CHAPTER - 8

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
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As a group, number of only-children is increasing. In the U.S., U.K. and many European countries couples are opting for one-child family norm. Many reasons have been cited for the same, e.g., career, stress, pre-occupation with professional growth, late age marriages and a desire to give best to their children. In countries like China, one-child policy is mandatory by law. In India also family planning measures and both husband and wife working have forced many working couples to opt for single child families. However there are many stereotypes attached to being a single child. The literature shows three parallel streams of thought. One set of finding opines that only children are at a disadvantage emotionally and socially compared to children with siblings. These researches emphasize the importance of sibling love in the balanced development of psyche. Siblings teach sharing and caring as per this school of thought. Only child is thought to be selfish, moody, egocentric and poor in social relations. Single children may also experience more anxiety and loneliness.

A second line of research says that only children may do better in life because of unconditional love of parents and resources available to them. They show higher achievement and self esteem. The third set of findings opines that there are no differences between only children and children with siblings. It is not the status of the child per se single or otherwise which is important. What is important is effect of moderating factors like parental education, parental socio-economic status, emotional health of children and parent-child interaction.

Keeping in view these equivocal findings, an attempt was made in the present study to investigate the psychosocial profile of only children vs. children with siblings. They were compared on Emotional Intelligence, Stress Dimensions, Coping Styles, State-Trait Anxiety, Self Efficacy, Parental Bonding, Academic Achievement, Perceived Happiness and Perceived Health
Conclusions, Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Status. The sample comprised of 400 adolescents in the age range of 16-18 years. 400 adolescents (200 males and 200 females) comprised the sample. Sample of 200 males consisted of only children (n=100) and children with siblings (n=100). Similarly sample of 200 females consisted of only children (n=100) and children with siblings (n=100). Further group of 100 children, that is, male only children, female only children, male children with siblings and female children with siblings, comprised children of working mothers (n=50) and children of non-working mothers (n=50). The raw scores were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques viz. t-test, 2x2x2 ANOVA, Inter-correlations and regression analysis.

The results revealed that barring task focused coping on which children with siblings scored higher, no differences emerged between only children and children with siblings. As regards gender differences, only children females scored higher on emotional intelligence, perceived parental care and perceived stress. Males scored higher on perceived health status. It was expected that employment status of mothers, whether working or non-working may impact the psyche of children. By and large, no major differences emerged between only children of working and non-working mothers. Only on dimension of emotional intelligence, only children of working mothers scored higher than only children of non-working mothers.

Thus, overall, the results of the present study are in line with previous set of research that advocates that only children and children with siblings are not different. Myths about negative image and profile of only children found no credence in the present empirical study. At best, one may conclude that only children are distinct, not worse, not better but different. Close bond with parents and peers may be the pathways that mitigate the negative impact of being an only child. It is the positive qualitative life experiences that contribute to healthy development in children and not just status of an only child.

Since this investigation was confined to urban population, the research may be extended in future to rural areas also. Parental education and child rearing practices may be included as additional factors in future endeavour of this kind.