Encouragement on health aspects					
		Low		Moderate		High	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Medium of Instruction	Tamil	202	30.2	215	32.1	252	37.7
	English	164	38.5	102	23.9	160	37.6

Table 2. Level of parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with regard to medium of instruction

Dimension	Male (N - 471)		Female (N - 624)		Calculated 't' value	P value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Parental encouragement on Health care	48.20	11.653	51.35	8.301	4.994	.000*

Table 3. Significant difference between male and female students with regard to parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards

Dimension	Tamil (N-669)		English (N-426)		Calculated 't' value	P value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Parental encouragement on Healthcare	50.57	9.652	49.10	10.473	2.333	.002*

Table 4. Significant difference between students studying in Tamil and English medium with regard to parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards

encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with regard to medium of instruction, since the obtained calculated value (2.333), is greater than minimum value for significance at 0.05 level of confidence.

### Results and Interpretation

The descriptive analysis indicates 36.7% and 38.3% of male, female students and 37.7% and 37.6% of students studying in Tamil and English medium have high level of parental encouragement in the dimension of health care respectively. In general, parents should give more concern about the health of male and female children. The parents should pay more attention to the weakness of both children. Also the parents should fulfill the basic needs and expectation of the children. They may provide more healthy nutritious food, fruits and vegetables. The institution need to organize periodical meetings with parents and counsell them to pay more attention towards their wards health. Parental counselling is essential for enabling the parents to understand the importance of encouragement towards their wards health.

Table 3 shows that, calculated 't' value is greater than the table value (1.96) for df of 1093, at 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. There is significant difference in parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with regard to gender. The mean response given by female students have gained more mean score (51.35) when compared to the male students (48.20) with respect to parental

encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards. In general, female children are basically weak in health aspects. Hence they should be provided healthy nutritious food, fruits and vegetables. Also the parents should give more concern about their illness. Also parents must give uniform care for both male and female children. The institution needs to organize periodical meetings and invite the experts and doctors to give more awareness about health and hygiene practices.

Table 4 shows that, calculated 't' value is greater than the table value (1.96) for df of 1093, at 5% level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. There is significant difference in parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards with regard to medium of instruction. The mean response given by students studying in Tamil medium has gained more mean score (50.35) when compared to the students studying in English medium (49.10) with respect to parental encouragement in the dimension of health care of their wards. The reasons may be that government authorities provide mid-day meals system only for those who are studying in government and government aided schools. These schools are almost in Tamil medium. Government authorities should aim to improve the nutritional status of school-age children. But in English medium schools they are concentrating more on academic studies than physical activities. Hence the institution and parents should encourage their wards for physical activities and intake of nutritious food. The schools of English medium need to organise periodical meetings with parents and counsell them to pay attention towards their wards' health.

## Recommendations

1. Parents should fulfill their basic needs and expectations of the children.
2. The management needs to organize periodical meetings for the students and invite the experts and doctors to give more awareness about health and hygiene practices to them.
3. Parents should be a positive role model in taking healthy food.
4. Parents should provide a variety of nutrient-dense foods such as fruits and vegetables to their children.
5. Parents should schedule their meal times, and eat together as a family.
6. Parents should apply a moderate amount of restriction and teach that all foods can be part of a healthy diet in the right amounts.
7. Parents should encourage their wards, but not pressure the children to eat fruits and vegetables.

## Conclusion

Parents are the child's first teachers and they continue to have primary responsibility for their child's development. Parents are in a unique position to influence the health of their children. Any parent can be a good role model for children's nutrition. Being well-nourished supports healthy growth and development and gives children the energy needed to carry out their daily activities. Eating well has been proven to help children perform better at school. The situation is compounded by the fact that the joint family system is disappearing and today's child does not have the benefits of the guidance and counseling of grandparents who can provide extended family support, encouragement or companionship. Child's development is affected by family conditions such as divorce, remarriage, and parental employment. It may also affect the child's health. Parents must provide healthy food for their children for physical and mental development.

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