

A STUDY ON PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS OF MIDDLE AGE CHILDREN IN RELATION TO FAMILY RECREATIONAL PATTERN

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Abstract

Middle childhood is one of the most important stage's that is marked by the child's transition from total physical and psychological dependency to self-sufficiency and independence wherein they begin to develop their own identities, establish unique personalities, and enjoy a variety of interests and likes. Though the desire for independence and growing individuality move the middle age children into the world that is a little distant from that of their parents but still they strive to seek parents' acceptance and feel the need to spend some quality time with them. Thus parents' need to establish a family recreational pattern that is positive and involves spending enough quality time with their middle age children as leisure time plays an important role in psychophysical and social growth of children. And therefore the present study was designed to examine the personality and behavior problems of middle age children in relation to family recreational pattern. For the study a sample of 200 middle age children (6-8 years) and 200 parents (N = 400) from different schools of Jodhpur city were selected through purposive random sampling. Questionnaires were used by the researcher to obtain the data related to the family recreational pattern (Parental Lifestyle Questionnaire), behavior problem in children (Child Behavior Checklist by Achenbach, 1981) and personality of children (Early school personality questionnaire (ESPQ) by J. N. Lal, 1987). The findings of the study indicated that most of the families (65%) in the selected sample had a positive recreational pattern. Furthermore the results indicated that there is a significant negative correlation between family recreational pattern and behavior problems in middle age children. It was also revealed that most of the personality factors of children were significantly related to the family recreational pattern indicating the influence of quality time spent by parents with their children on the overall personality development of middle age children.

Key words - Middle childhood, Behavior problem, Personality and family recreational pattern

Introduction

Middle childhood has been called the "golden age" of childhood. The recurring theme children face at this age is change. Yet the changes affecting middle childhood centre less on 'growth' and more on children's developing social and emotional worlds. The first big change is that children in middle childhood spend around half as much time with their parents as they do in early childhood, while the time they spend with other children and alone increases significantly. Children however still recognize the need for the parents' support and their relationship with their parents continues to be important. They respect parents' knowledge, skills and need time and attention from them. Therefore in spite of the shift in the focus of middle age

children from parents to peers, the dynamics of the parent child relationship does not change, making it one of the most important aspects having far reaching effects on the behavior and personality development of a middle age child.

The goal of every parent is to raise a happy and well-adjusted child and though parents do invest both their material resources and their time into raising their child, sometimes they become so anxious in this process of raising a “successful” child that they overlook the importance of spending time interacting personally with their child. This does not mean rushing from school to extracurricular activity to supervising homework. Interactive time is that spent with both child and parent fully engaged in an activity together. The importance of this time is multifold. It makes the child feel important and loved, he or she gets an opportunity to model parent’s behavior, the parent can observe and learn about the child’s strengths and weaknesses in order to guide them better, the parent can pass on their values and opinions and the child has a chance to voice their thoughts and feelings. All this interactive or quality time spent by the parent with their middle age child helps them develop a stronger bond, better overall personality and combat various behavior issues that the child might face during these crucial years. Therefore one of the most important functions of contemporary families/parents is health, recreation and social function that prepare children and young people to utilize their leisure time. Children are known to copy forms of behavior that occur both in the family environment and outside them. So it is important that parents participate in games, playing and other forms of recreation with the children to help their middle age child inculcate the same habit. Parents need to plan their leisure time or create a family recreational pattern making sure that their middle age child is involved in it. Reading stories to the child, making outing plans, going on trips and playing with children help the parent strengthen their ties with them and it also influences the overall development of the middle age child. Different studies have proved the positive effects of joint family recreational time on the overall development of children, school achievements and future career (Schor J.B., 1993). Joint family recreational pattern not only promotes healthy lifestyle, stimulates interest in physical exercise and becomes a behavior pattern for children but it also strengthens the bond with parents, which in turn has the strongest influence on emotional well-being and emotional problems of the middle age child. Therefore it is quite imperative for parents to establish a family recreational pattern in such a way that they get to spend enough quality time with their middle age children making them feel more loved, wanted and secure thereby positively affecting their overall personality development and behavior.

