SAMPLING

AND

FIELD STUDY
CHAPTER - IV

SAMPLING AND FIELD STUDY

The present study represents a systematic inquiry into the social behaviour of pre-school children. An attempt has been made to find out the impact of pre-school education on the social development of children between the age of 3 and 6 years. This age group was chosen because children normally attend pre-school when they are three years old. The age group below three was not included for various reasons, the chief being that contact with the outside world is not sufficiently established at this stage.

Sample: Before going into the details of the procedure for data collection, it would be in proper perspective to present the sampling procedure adopted in this research work. Two hundred and forty (240) children ranging from 3 to 6 years constituted the sample of this investigation. Out of this, 120 children were drawn from a population attending pre-schools (that is, nursery or kindergarten) and an equal number from a non-school-going population. The number of the two sexes, boys and girls was kept equal in both the groups.

Since it is not possible to describe the stages of normal social development step by step, month by month within the pre-school ages of 3 to 6 years on account of too many individual differences, this study has been cross-sectional in nature. The
children have been classified into three levels on the basis of three age groups.

Level 1 consisted of children between the age of 3 and 4 years.

Level 2 consisted of children between the age of 4 and 5 years and

Level 3 consisted of children between the age group of 5 and 6 years.

Since the objective of the present study was to examine whether pre-school education had any impact on the social development of children, the examination was made between two comparable groups of children -

i) Children exposed to pre-school education.

ii) Children without any pre-school education.

This study has been confined to the lower Socio-Economic Status (SES) groups only. Consequently, two income groups - the lowest and the lower middle have been considered in this study.

Before going further, a question may be raised here as to why the study was restricted to the lower SES groups only. In order to answer this question the following points may be considered.

(i) As already stated, this study aims at making a comparative study between children exposed to pre-school education and children without any pre-school education. So far as the school going population was concerned it was not difficult to obtain the required sample. But when the selection of the non-school going sample came, the investigator had to face practical
problems in obtaining the required number of sample. Most of the children belonging to the upper socio-economic groups were found to be attending some type of pre-school institutions. Since it was difficult for the investigator to locate the required number of families having non-school going children in the age group 3 – 6 years from the middle and upper SES groups, this study was confined to the children coming from families belonging to the lowest and lower middle income groups. From the families belonging to the lower income level it was not difficult for the investigator to draw both the samples - that is, school going and non-school going, matched on age, sex, family background, parental occupation and income.

**TABLE I**

**Distribution of the Sample:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>School Going children</th>
<th>Non-school going children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>3 – 4 years</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>4 – 5 years</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>5 – 6 years</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL = 120**

**SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE**

**SCHOOL GOING SAMPLE:**

Since it was difficult to obtain samples as desired of a
uniform standard, the study has been restricted to children of the lower SES population.

The method of sample selection for the school unifying population can be outlined in the following distinct stages:

At the outset the number of pre-primary schools in Greater Guwahati was listed. There are more than 100 pre-primary schools in Guwahati city alone. These schools are under different types of management, e.g. private, government, state-aided, missionary etc. The investigator collected this information from the office of the Deputy Inspector of schools. The statistical assistant extended all cooperation in this regard.

Some schools were found unsuitable as they did not fit into the requirements of the present study. The missionary and the private schools were left out as they demand higher tuition fee and involve heavy expenditure and are within the reach of only the higher stratum of the society. Children belonging to the lower strata of society who are unable to pay their fees normally attend Government schools.

The type of school the child attends could be a positive index to the kind of family and the social ambience he emerges from. That is to say, that children from different socio-economic backgrounds attend different categories of schools. In the present study, therefore, the sample consisted of pre-school children from the Government schools only.

All the Government schools within greater Guwahati were
separately enlisted and from this list 6 schools were randomly selected for the study. The heads of the institutions were first approached and asked to cooperate. They were frankly and clearly explained about the purpose of the study and the nature of the work involved. Out of the selected six schools, two schools were reluctant to devote time to the research project since they did not have regular teachers who could observe the children continuously for a definite period. These two schools were left out from the purview of the present study.

