

School Teachers' Perception of Problematic Parent Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

This paper is part of the Doctoral work of the first author completed under the supervision of the second. The study's sample comprised 252 male and female primary and secondary level school teachers of private and public schools of Patna (Bihar). Though the purpose of the Doctoral work was to study the relationship between the 'difficult parent behavior' and the 'school teachers' stress,' this presentation shall address the school teacher's perception of the problematic parent behaviour. The difficult parent behavior was studied with the help of descriptions of behaviours likely to be shown by the problematic parents developed by the Hoge school of the Educational Faculty of Utrecht, Netherlands (2007). Analysis of the data included extracting factors from the school teachers' ratings for the 'frequency of occurrence' of the behaviours displayed by the problematic parent. Additionally, qualitative data was collected from the school teachers with the help of three open ended questions. Factor analysis helped extract five factors of the problematic parent behavior that were named, Domineering Parent, concerned without Action Parent, Excessively Concerned Parent, Indifferent Parent and Imposing Parent. Further, thematic analysis of the descriptive content of the open-ended questions, helped arrive at six themes of difficult parent behaviours namely, Imposing/Blaming Parent, Concerned without Action Parent, Uncooperative Parent, Irresponsible Parent Rude/Disrespectful Parent and High Expectation Parent.

Keywords: *School Teachers, Problematic Parent, Students*

Parental misbehavior in the school setting has been ignored in both academic and professional literature. A fairly large body of research recognizes that teachers and parents often work in adversarial relationships and mention the presence of pushy parents in the school setting. A survey of the American teachers conducted by Metlife in the year 2005, claimed that teachers have to deal more with problematic parents and 31% of them considered handling relationships with the parents as the most difficult aspect of their job. Prakke, Peet and Wolf (2007) contend that a teacher is generally desirous of having a positive attitude towards the parents but may experience moral conflict and feelings of guilt because he/she blames herself/himself for holding a negative attitude towards them. In that sense, a teacher experiences feelings of inadequacy which in turn, negatively influences her/his self-image. According to Gibbs (2005), teachers are concerned about an increasing

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number of problematic parents who question their ward's grades and often harass teachers regarding the treatment their child is receiving at school.

Purpose

Part of a Doctoral work entitled, 'A study of stress related to problematic parents and the general wellbeing of the school teachers,' this paper has two main objectives. First, to examine the types and configuration of the empirically derived factors of the problematic parent behavior and second, to present the observations based on the content analysis of the descriptive data generated against three open ended questions that intended to understand (a) *categories of difficult parent behavior*, (b) *reasons* for finding these behaviours as the most difficult one and (c) *recommendations* offered by an affected teacher to his/her colleagues for dealing with the difficult behaviours of problematic parents.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample comprised 252 male and female (male = 97, female =153) primary and secondary level school teachers from some private and public schools of the city of Patna, Bihar. Around two third (i.e., 75.4%) of the total sample comprised of teachers from the private schools of Patna while the remaining one fourth (i.e., 24%) were employed in the public schools of the city. As the private schools catered to the educational needs of the school going age children in a big way, were larger in number and easily found in all the locations of Patna, their number was much bigger than the public schools in the sample. The average years of teaching experience for both the private and the public-school teachers was 9.39 years but showed large variability on this ground (S.D. =7.08 years and the range for teaching experience between 0 to 42 years). As regards to the teachers' religious affiliation 95.2 % of the teachers were Hindus, 2.8%, were Christians, 1.6% were Muslims and only .4% were Sikhs. Further, 38.5% of the teachers taught in High schools, 34.1% in Secondary schools and 20.2% in the Primary schools.

Instrument

Twenty-four items of the Parent Stress Questionnaire (PSQ) developed by Professors Kees Van der Wolf and Huub Everaert, of the Hogeschool of the Educational Faculty of Utrecht, Netherlands (2007) was used with desirable moderations to suit the culture specific requirements of the Indian sample, for measuring the 'difficult parent behavior.' In fact, the items were 24 descriptions of difficult parent behaviour and the teachers were asked to rate the 'frequency' of occurrence' of the given behaviours shown by the problematic parent on a 5 points scale. Furthermore, for acquiring the descriptive data, the teachers were requested to (i) describe the behaviour of the most difficult parent he/she had to deal with in the current school year, (ii) tell, why this behavior was considered the most difficult one by him/her and (iii) suggest, what they would recommend to other teachers for handling this kind of difficult behaviour?

