CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION
The present study aimed at studying the effect of customised behavioural intervention on problem behaviours as distinct from skill deficits in children with autism. The results of this study has demonstrated the possibility for identifying, listing and recording a baseline of the different types and specific instances of problem behaviours as distinct from deficits in the skill behaviours in children with autism. It has also shown that it is feasible to carry out case by case topological mapping of situations, triggers, antecedents, functions, maintaining aspects and consequences of the identified behaviour problems for the identified children with autism before taking up strategic individualised/ small group based behavioural interventions within the specified time frame and/or envisaged sessions in home or therapy settings.

The other major findings of the study will be discussed under 3 heads, as in the results:

A) **Comparitive Pre and Post treatment scores on skill and problem behaviour:**

The results of the study indicated that there was significant improvement in the experimental group as compared to the control group. This improvement could be attributed to the Customised Behavioural Intervention given only to the children in the experimental group.

Looking specifically at the skill behaviours it was seen that there was significant improvement in the skill behaviours following Customised Behavioural Intervention. This result is in consonance with studies by Eldevik et al. (2011) which also reported significant improvement in the skill/ adaptive behaviour following intensive behavioural intervention.

There have also been various other studies, which dealt with efficacy of Customised Behavioural Intervention in facilitating clinically significant gains for
children with autism focussing on skill behaviours (Solomon, Necheles, Ferch & Bruckman, 2007; Ingersoll & Schreibman, 2006; Hwang & Hughes, 2000) at the cost of ignoring management of problem behaviours (Macintosh & Dissanayake, 2006; Campbell, 2003). Ideally there is a need to combine the both.

The result also indicates that although there is significant difference between the pre and post treatment scores of skill behaviours, the difference between level of incrementation in post treatment scores of the experimental group is much higher than the control group. This is again in consonance with findings of a study by Eikeseth et al. (2002), wherein the group receiving intensive behavioural therapy demonstrated more gains in skill behaviours as compared to the group receiving only educational assiatance.

With reference to pre and post treatment scores on problem behaviours it can be inferred that although the gains are highly significant for both the groups on PBIS, the gains are much higher for the groups receiving structured individualised behavioural intervention as compared to the group not receiving the same. These results are in compliance with a study by Borrero & Vollmer (2006) and Foxx and Meindl (2007) which found that with intensive behaviour therapy the frequency and intensity of problem behaviour can be reduced significantly in children with autism. Also, research by Horner et al. (2002), suggests that behavioural intervention if implemented at an early age can lead to reduction of problem behaviours by 80-90%. Hence it can be deduced that Customised Behavioural Intervention can lead to higher level of gains (reduction of problem behaviours) while treating young children with autism.

B) Domain-wise analysis of pre-post treatment scores on skill behaviour:

A deeper probe to analyse the improvement in skill behaviour reveal there were significant gains across all domains for both experimental and control groups, although
the gains being much more for the experimental group. The results showed the caregivers were more concerned about academic and self-help skills before training for any other domains, although many other such western studies have shown that there is significant improvement in other domains such as language, communication, socialization, and other adaptive skills following behaviour therapy (Dawson et al. 2010; Virues-Ortega, 2010; Ospina, 2008; and Remington et al., 2007). The reason for Indian parents giving more importance to academics could be the current education system in our country, which gives more importance on reading, writing and arithmetic skills than anything else.

With reference to control group it can be seen that gains were high in Self-Help skills as well as gross motor domain. Comparing the gains between the experimental and control group, the data again revealed much higher gains in experimental group, which could be due to lesser significant decreament of problem behaviours for control group.

C) **Domain-wise analysis of pre- post treatment scores on problem behaviours:**

The result of domain wise analysis of problem behaviour reveal that there were significant reductions in intensity of all domains except Temper Tantrums, Anti-Social, and Any-Other for the experimental group, whereas intensity of none of the other domains was reduced except Rebellious Behaviour for the control group.

Comparing the frequency scores, it can be seen that there was significant reduction in all domains except anti-social following Customised Behaviour Intervention for the experimental group. In the case of control group the scenario was vice-versa, with reduction only in the Anti-Social domain, while all other domains had no significant reduction. It is also noteworthy to see that there was an increase in the frequency of violent and destructive behaviour for the control group.
Hence it can be seen that with tailor-made behavioural intervention, the frequency as well as the intensity of problem behaviours was reduced by a significant margin, as found by many other researchers who have used intensive behaviour intervention, if not customised to reduce problem behaviours in children with autism (Ringdahl et al, 2009; Borrero et al., 2004; Schriebman et al., 2000; and Krantz, MacDuff, & McClannahan, 1993). Study by Massey & Wheeler (2000) also suggested that individualised activity schedules can lead to significant decrease in problem behaviours, thus reiterating the findings of this study that Customised Behavioural Intervention leads to reduction of intensity as well as frequency of problem behaviours in children with autism.

Also, although there are no studies finding concurrency between problem behaviour reduction and simultaneous improvements in skill behaviour, the result of this study has found that there is a co-relation between significant reduction of problem behaviours with increased skill behaviour and vice-versa.