Since a representative sample is more important than the number of schools, the following four schools were finally selected for the main study:-

1) UZANBAZAR SISHU BIDYALAYA, BARWARI, UZANBAZAR, GUWAHATI - 1
2) BHARALUMUKH, L.P. SCHOOL, BHARALUMUKH, GUWAHATI - 9
3) MILON BIDYAPITH, KORNASAL, NIZARAPAR, GUWAHATI - 3
4) DAKHIN GAON, L.P. SCHOOL, LUTUMA, LOKHRA, GUWAHATI - 25

The schools selected admitted both boys and girls in the pre-primary classes. Most of the children attending these schools were the children of unskilled workers, labourers, semi-skilled workers, low paid clerical personnel and class IV employees.

The total school going sample consisted of 120 children - 60 boys and 60 girls. From each school a total of 30 children were randomly selected taking 10 for each of the three age groups, that is, 3-4 years 4-5 years and 5-6 years. In each age group the number of boys and girls was kept equal. The age of
the children was checked from the register maintained in the school.

A personal data sheet was prepared to study the data of the subjects. This helped in getting the required information regarding the child's name, sex, address, position in the family and language spoken at home. The sheet also included the names of parents, their respective occupation, education, income and the type of family (i.e. whether single or joint they represented. The name of the school and its location also figuring in the list (applicable to the school going child. See Appendix B for the detailed Information sheet) The socio-economic status of the family to which the child belonged could be identified from the information sheet.

### TABLE II

AGE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL GOING SAMPLE :-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI. No</th>
<th>Name of the school</th>
<th>3 - 4 Years</th>
<th>4 - 5 Years</th>
<th>5 - 6 Years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>UZANBAZAR SISHU BIDYALAYA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>BHARALUMUKH, L.P. SCHOOL</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MILON BIDYAPITH</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>DAKHIN GAON, L.P. SCHOOL</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>120</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*B - boys   G - Girls*
The sample selected can, hence, be taken as a representative one because all the students belong either to the lower or the lower middle socio-economic status.

SAMPLE SELECTION OF THE NON-SCHOOL GOING POPULATION

The non-school going sample was mainly drawn from the neighbouring areas where the pre-schools were located. The investigator with the aid of her friends and colleagues tried to identify small localities or pockets which were known to have a concentration of households belonging to the lower socio-economic status groups. The purposive sampling method was used to select the non-school going sample. This sample consisted of children drawn from families categorised as under privileged households on the basis of their income and memberships in lower socio-economic classes.

In many a case, the headman of the locality had to be approached and his help was sought to identify the families and get in touch with the parents of the children concerned.

The following criteria were laid down for identifying a household to constitute the families from where the non-school going sample could be selected.

(a) The household should have at least one child in the age group of 3 to 6 years.
(b) The household should be in the low or lower middle socio-economic status group.
The investigator, in other words, restricted her search for households earning an income of Rs 3000/- or less. In practice it meant that households earning a monthly income of Rs 1000/- or less was taken to represent the lowest income group and households earning above Rs 1000/- but less than Rs 3000/- was taken to constitute the lower middle income group. On an average an individual belonging to the lowest income group earned a daily income of Rs 30/- to Rs 35/- approx., and one earning a daily income of Rs 100/- approx. was taken to belong to the lower middle income group in this study. The families selected had no other source of income except their earnings.

The local headman of the respective areas helped the investigator in preparing a list of the families who had children belonging to the age group 3 - 6 years. Identification of families in each locality and preparation of tentative lists took quite a long time since the headmen were preoccupied and had to be approached by the investigator several times and reminded of the identification of the families, and the cooperation needed in this regard.