Procedure

After seeking appointment from the school authorities, the researcher personally approached the teachers in their leisure period in their respective schools. Only teachers who were willing to participate in this research work were requested to help in providing the data. The respondents took 45 to 60 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Since the school teachers were at least Graduates and were expected to understand the instructions and provide information properly, the PSQ was administered in English. Nevertheless, the researcher made sure that the teachers understood the instructions and made clarifications if needed.

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Analysis

Statistical package SPSS, version 17.0 was used for the analysis of the quantitative data. More specifically, rating scores for the 'frequency of occurrence' of the difficult parent behaviour were factor analyzed with the Principal Axis Method and thereafter, the extracted factors were described and compared by the method of paired comparison *t* test. As regards to the analysis of the descriptive data, responses against the three open-ended questions were content analyzed. For this purpose, the researcher carefully studied the qualitative content of the evocative responses and cautiously looked for meaningful themes behind the descriptions. Further, the frequencies of the responses in each category were counted and added for taking note of the number of responses falling into each category.

Notably, in case of the second open ended question, the teacher had to give 'reasons' as to why he/she perceived a parent's behavior as the most difficult one. However, whenever there was lack of clarity in a teacher's answers, the researcher re-examined the responses against the first question where the teacher was supposed to describe the most difficult parent's behavior. It was argued that often the 'reason' behind the most difficult behaviour could be found hidden behind the description of the difficult behavior itself. Finally, inter rater reliability was assured by reviewing, rechecking and revising the content analyzed matters with the help of two senior university faculty members.

RESULTS

The Frequency of the Occurrence of the Difficult Parent Behavior

It has been mentioned that the 24 descriptions of the difficult parent behavior from the PSQ were rated by the school teachers for the frequency of their occurrence on a 5 points scale. The rating scores were put to factor analysis which helped extract 8 factors of 'difficult parent behaviour.' However, factors having poor configuration and low reliability were not considered for further analysis. The only exception to this rule was the factor named *Indifferent Parent* which showed low reliability but was retained due to its meaningful configuration. The remaining four factors were named: *Domineering Parent*, *Concerned without Action Parent*, *Excessively Concerned Parent*, and *Imposing Parent*. The total variance explained by the five factors was 46.23%. Notably, an item with a loading of less than .35 on a particular factor was not included as the constituent part of that factor. Table 1. presents the factors of the difficult parent behavior with the required details.

Table 1 Factors of the Difficult Parent Behavior

Factor 1		
Domineering Parent		
Mean=1.37, SD=.91, r=.69, Variance explained 16.54%		
Item no.		Item Loading
14	This parent says he/she thinks you are a bad teacher.	.73
19	This parent avoids contact with you as a teacher	.64
7	This parent complains about the other parent of the child.	.61
17	You feel harassed by the parent of the child.	.59
18	This parent is over involved in your classroom.	.48
Factor2		
Concerned without Action Parent		
Mean=2.32, SD=1.02, r=.63, Variance explained 9.99%		
Item no.		Item Loading

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9	This parent expresses the intension to cooperate, but does not follow through.	.74
11	This parent shows little initiative.	.72
5	This parent failed to follow through with an agreement about supervising the child's homework.	.62
Factor 3		
Excessively Concerned Parent		
Mean=2.34, SD=.90, r=.61, Variance explained 7.99%		
Item no.		Item Loading
24	This parent is involved with the progress of the child to an excessive degree.	.77
8	This parent is excessively concerned about the child.	.69
23	This parent is overly concerned about his child's education.	.61
21	This parent is very concerned about the health of the child.	.52
Factor: 4		
Indifferent Parent		
Mean=1.97, SD=.96, r=.48, Variance Explained 5.97%		
Item no.		Item Loading
3	This parent hardly ever comes to school.	.72
6	This parent asks your opinion without having one him/herself.	.71
16	This parent takes little notice of the child.	.37
Factor: 5		
Imposing Parent		
Mean=2.13, SD=1.19, r=.62, Variance Explained 5.74%		
Item no.		Item Loading
12	This parent uses his/her degree of expertise as an excuse for becoming involved in the education of the child.	.77
4	This parent uses his/her degree, Knowledge or professional experience in attempt to change the approach of the teacher.	.76

Description of the Factors

Factor 1 *Domineering Parent*

The high loading items of the factor *Domineering Parent*, suggested that the difficult parent behaviour, included avoiding contacting the teacher, complaining against the parents of the other kids, causing harassment to the teacher, showing over involvement in the classroom and perceiving the teacher to be generally, bad. Apparently, the teacher found such behaviours as 'domineering' and difficult.