Therefore the present study was an attempt to examine the personality and behavior problems of middle age children in relation to family recreational pattern. The study also attempted to identify the family recreational pattern adopted by Indian parents. Thus, by examining the relationship between family recreational pattern and personality and behavior problems of middle age children, we may have a better understanding of the importance of establishing a positive family recreational pattern which would help parents strengthen their bond with their middle age child and help the children feel more valued and more heard thereby positively influencing their personality and combating the negative influences and behavioral issues that their child might face in this new phase of their life.

Review of literature

Ellington, A. (2011) examined “The role of family time on a young child’s overall development”. The sample consisted of 53 families with children between the ages of two and five. Participants were asked to fill out a Family Time Questionnaire. Findings showed family time to be significantly related to two year

old children's social/emotional, cognitive, and language development and three to five year old children's cognitive development. Thus it can be concluded that a good or positive recreational pattern does affect the overall development of children in a positive way.

Kapil and Sonawat (2002) conducted a study to find out the amount of time spend with the child by the parents and its impact on socialization. The results revealed that mothers regardless of their working status are the most involved in child care. And the time spend by her has a positive impact on the socialization of the child. The environment of the family or the home environment is determined by the kind of interaction among its members. This interaction is further influenced by the lifestyle of the parents.

Hofferth & Sandberg (2001) also stated that family time is important to both achievement and behavior of children; spending more time with the family is associated with a higher score on the applied problems test and a reduced number of behavior problems. In another study by **Mactavish & Schleien (1998)** when parents' perceptions of family leisure were examined, findings showed that shared recreation was especially helpful in developing social skills in children, such as learning to problem solve, to compromise and to negotiate.

Objectives

The following objectives were laid down for the present study

1. To identify the family recreational pattern adopted by the parents of middle age children.
2. To correlate family recreational pattern and personality and behavior problems of middle age children.

Research design - For this study, the researcher employed **descriptive research** as it is an investigation effort to explore and describe the relationship between family recreational pattern and personality and behavioral problems of middle age (6-8 years) children.

Locale of the study - The present study was conducted in the primary schools lying within the municipal limits of Jodhpur city, Rajasthan.

Sampling – A total sample of 400, 200 middle age children (sample A) and 200 parents (sample B), fulfilling the criteria required for the present study was selected through purposive random sampling for the present study.