From the lists supplied, the children were classified into 3 age groups. Boys and Girls were listed separately. Lots were drawn and a total of 120 children were selected at random from different localities. Since there were three age groups, for each group there were 40 children - 20 boys and 20 girls.
TABLE III

AGE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NON SCHOOL GOING SAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>3 TO 4 YEARS</th>
<th>4 TO 5 YEARS</th>
<th>5 TO 6 YEARS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOYS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIRLS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total N = 120

Unlike the school going sample, the ages of the non-school going children could not be verified from any register or records. Only a few children had age certificates. Parents, especially the mother, was considered the right person and she was asked to calculate the age of her child as correctly as possible.

FIELD STUDY: As has already been mentioned in the Methodology adopted in the present research work (chapter II), observational techniques and interviews were used as tools for data collection. Social behaviour of small children, who can neither understand our queries nor express themselves clearly, can best be studied by means of naturalistic observation.

Before going into the details of the field study and the method adopted for data collection, it would be in order to present a total picture of the procedure involved in preparing the observation schedules used for the present research work.

For the investigator, observation of children and identifying their social behaviour was not very easy. As a preliminary try-out, she started by observing about 50 children.
in a neighbourhood pre-primary school. There was so much variety in the first behaviour records that there seemed to be little or no order in them. Some children cried frequently, others scarcely at all. Some were friendly and co-operative, whereas some sat quietly in a corner and hardly talked. Again, some children liked to share their things, whereas others were very possessive about their belongings and toys. Some children 'hung around' the adults for attention, while others opposed almost every suggestion or request made to them by an adult and displayed aggressive behaviour.

Gradually after repeated attempts some loose sort of order became apparent in the behaviour of the children. Effort was made to cover only those aspects of behaviour observed in the children which seemed to be of social significance. A few teachers of the school also offered their valuable suggestions in this regard.

On the basis of a pilot study a comprehensive observation schedule was drawn up to elicit the required information regarding the social development of pre-school children. Some items in the schedule were modified after the preliminary trial. The final schedule covered the following broad aspects of social behaviour:

**ASPECTS CONSIDERED**

- i. Nature of Play
- ii. Friendship
- iii. Dependence/Independence
- iv. Aggression
v. Dominance/Submission
vi. Co-operation / competition
vii. Sex-related behaviour
viii. Social Acceptance.
ix. Social Manners
x. Leadership Qualities

Under each of the broad aspect of behaviour various items were identified and observation was to be focussed on these behaviour patterns while studying the children. These were as follows:

(i) Nature of Play:— For example, under the broad category 'Nature of play' the following variables or items were to be identified and observed:

(a) Whether the child indulges in solitary play, parallel play or co-operative play.
(b) Whether the child prefers to play with older children, younger children, children of his own age, own sex, opposite sex or with both the sexes.
(c) Whether the child participates in group games actively and spontaneously.

Under the broad category 'Friendship', it was to be observed whether the child under study is:

(a) Friendly with all
(b) Friendly with just one or two
(c) Not at all friendly
(d) Persists with the same friend/friends.
In this way the other items in the observation schedule were to be kept under careful consideration while observing the children and noting their rate of development and social behaviour.

Under the broad category 'Social Manners' four activities were to be considered i.e.

(a) Whether the child greets visitors.
(b) Whether he thanks people whenever it is required.
(c) Whether he shows appropriate table manners.
(d) Whether the child is shy in the presence of strangers.

(See Appendix C for the detailed observation schedule)

For the school going sample the teachers and the parents were considered as the key persons through whom the required information regarding the social development of children could be gathered. The investigator personally got in touch with the class teachers and frankly and clearly explained to them the nature of the study and the manner of observing and filling in the observation schedules for each child selected for the study.

Since a teacher has to work with children over a period of several months or years, his judgement can be taken to be quite reliable. Moreover, teachers have sufficient contact with the children placed under their care and can provide us with valuable information regarding the rate of children's development in the different aspects. Six teachers were selected from each school and they were requested to co-operate with the investigator. No attempt was made to minimise the nature of the work involved.
and the role they had to play in the present study. Much depended on their unbiased and accurate observations.