Factor 2. *Concerned without Action Parent*

In case of the 2nd factor namely, *Concerned without Action Parent*, the high loading items suggested that though the difficult parent expressed intention to cooperate but did not do so and showed very little initiative. Further, despite agreeing to supervise the child in his/her homework, the parent failed to do so.

Factor 3. *Excessively Concerned Parents*

The high loading items on the factor, *Excessively Concerned Parent*, suggested that the parent was excessively concerned about the health, progress and education of his/her child. However, the teachers perceived such overwhelming concern for one's ward as difficult behavior.

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Factor 4. *Indifferent Parent*

The content of the high loading items on the fourth factor helped it name, *Indifferent Parent*. The factor suggested that a difficult parent hardly visited the school, asked for the teacher's opinion about the child (without having any clear opinion himself/herself) and took little notice of his/her ward.

Factor 5. *Imposing Parent*

The factor named *Imposing Parent*, configured out of items impressing that a difficult parent used his/her degree, knowledge or professional experience as an excuse for getting involved in the child's education. Such behaviours looked 'imposing' because the parent was attempting to change the approach of the teacher.

Notably, an important observation was that if the parent held an extreme position towards his/her ward, showed aggressive and blaming behavior, did not heed to the teacher's expectations, held high expectations from others, and was an irresponsible parent, the teachers were likely to perceive these as the most difficult. The analysis for understanding the 'difficult parent behavior' also included examining the difference between the factors of the difficult parent behavior by using Paired Comparison t Test. The results in this regard are presented in Table 2.

Table. 2 Mean, SD and Paired Comparison t test Results between the Factors of Difficult Parent Behaviour

	Factors of Difficult parent Behaviours	Mean	SD	t	P
Pair 1	Paired Comparison between Domineering Parent and Concerned without action Parent	1.37	.91	-11.34	.00
Pair 2	Excessively Concerned parent	2.34	.90	-13.01	.00
Pair3	Indifferent Parent	1.97	.96	-8.06	.00
Pair 4	Imposing Parent	2.15	.90	-11.75	.01
Pair 1	Paired Comparison between the Concerned without Action parent and Excessively Concerned Parent	2.34	.90	-.282	.78
Pair 2	Indifferent Parent	1.97	.96	4.94	.00
Pair3	Imposing Parent	2.15	.90	2.21	.03
Pair1	Paired Comparison between the Excessively Concerned Parent and Indifferent Parent	2.34	.90	4.58	.00
Pair2	Imposing Parent	2.15	.90	2.21	.00
Pair3	Paired Comparison between the Indifferent Parent and Imposing Parent	2.15	.90	-2.53	.01

Table 2. shows that identical and largest Mean scores were observed for the factors *Excessively Concerned Parent* and *Concerned without Action Parent* (X = 2.34 and X

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=2.32, $t = -.28$, $p = ns$). The finding suggested that behaviours comprising of parental 'concern' towards one's child but in one case 'excessive' and in the other case 'without any action' were the most frequently reported problematic parent behaviour by the teachers. On the average the teachers reported occurrence of such behaviours around 50 % of the time.

All the remaining pairs of the difficult parent behaviour factors were significantly different from each other. Accordingly, (a) *Domineering parent* behaviour was significantly different from *Concerned without Action Parent*, *Excessively Concerned Parent*, *Indifferent Parent* and *Imposing Parent behaviours* ($t = -11.34$, $p < .01$, $t = -13.01$, $p < .01$; $t = 8.06$, $p < .01$ and $t = -11.75$, $p < .01$ respectively).

The factors *Concerned without Action Parent* and *Excessively Concerned Parent* were significantly different from at least two of the factors of difficult parent behaviour namely, *Indifferent* and *Imposing Parents* ($t = 4.94$, $p < .01$ and $t = 2.21$, $p < .05$ in the case of *Concerned without Action Parent* and $t = 4.58$, $p < .01$ and $t = 2.21$, $p < .05$ in the case of *Excessively Concerned Parent*).

Discussing the factors of difficult parent behaviour

While discussing the factor analysis observations, one may like to refer to Seligman (2000) who described seven types of problematic parent behavior and labeled them as, Uncooperative, Overprotective, Avoiding, Neglectful, Perfectionist, Unsatisfied and Fighting parents. The difficult parent behaviour factors observed in the present study, seem to have some compatibility with Seligman's types on face value. For example, *Excessively Concerned Parent* seemed somewhat close to Seligman's 'Overprotective Parent', *Concerned without Action Parent* to 'Avoiding and Neglectful Parent' and *Domineering Parent* to 'Unsatisfied and Fighting Parents.' Perhaps Seligman's 'Perfectionist Parent' shared some common elements with the *Imposing Parent* of the present study.