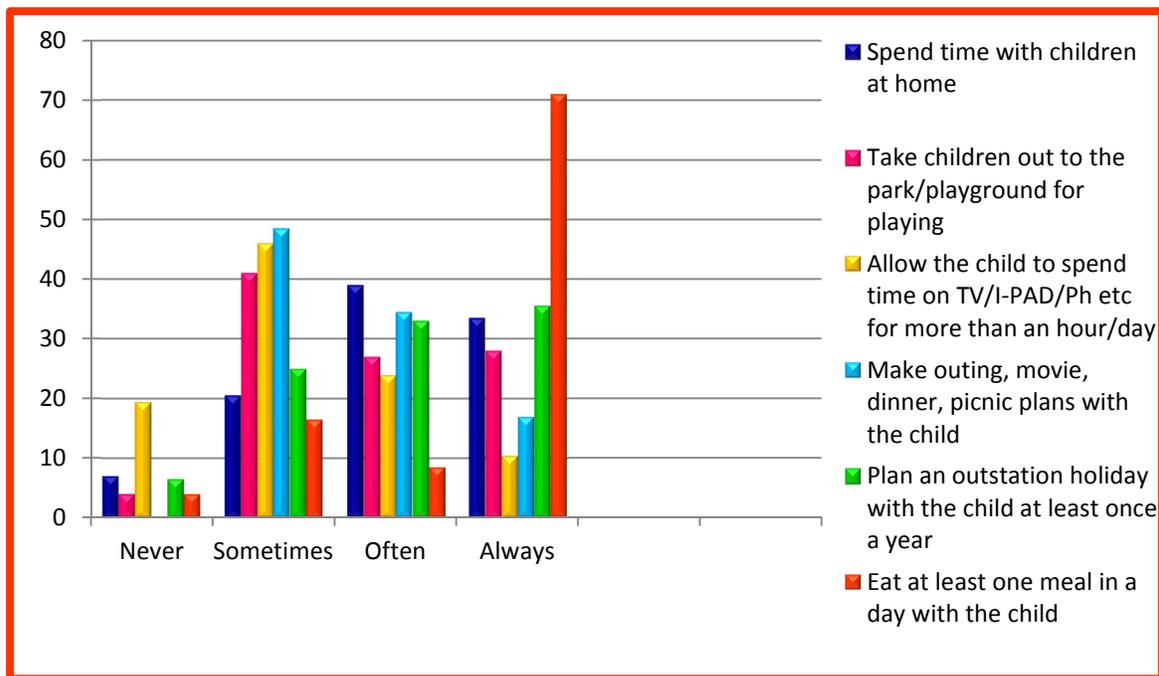
Tools used

- General information questionnaire (self constructed)
- Child behavior checklist by Achenbach (1981)
- Parental lifestyle questionnaire (self constructed)
- Early school personality questionnaire (ESPQ) by J. N. Lal (1987)

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to the family recreational pattern

Activity	Never		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Spend time with children at home (telling stories, playing with them etc.)	14	7.00	41	20.50	78	39.00	67	33.50
Take children out to the park/playground for playing	8	4.00	82	41.00	54	27.00	56	28.00
Allow the child to spend time on TV/I-PAD/Ph etc for more than an hour/day	39	19.50	92	46.00	48	24.00	21	10.50
Make outing, movie, dinner, picnic plans with the child	0	0.00	97	48.50	69	34.50	34	17.00
Plan an outstation holiday with the child at least once a year	13	6.50	50	25.00	66	33.00	71	35.50
Eat at least one meal in a day with the child	8	4.00	33	16.50	17	8.50	142	71.00

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents according to the family recreational pattern



The above table and figure helps in determining the amount of recreational time spent by the parents with their middle age child.

The results indicated that maximum parents i.e. 39%, often spend quality time with their children enjoying at home, telling them stories or playing with them. 33.50% of them were such who spend quality time with their children on a daily basis followed by 41 (20.50%) respondents who said that they hardly get time therefore they sit and spend time with their children only sometimes. And hardly 7% of parents reported that they never get time to spend with their children due to work pressure or other reasons.

Majority of parents (41%) admitted that they take their children out to play only sometimes whereas 28% of respondents were such who on a regular basis took their children to parks and playgrounds to play. There were parents (27%) who did not take their kids to parks everyday but quite often and only 4% were such who never took their children outside to play.

46% of parents allowed their children a screen time (TV/I-PAD/Ph) of more than 1 hour/day sometimes only. However 24% were such who allowed the prolong use of gadgets (>1 hr) quite often whereas the number of parents who allowed their middle age children to spend more than an hour on tv/i-pad/ph everyday accounted for almost 10.50% of the total sample. And there were around 39 (19.50%) parents who never let the screen time exceed more than an hour for their children.

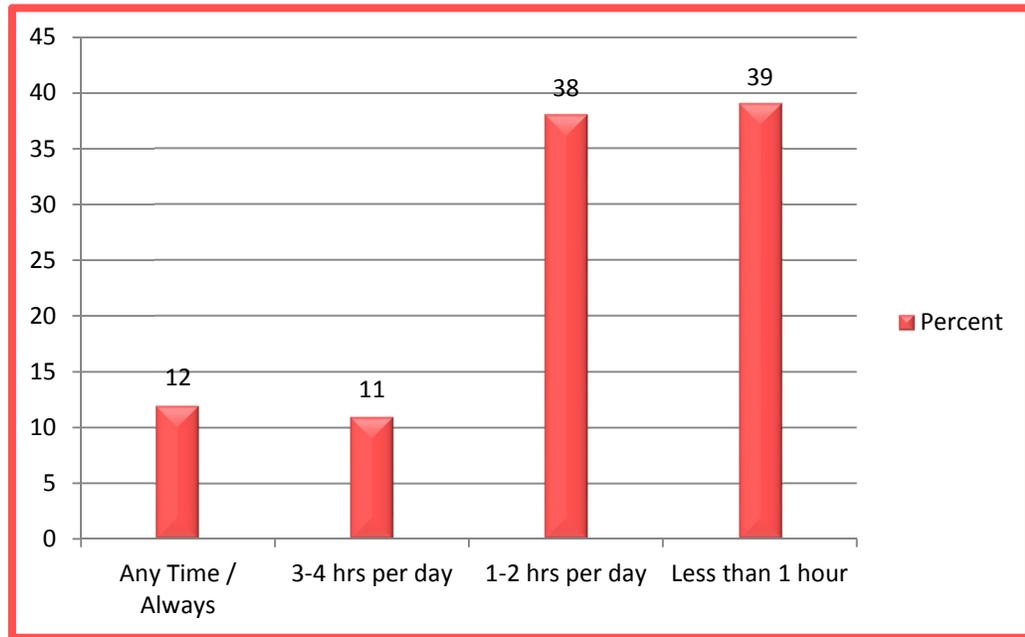
There were hardly 17% of parents who always made outing plans (movie, picnic etc.) with their children. Almost fifty percent of the total sample i.e. 48.50% of parents made outing plans only sometimes whereas 34.50% of them were such who quite often went for picnics, dinners etc. with their middle age children. However there were none who never went for outings with their children.