The teachers were given the observation schedules and were asked to observe only those aspects of social behaviour which were relevant from the standpoint of the study. Since teachers are busy people who have much more to do than just evaluating and observing children each of them were asked to observe not more than 5 children inclusive of boys and girls.

In the observation schedule three qualifying adverbs, namely, Frequently (F), Sometimes (S) and Rarely (R) were marked. After repeated observation of the children's behaviour the data obtained was summarized on the observation schedule designed to measure the social aspects of the child's behaviour such as nature of play, friendship, aggression, cooperation, acceptance of the child etc.

For example to put it more clearly, so far as Nature of play was concerned it was to be observed whether the child indulged in solitary play, parallel play or co-operative play. If after repeated observation it was seen that the child in the study always preferred to play alone and felt uncomfortable in the company of others a tick mark was put under the column 'Frequently' against the item 'Solitary Play.' On the other hand, if it was observed that the child did not like to play alone but preferred the company of other children, a tick mark was to be put under the column 'Rarely'.

The same procedure applied for the other items in the observation schedule for all the children involved in the study.
At the end of the observation period the number of tick marks was counted for each child and the column with the maximum tick marks was taken to represent his social behaviour on that particular aspect under consideration. A child for example, who frequently indulges in solitary play is different from one who rarely or never plays alone. By observing the child on such aspects of social behaviour, the teacher or the observer can understand how far the child has progressed in his relationship with others.

Children can be best observed in one of their natural habitats - a playground, a classroom or a schoolyard. So, teachers observed the children in these situations. Note - books were supplied to the teachers so that they could maintain a running record of the children's behaviour. Since it is not possible to observe everything that the children are doing, teachers were asked to direct their observations to the relevant aspects of behaviour required for the study.

Another thing to be noted here is that the evaluation of parents is also very important so far as the behaviour of children is concerned. They supplement the data obtained from other sources. In many a case, the teachers were the key persons through whom the parents of the children could be contacted. Since most of the parents were illiterate or semi literate they were not given the observation schedules. Mothers were interviewed regarding the social behaviour of their children at home. In a majority of cases, it was found that mothers and
teachers showed a high degree of agreement in the behaviour of the children.

Though it was not possible for the investigator to go to the schools regularly to observe the children, she made as frequent visits as possible to the schools and observed the children herself. She also visited the families of the children now and then and gathered information by means of observation and conversation with the parents, especially the mother.

The school going children (all the three age groups) were observed throughout the year and the rates of their social development were recorded on the schedule in intervals of two/three months. Inferences were drawn at the end of the observation period. The consistency in the behaviour pattern of children were noted down so that comments could be made later on.

The investigator received full cooperation from the teachers and parents of the school-going children without whose help and participation this research project would not have been possible.

For the non-school going sample, the process of data collection was slightly different since the investigator herself observed the children. She took the help of friends, relatives and colleagues where and whenever needed. Two post graduate students who were interested in child study helped the investigator by offering their unbiased observations of the children selected for the study.

Before the actual commencement of the work the investigator tried to establish contacts with children by
informal chit-chats. No systematic order was followed in observing the children. Rather the investigator took to the child who was most convenient to observe at a particular time. This random selection was followed because it greatly facilitated the observational process.

In the beginning the investigator started by observing only two or three children at a time. But as the skills of observation improved the number was gradually increased. While observing more than one child at any particular point of time, utmost care was to be taken to guard against one child engaging the whole of the observer's attention. It is not usually possible to observe behaviour continuously for long periods. Hence the incident sampling method which concerns the observation on the child's behaviour in selected situations in which he/she becomes involved was employed.

Children in a free play experience tell us many things about themselves. The investigator observed the children while playing and noted down their social behaviour. The children were observed mainly in a non-family situation, because in a family group there is not much scope for the development of social behaviour. But in a play group or in a school the child is forced to adjust himself to outsiders and this provides a genuine opportunity to study his progress in socialisation.

The children were observed on several occasions and the observations were written down in a note-book. The same observation schedule consisting of the same items was used for
rating the social development of the non-school going children. To prevent exhibition of artificial behaviour, to the extent possible the children were not made conscious of the fact that they were being observed.