Notably, it appeared that the behaviours configuring the first factor, (i.e., avoiding contacting the teacher, complaining against the parents of other kids, harassing the teacher, being over involved in the classroom, and in general, perceiving the teacher to be bad), presented a cluster of difficult parent behaviour which appeared 'domineering' to the teachers. This factor was also responsible for explaining the highest percentage of variance among the factors of the problematic parent behaviour.

On the other hand, factors such as *Concerned without Action Parent*, *Excessively Concerned Parent* and *Imposing Parent*, despite showing larger Means, or being perceived more frequently on the average by the Patna school teachers, explained relatively smaller percentage of variance. That is, these factors couldn't explain the apparent randomness of the data set or as to why the differences were observed in the different types of problematic parent behaviours in a convincing manner. In sum, the descriptions of problematic behaviour that configured the low variance explaining factors namely *Excessively Concerned parent* and *Imposing Parent* were nevertheless perceived more frequently on the average by the school teachers.

Coming to the observations of the paired comparison t test between the factors, it was evident that barring the exception of one pair of factors namely, *Concern without Action Parent* and *Excessively Concerned Parent*, rest of the factors were significantly different from each other. Accordingly, on the average the teachers considered the most frequently observed problematic parent behaviors (having the highest Mean) to be the ones where the

parents showed 'excessive concern' towards their child but did not take 'any action' to improve the situation. In fact, the school teachers found both of these behaviours equally difficult. It has been reported that parents expecting greater accountability from their children's teacher, can lead the teacher to experience high degree of stress (Cockburn, 1996).

Content Analysis Observations from the Open-Ended Questions

It may be recalled that the first open-ended question asked to 'describe the behaviour of the most difficult parent dealt by the teacher in the current school year.' The content analysis of the responses against this question helped delineate six themes of the most difficult parent behaviour. The researcher also looked for similarity in the content of the descriptions and the empirically extracted factors of the 'difficult parent behavior.' Interestingly, majority of themes that showed up against the first open ended question were fairly similar to the empirically extracted factors of the 'difficult parent behavior.' The name and description of the six respective categories of difficult parent behaviour observed against the first open ended question is being briefly presented below.

1. Imposing/Blaming
2. Rude, Critical and Non-Accepting of the Child's Faults
3. Irresponsible
4. High Expectation
5. Indifferent/Uncooperative
6. Concerned without Action

1. Imposing/Blaming

Imposing/Blaming behaviour was one of the highly endorsed categories that included 96 descriptions of the most difficult parent behavior. Some responses under this category were of the following nature:

- i. *"This type of parent does not want to understand either his/her ward or the teacher. He/She directly blames the teacher for every shortcoming of the ward." (F# 1).*
- ii. *"That parent compels me to give extra attention on her ward. She doesn't fulfill all the needs on time and blames the teachers. If child is punished, she comes to school and argues (F# 36).*
- iii. *"They are already convinced by their wards and do nothing to listen from the teachers and try to impose their views" (F# 99).*
- iv. *"During my teaching period, I came across a most difficult parent. He always queries about his ward but don't pay heed to any of my suggestions regarding the pragmatic approach towards his study and self-evaluation" (F# 179).*

2. Rude, Critical and Non -Accepting of the Child's Faults

Around 46 responses were placed under the theme, *Rude, Critical and Non -Accepting of the Child's Faults*. At this instance, the descriptions referred to indecent, rude and disrespectful behaviour of the parent towards the teacher and the institution, plus non-acceptance of his/her child's faults. A few examples from this category read as follows:

- i. *"He will start talking very rudely in front of my colleagues and my students" (F# 53).*
- ii. *"Obscenely rude. Unwilling to listen. Threatens, drops names in front of the ward, heedless to request or plea to not to do so" (F# 100).*
- iii. *"Sometimes they are very rude and try to assert their presence. They only want to hear good things about their wards and not bad" (M# 230).*

3. Irresponsible Parent

The third theme with 33 descriptions of difficult parent behavior was named *Irresponsible Parent*. The following nature of descriptions were found suitable to be placed under this theme.