Most of the respondents i.e. 35.50% (always) and 33% (often) planned outstation holiday with their children at least once a year. There were 25% of parents who made holiday plans only sometimes whereas hardly 6.50% of parents never planned an outstation holiday with their children.

It was also revealed that majority of parents (71%) made sure that they eat at least 1 meal with their children daily whereas 16.50% of parents sometimes ate 1 meal in a day with their children. The percentage of parents who often had 1 meal/day with their children was quite less i.e. 8.50% and only 4% were such who could never eat even a single meal in a day with their child because of their busy schedules.

Table 2: Distribution of parents according to the number of hours spent by them on TV/Mobile

Time	N	%
Any Time / Always	24	12.00
3-4 hrs per day	22	11.00
1-2 hrs per day	76	38.00
Less than 1 hour	78	39.00
Total	200	100.00

Figure 2: Distribution of parents according to the number of hours spent by them on TV/Mobile

The above figure indicates the screen time/day of the Indian parents. In an article by **Nandita Mathur (2017)** it was estimated that adults in India will be spending an average of 1 hour and 18 minutes daily with digital media, which was expected to increase by 14.4% in a year.

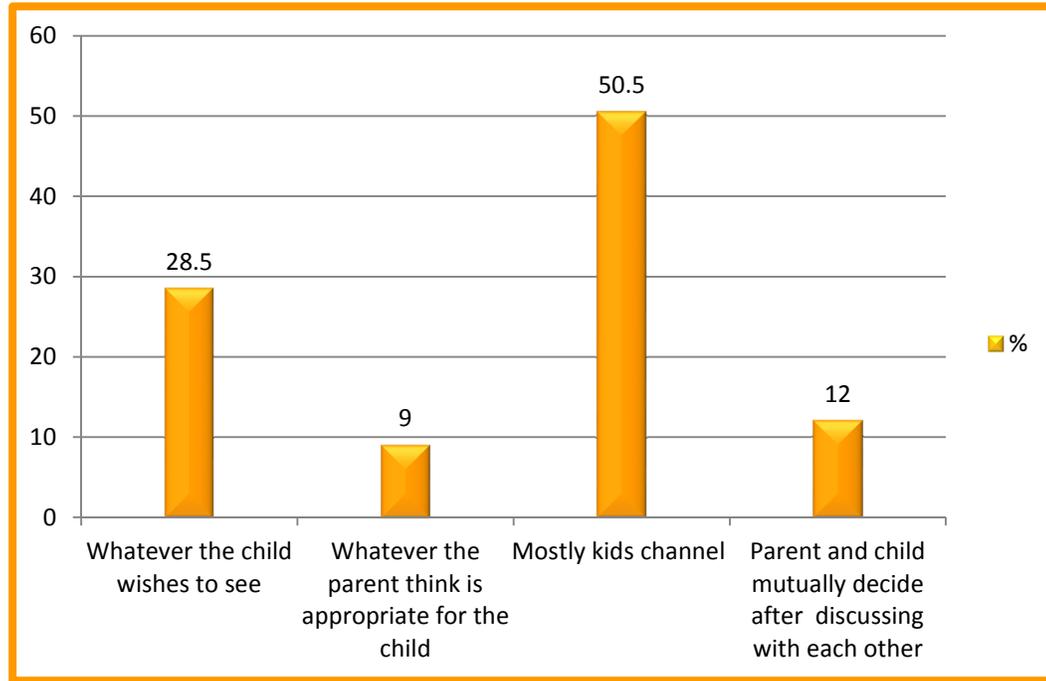
(<https://www.livemint.com/Consumer/f7ZqNqxZnt9b17pQ8Np30N/Adults-time-spent-on-digital-media-to-grow-144-in-2017-r.html>, cited September, 2018)