The investigator visited the different localities at the time convenient to the families. A personal data sheet was prepared to study the family history of the subjects (see Appendix B). Data was obtained by observing the children in group activities or while playing or sitting together. After a series of observations of selected behaviour, an observer may have sufficient data to draw inferences about the typical pattern of behaviour of the subjects under study. If for example, a child did not participate in group games freely and spontaneously, this behaviour attitude was to be recorded. On different occasions again, it was to be observed whether the child participated in group games or not and to what degree—Frequently, Sometimes or Rarely. A cumulative series of record was maintained on that aspect of behaviour namely the child's participation in group games. Later on a conclusion was established regarding the aspect of behaviour under consideration.

In this way other items were observed in the behaviour of the children under study and the observations made, were later recorded on the rating scale under the appropriate columns viz., Frequently, Sometimes and Rarely. Care was taken to note the frequency and intensity of each trait of behaviour. The investigator tried her best to record as objectively as possible the behavioural traits of the children in a variety of
situations. Inferences were drawn when repeated occurrence was observed on the aspects of behaviour under study.

The investigator sometimes separated the three groups of children (i.e., 3-4 years, 4-5 years, and 5-6 years) sometime during play sessions. This separation was found to facilitate greatly the task of observing the differences in the behaviour of younger and older children which might be considered as developmental differences. Similarly, boys and girls were sometimes observed separately to find out differences in their social behaviour.

Apart from this, mothers were interviewed regarding the social behaviour of their children and also in those aspects of behaviour where observation was not possible by the investigator. The observation period for the entire sample was one year. The study would have taken a longer period of time if the children were followed month by month through the years from 3 to 6 years.

PROBLEMS FACED IN DATA COLLECTION

Despite the help and co-operation received from the families of the children selected for the study, the investigator met with some difficulties. At the outset, when she visited the families, people were suspicious and apprehensive of her motives for conducting such a study. In fact in some homes she was asked whether she had 'come from the Government' and if not, what business she had to study and observe their children. People have even shut their doors on her face and some parents refused to
cooperate. Again, some families were very reluctant to devote time for an interview and to allow their children to be used as subjects in a pursuit that did not materially help them. Consequently, the investigator had to drop some children from the study. Though she began with a larger sample, at the end she was left with only 120 children of the required age groups.

Since the number of non-school going sample was 120, the number of school going sample was also kept at 120. This facilitated the comparison of the two groups of children.

The investigator is initially a new face for the children and it took some time for them to feel free and be at ease. Since play materials help to put children at ease, the investigator carried with her some dolls, toy guns, balls, pictures, marbles, and the like. Gradually the children learnt that the investigator meant no harm and their self-consciousness was diminished to a great extent. A few children, especially at first, did ask the observer what she was doing. In such instances the investigator said 'watching the children play' and immediately turned away from their question. The children then started playing as usual - freely and spontaneously.

Another problem faced by the investigator was that since a majority of the parents belonged to the working class it was not possible to observe the child whenever the investigator wanted him. In such a case the investigator had no other option but 'willing to come again.' Since the ultimate source of information regarding the child is the home, contact was to be made with one or both of the parents. Parents are the ones who are responsible
for their children and legally they are the only ones who can agree to the use of the child as an object of study. Some of the parents seemed to be very busy and each time the investigator visited these families it was 'not a convenient time and the child was away'.

In most of the cases the role of the father in fostering the social development of the child could not be easily studied as he was frequently absent when the investigator visited the family. As a matter of fact, the mother had to be interviewed most of the time. Some women did not like to remove their 'ghungroo' while talking to the investigator but as time passed they became quite free with her. One or two families did not allow the womenfolk to come out and sit for an interview with the investigator. These families were eliminated from further study.

The investigator took an active part in the family life of the children selected for the study. At times, she would have meals with them and would partake of their interests like any member of the household. The candid approach of the investigator endeared her to the children and their parents and always looked forward to her visits.