- i. "Parents complain that teachers are the responsibility of their child's progress. However, they never attend P. T. meetings" (F# 60).
- ii. "The parents who never look into the diary of their children. They should in fact, always keep track of the performance of their child in the school through the remarks they are given by the teachers" (F#113).
- iii. "The parent is stubborn person who in no case accepts responsibility. He/she think that teachers are totally responsible for a child's development. Their duty is to only give birth to their child which is totally wrong" (F#159)

4. High Expectation Behaviour

The next theme *Higher Expectation Behaviour*. comprised of 33 responses and referred to the undue high expectations of a parent. Such parents demanded better performance from their children and seemed to have unreasonable expectations both from the teacher and the child. Some prototypical examples from this category are as follows:

- i. "Some parents create many problems for the teacher. They want us to care for their child too much but this is not possible for us" (F# 24).
- iii. "A father had over-expectation from his ward who is an average student. He was too hard on his ward which made it difficult for the teachers to be honest with the guardian" (F# 171)
- iv. "Many parents want to see the progress of their wards in a short span of time. It becomes quite difficult to make them understand that "Rome was not built in a day" (M# 191).

5. Indifferent/ Uncooperative Parent

The fifth theme comprising of 18 descriptions of difficult parent behaviour was named *Indifferent/ Uncooperative*. The following are some examples from the theme.

- i. "When I complained to the parent that the child is not coming to school in proper uniforms his parent didn't give any attention" (F# 15).
- ii. "When I write complain in the diary of some students, their parent does not respond" (F# 58).
- iii. "The parent is unconcerned, uncooperative, disinterested, distant" (F# 121).

6. Concerned Without Action

The theme with only 13 descriptions was named *Concerned without Action*. In this case, a parent showed concern towards his/her ward but had no intention of taking any corrective action. Some of the examples from this theme are:

- i. "A parent was very much concerned about the marks of his ward. Only on the results day he used to discuss the marks obtained by his ward without knowing the fact from the teacher. He was never interested to know what is wrong with his ward" (F# 18).
- ii. "The mother of a girl is very cautious about her daughter and wants special care for her. If a teacher points out at the girl's demerits or the need for improvement, the mother gets furious. Though the girl is dull, she doesn't take any pains to improve her" (F# 112).
- iii. "Some parents are very difficult to handle because they are over-conscious about their child and leave each and every responsibility for the child's development solely on the teacher" (F# 138).

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The last category had to be left with the title *Others*. This category had only 8 responses out of which four teachers had to say that they have not met a problematic parent while the rest mentioned different things that seemed relevant but could not be categorized.

Observations from the Semi Projected Second Open-ended Question

The second semi projected open ended question aimed to understand the *reasons* behind finding a parent's behaviour as the most difficult one. At this instance, the analysis of the descriptive material helped arrive at no less than eight themes of 'reasons' for considering a parent's behaviour as the most difficult one. The themes shall be briefly described with a few examples to make the point. They were given the following names:

1. Reluctance to Listen, Understand or Meet the Teachers' Expectations
2. Teachers' Limitations and Inability in Handling the Problems
3. Parents' Higher Expectations
4. Aggressive and Blaming Behavior of the Parent
5. Negative Impact Causing Behaviours for the Teachers
6. Parents' Extreme Position towards their Wards
7. Irresponsible Parent
8. Non-specific

1. Reluctance to Listen, Understand or Meet the Teachers' Expectations

A highly endorsed theme with 86 responses was named, *Reluctance to Listen, Understand or Meet Teachers' Expectation*. At this instance, the reason for perceiving a parent's behaviour as the most difficult one was the parent's unwillingness to listen to or meet the teacher. Additionally, the parent did not heed the teacher's expectations that the parent must also look after the progress of his/her child. The following examples will represent the ideas behind this theme.

- i. "I am not able to make the mother of the child understand that it is not wholly my responsibility to look after the child and they too have to look how the child performs. She was not listening to me and this was difficult for me" (F# 52).
- ii. "I feel difficulty while dealing with this type of parent because they don't accept things easily and keep harping on the same string that why my ward has not done the best" (F# 94).
- iii. "Parents don't listen to the teachers. They are always ready to argue with the teachers" (F#14).
- iv. "They don't want to listen to the problem and understand" (F#106).

2. Teachers' Limitations and Inability in Handling the Problems

Thirty-seven descriptions helped configure the second category of reasons for which the suitable name seemed to be, *Teacher's Limitations and Inability in Handling or Understanding the Problem* created by a difficult parent. A few examples will illustrate the theme.

- i. "I am a failure in convincing him about the progress of his ward" (F# 39).
- ii. "I become restless, I do something better for them, but I can't do anything" (F# 58)
- iii. "I think I am required to have an amount of patience but when I come across such parents, I find it rather difficult to handle the situation and feel out of wits" (M#207).