And the current research figures confirm the above given statement as maximum parents (39% and 38%) said that their screen time is limited to either less than an hour or 1-2 hours/day whereas there were 11% and 12% respondents who reported to have a screen time of almost 3-4 hours/day and any time of the day respectively.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to the person determining the programs to be viewed or applications to be used by the child on TV/Mobile

Response	N	%
Whatever the child wishes to see	57	28.50
Whatever the parent think is appropriate for the child	18	9.00
Mostly kids channel	101	50.50
Parent and child mutually decide after discussing with each other	24	12.00
Total	200	100.00

Figure 3: Distribution of respondents according to the person determining the programs to be viewed or applications to be used by the child on TV/Mobile

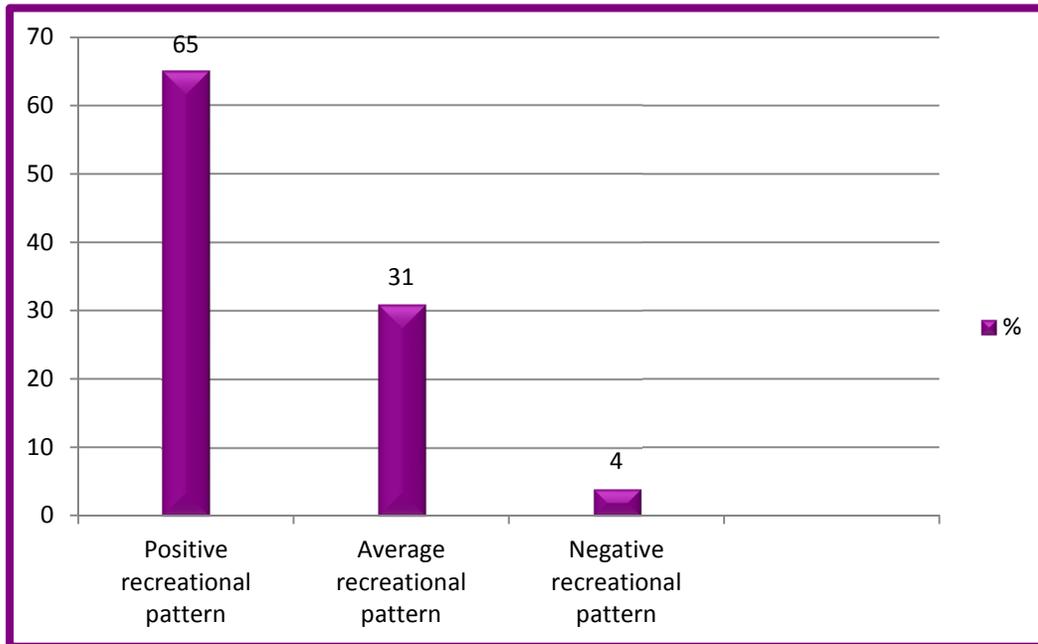


The above table reveals that in most families (50.50%) the children view kids channel or use applications for children on mobile followed by 28% of cases wherein the child uses or views whatever he/she likes on the mobile or TV. There was a small percentage (12%) where what has to be viewed on TV or what applications are to be used on the mobile were mutually decided by the parents and children and only 9% of cases were such wherein only parents decided what the child should use or view on the mobile and TV.

Table 4: Overall Family Recreational Pattern

Family recreational pattern	N	%
Positive recreational pattern	130	65.00
Average recreational pattern	62	31.00
Negative recreational pattern	8	4.00
Total	200	100

Figure 4: Overall Family Recreational Pattern

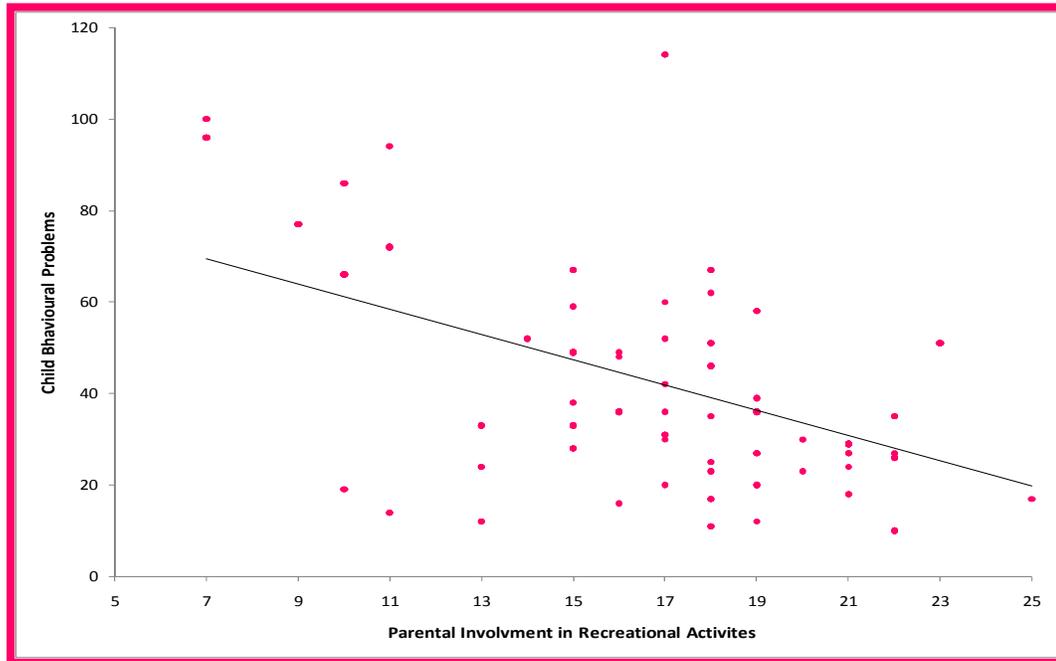


The above figure depicting the family recreational pattern exhibits that majority (65%) of parents/families had a positive recreational pattern wherein parents made sure that they spend ample quality time with their middle age children and plan activities that involve their children whereas 31% of parents had an average recreational pattern and there were hardly 4% of families that had a negative recreational pattern wherein parents didn't spend enough leisure time with their kids. However contradictory results were reported by **Mestdag, I. (2005)** in his study wherein data showed that parents are spending less time together as a family and especially on family meals, and even more so on working days. Though according to a survey in US, two out of three parents stated that in case they had more free time, they would spend it with their children (**Talking Points – State Services Children, the Internet and the family time Media Release Points, Ask-Alabama Poll, 2004**)

Table 5: Correlation between Child Behavioral Problems and overall family Recreational Pattern

N	r	Result
200	-0.469	***
*** Correlation is significant at 0.001 level		

Figure 5: Correlation between Child Behavioral Problems and overall family Recreational Pattern



Joint family activities contribute to the well-being of each family member and enhance the quality of communication between family members (Fiese, H., 2006). Another study that confirms the importance of positive/involved recreational pattern or joint family activities is a study by Garmiené, A. et al. (2003) which reveals that the children and adolescents, who spend less time with their parents, are more susceptible to the development of risk behavior.