3. Parents' Higher Expectations

Another reasons' category with 32 descriptions contained messages that the parent had 'high expectations' from the teachers and found the school lacking in many ways for the proper growth of his/her ward. Following are some examples from this category:

- i. "Father was not accepting the marks and positions of his ward because his expectation was very high regarding his child" (F# 83).
- ii. "The student was dull and did not complete his homework but the parent's expectation was to get him updated through my guidance for the child's improvement" (M# 223).
- iii. "Such guardians do not have realistic expectations therefore; it makes communication difficult between guardian and the teachers" (F#146).

4. Negative Impact Causing Behaviours for the Teachers

One of the categories for considering a parent's behavior as the most difficult one (endorsed by 28 teachers) pointed out towards certain 'negative impacts' that the problematic parent's behavior left on the teacher. A few examples from this category are written below:

- i. "This type of behaviour makes me embarrassed and also hits my self-respect" (F#77).
- ii. "As they choose to blame the teachers it demoralizes the spirit and enthusiasm of the teacher to work hard. It also disrupts our passion to provoke to students to strive for human excellence" (F#95).
- iii. "I love good manner and culture and cannot tolerate any kind of bad behaviour of any person. He always gives me a stress that makes me disturbed" (M#221).

5. Aggressive and Blaming Behavior of the Parent

The fifth theme pointed out at the *Aggressive and Blaming Behavior of the Parent* as the reason behind perceiving a parent's behavior as problematic. Contents of 32 responses seemed suitable for being included under this theme and some of them read as follows:

- i. "Her behaviour is most difficult for me because she becomes very aggressive and defensive and does not try to understand the actual situation" (F# 3).
- ii. "They are quarrelsome and obstinate" (F#85).
- iii. "He repeatedly gave arguments in support of his child. They blamed the institution for this, arguing that he had given an innocent child when his child was admitted to the school" (F#150).

6. Parents' Extreme Position towards their Wards

'Having an extreme position towards one's ward' referred to either completely ignoring the child's faults or being extremely defensive towards his/her mistakes. At this instance, at least 22 descriptions helped configure the reason category that highlighted the *Parents' Extreme Position towards their Wards*. The following examples will give an impression of the reasons included under this category:

- i. "They try to ignore the main issues and protect the wrong doing of his son in front of the teacher. They hurt the feelings of the teacher" (F# 88).
- ii. "The parents are unable to understand the demerits of his child." (F# 185).
- iii. "Guardian was not ready to acknowledge the fault of his ward. Apparently, it was blunder on their past not to realize the arrogance of their ward" (M# 213).

7. Irresponsible Parent

In case of the theme named *Irresponsible Parent*, the reason for finding a parent's behaviour as the most difficult one was the parent's irresponsible ways. This category consisted of 21 descriptions. Following are some examples from this theme.

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- i. "I try my level best to help children in class even then the parents blame me and do not accept their responsibility as a parent" (F# 21).
- ii. "The parents do not understand. They feel that they have paid fees and hence have discharged their duties. Now, the school administration alone is responsible for his/her child's performance" (F# 44)
- iii. "The parents were not at all co-operative. They could not spare a time for me or contact me even after several requests" (F# 125).

8. Non-Specific Responses

Around 7 responses were *Non-Specific Responses* as regards to the reasons given for considering a parent's behaviour as problematic. A few of such responses are given below.

- i. "I always try to adjust the situation and don't like to punish the student. I want to know about them. I also want to change their attitude towards the teacher" (F#69).
- ii. "The child was not communicating the right information and also lost the syllabus in which it was mentioned that the courses have been completed" (F#104).
- iii. "I think I am doing right; I help the student especially the weak student in every ways" (F#116).

Table. 3 Convergence Observed Between the Extracted Factors and the Descriptive Categories (Observed from the open-ended question 1) of Difficult Parent Behaviour

Name of the Extracted Factor <i>Domineering and Imposing Parent</i>	<i>This parent uses his/her degree, knowledge or professional experience in attempt to change the approach of the teacher.</i> <i>This parent uses his/her degree of expertise as an excuse for becoming involved in the education of the child.</i> <i>This parent says he/she thinks you are a bad teacher.</i>
Descriptive Category <i>Imposing/Blaming Parent</i>	<i>This parent uses or tries to impose his personal experience. Takes little notice or initiative or any activities for her child and instead of taking attention, often blames the teacher."</i> <i>A student's father came to me and told me that "How you taught students, you have to know the technique of teaching." I felt very bad."</i>
Extracted Factor <i>Concern Without Action Parent</i>	<i>This parent failed to follow through with an agreement about supervising the child's homework.</i>
Descriptive Category <i>Concern Without Action</i>	<i>Some parents do not supervise their ward's homework and want too much improvement in him. They also often complain about their progress."</i>
Extracted Factor <i>Indifferent Parent Behaviour</i>	<i>This parent hardly ever comes to school.</i> <i>This parent takes little notice of the child.</i> <i>This parent asks your opinion without having one him/herself.</i>
Descriptive Category <i>Un-cooperative /Indifferent Behaviour</i>	<i>When I write complain of some students, their parents do not respond.</i> <i>He comes to see me occasionally. He doesn't care for the comment made by the teacher.</i>
Themes not observed in the empirically extracted factors of	<i>Rude, Critical Non-Accepting of the Child's Fault High Expectation Parent.</i>

<p>the 'most difficult parent behaviour' but observed in the descriptive data against the open-ended question 1.</p>	
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Talking of the correspondence between the empirically derived factors of the difficult parent behaviours and the six descriptive themes surfacing from the first open ended question, it appeared that a couple of extracted factors i.e., having '*High Expectations from One's Child*' and showing behavior indicative of '*Rude, Critical Non-accepting of the Child's Fault*,' were not seen frequently enough by the school teachers to be suggestive of the most difficult parent behaviour. However, the analysis of the descriptive data helped in outlining couple of such new dimensions of problematic parent behaviors.

Recommendations for Dealing with Difficult Parent Behaviours

One of the research concerns was to have some idea as to how a teacher should be dealing with the difficult parent behaviour. Accordingly, open ended questions 3 asked 'What recommendations do you have for other teachers for handling this kind of behavior?' The descriptive responses against this question, contains at least five 'recommendation categories' that are being briefly presented along with their names.

1. Remain Polite, and Advise for Guiding the Child
2. Interact Carefully and Assure the Parent
3. Explain Matters Coolly and Handle the Child's Difficulties
4. Listen without Reacting
5. Keep Proof and Refer to the principal

1. Remain Polite, and Advise for Guiding the Child

A heavily endorsed category of recommendations with 94 endorsements was named: *Remain Polite, and Advise for Guiding the Child*. In this case, the recommendations were to remain polite towards the difficult parents and utilizing the right opportunity for advising the parents to guide their wards. Some sample recommendations in this context read as follows:

- i. "First we should listen to the parent's problems and then advise them accordingly for his/her child's studies and behaviour." (F#9).
- ii. "First of all as a patient listener I would listen to what she has to say about her child. Then instead of blaming the parent directly would give some suggestions as to how she could improve her child's studies. Then I would also talk about so" (F#80).
- iii. "The rude and uneducated parents should be dealt with politely and friendly. Proper suggestion and persuasion should be made" (F# 180.)

2. Listen, Interact Carefully and Assure the Parent

The second heavily supported theme with 87 recommendations was entitled, *Interact Carefully and Assure the Parent*. This theme recommended carefully interacting with a difficult parent and assuring the parent that his/her child would be taken care of. A few examples from this category are as follows:

- i. I would like to recommend to other teachers first to listen the parent grievances and then to assure them that their problem will be solved. (F# 52)
- ii. Being a teacher, I wish to advice other teacher to keep some points in their mind while handling such parents, such as, pay proper attention to the parents and their wards, listen to their problems carefully and assure that their wards will get more attention (F# 108).

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iii. "While handling such kinds of parents, we teachers should keep some points in our mind such as: listen to the parents patiently; give some special attention to them and their wards; and also understand the reasons behind their behaviour" (F#139).

3. Explain Matters Coolly and Handle the Child's Difficulties

The next category consisted of 42 responses for handling a difficult parent behavior and was entitled: *Explain Matters Coolly and Handle the Child's Difficulties*. Basically, the recommendations at this instance were to remain cool and calm while explaining the problems and mistakes of the difficult parent's ward. A few examples from this category are:

i. "Try, to be cool and calm and handle the situation with peace. (F# 138)

ii. "We must point out positive things of the student as also the weakness of the student which can be overcome with possible solutions. Must insist for following a proper daily routine for the student and most important, they should give time and encouragement to the student" (F#141).

iii. "We should hear the arguments of the parents with patience but in the absence of the child because it may cause reverse effect on the child. Then we should present the real picture of the child regarding his indifferent behaviour undertaking the parent in good confidence" (F# 175).