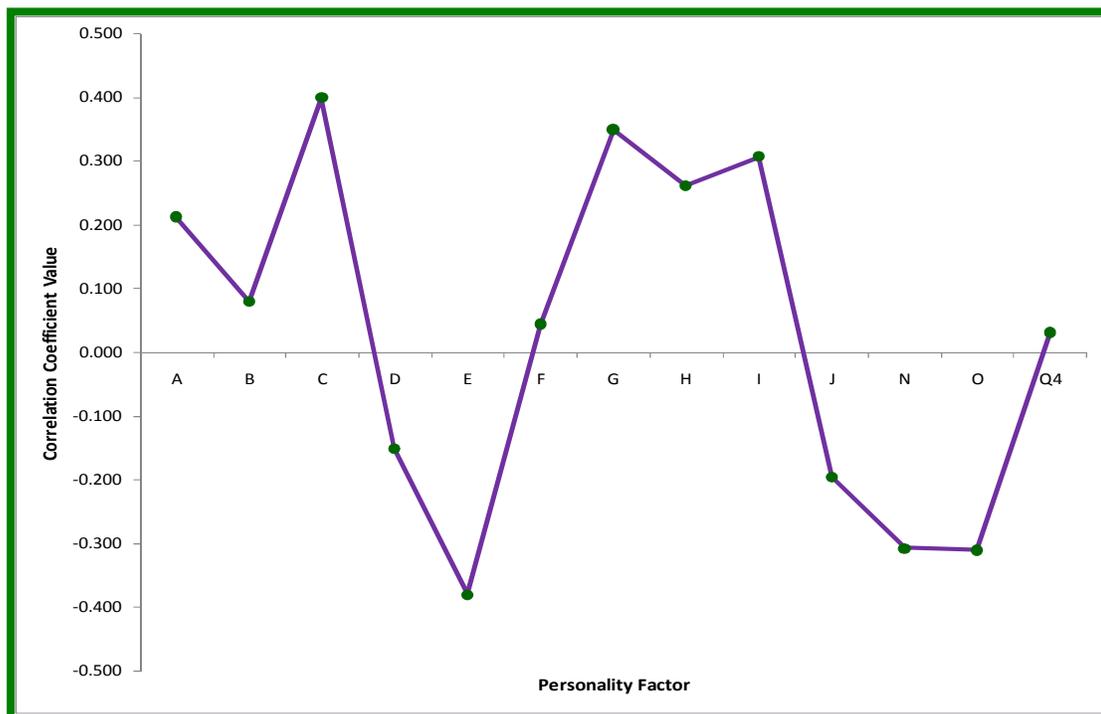
The current research data and results confirm the above-mentioned fact as the family recreational pattern in this study was found to have a significant negative relation with the behavior problems in middle age children which convey that more positive or involved the family recreational pattern is fewer are the behavioral issues in children. This negative correlation signifies the importance of spending sufficient leisure or quality time by the parents with their middle age children in order to counter the negative influences which the children might face during this phase of their life due to the widening social environment. These leisure time activities spent by children also function as learning environments for mastering specific skills and techniques (Verma, et al., 1999) thereby helping them in their overall positive development.

Table 6: Correlation between Personality Factors and Overall Family Recreational Pattern

Factors	Correlation with Overall Family Recreational Pattern (r)
A	0.212 **

B	0.080 NS
C	0.399 ***
D	-0.151 *
E	-0.380 ***
F	0.044 NS
G	0.349 ***
H	0.261 ***
I	0.307 ***
J	-0.196 **
N	-0.308 ***
O	-0.310 ***
Q4	0.031 NS
*** correlation significant at 0.001 level	
** correlation significant at 0.01 level	
* correlation significant at 0.05 level	

Figure 6: Correlation between Personality Factors and Overall Family Recreational Pattern



The above given figure and table exhibiting the inter correlation between overall family recreational pattern and personality factors for the entire sample indicates that the families wherein parents spend sufficient quality/leisure time with their middle age children (termed as positive recreational pattern in the current research) tend to have children who are more outgoing, emotionally stable, rule bound, tactful, secure and conforming as the overall family recreational pattern was found to have a significant positive relation with factor A, C, G, H and I and a negative relationship with factor D, E, J, N and O. Prior research studies by **Arati and Ratnaprabha (2004)** ; **Schor J.B., (1993)** also reported somewhat compatible results and revealed that active recreational orientation of family and joint family recreational time have significant relationship with emotional competence, overall development, school achievements and future career of children.

However personality factor B, F and Q4 was not found to be significantly related to the family recreational pattern.

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