4. Listen without Reacting

The thematic category with the name *Listen without Reacting* had 17 endorsements. The commonly shared recommendation under this category was that the teachers must not lose patience and should listen to whatever the difficult parent has to say without reacting. Following are some examples from the said theme.

i. "My recommendation for the other teacher is to be self-composed in handling such problem, never lose the confidence, not to take the criticism in negative sense and not to indulge in argument". (F#13)

ii. "I recommend to other teacher to ignore this type of comment and concentrate on their duties". (M#188)

iii. "Let the parent shout and insult you, a good teacher should never lose his/her temper and do what is to be done". (M# 198)

5. Keep Proof and Refer to the Principal

With six recommendations, the last theme categorically suggested that the teachers' colleagues should either have the proof and evidence against the difficult parent, or send the unresolved matters to the higher authority. Accordingly, the theme was named, *Keep Proof and Refer to the Principal*. Some examples will make the point:

i. "Always have guide books or solid proofs for discussion" (F#128).

ii. "While interacting with this kind of parent one should get attentive, alert with all the evidence" (F#174).

iii. "I recommend other teachers for handling this kind of behavior that at first tell them about working with loving language. After that send them to principal office" (M#203).

A couple of recommendations favored 'supporting a colleague' who had suffered while dealing with a difficult parent. The recommendations in this regard asked for *seeking help from other colleagues*. However, it was decided not to have a separate category for only two items with common message.

The Difficult Parent Behaviour: Recapitulation of the Observations from the Tree Open Ended Questions

Apparently, a good number of the teachers (N = 96) had to say that *imposing/blaming* behavior of the parent was the most difficult one to deal with followed by handling the parents who displayed rude, critical behavior and did not accept their child's faults (N = 46). An equal number of teachers (N = 33) found that parents who behaved in an *irresponsible* manner or held *high expectations* (N = 33) from the teacher and the student both, were difficult to deal. A fewer number of teachers found *indifferent/uncooperative* behavior of the parent (N = 18) as the most difficult one to deal with. The smallest number of teachers contended that parents showing *concern without any intention* to act were the most difficult ones to handle (N = 13).

As regards to the 'reasons' for perceiving a parent's behavior as the 'most difficult' one, it appeared that a fairly large number teachers (N=68) blamed the parent who was *reluctant to listen, meet or understand the teachers' expectations*. Further, at least 37 teachers suggested that with their limitations and inability to handle the parent's problems, they themselves were the reason for the parents' difficult behaviour. A number of teachers thought that having unreasonably *high expectations* from both the teacher and the student (N = 35), and displaying *aggressive/blaming* behaviors (N= 32) were the reasons for perceiving the parent's behaviour as the most difficult one. At least 28 teachers suggested that the *negative impact of the difficult parent's behaviour* left on the teacher, was instrumental for perceiving the behavior as the most difficult one. On the other hand, 22 teachers felt that parents who held *extreme positions towards their ward* or were *irresponsible* (N =21) were responsible for distinguishing the parent's behavior as the most difficult one.

The thematic categories for the recommendations part, showed a clear pattern. Majority of the responses were about suggesting the colleague to *remain polite* and *advise the parent for guiding the child* (N= 94), *interacting patiently* with the parent, plus *assuring the parent that their child would be taken care of* (N = 87). Another theme in this regard, was also made more or less in the same spirit suggesting the colleagues to handle the issues *coolly* (N = 42). Even the last category of recommendations with fewer number of teacher responses referred to *listening without reacting* (N=17). Lastly, six recommendations categorically recommended in favour of having *proof against the problematic parent or taking up the issue to the principal's level*. In sum, the recommendations were almost always about remaining polite, cool, patient and listening without reacting that is, not confronting the problematic parent which seems to be a general cultural feature of Indians.

CONCLUSION

The research aimed at empirically studying 'difficult parent behavior' of some school teachers of the city of Patna. For this purpose, the teachers' rating scores against the question 'how often the parent shows the problematic behavior,' were factor analyzed. The analysis helped extract 5 factors namely, *Domineering Parent*, *Concern without Action Parent*, *Excessively Concerned Parent*, *Imposing Parent* and *Indifferent Parent*. The highest percentage of variance was explained by the factor *Domineering Parent* whose configuration suggested that such a parent frequently avoided contacting the teachers, complained against others, caused harassment to the teachers, showed over involvement in the classroom and perceived the teacher to be bad. The constituting items of the second problematic parent factor named, *concerned without Action* indicated that this parent quite often expressed the intention to cooperate but did not do so, showed little initiative in the

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child's matters and failed to supervise the child at home despite agreeing for this. This was one of the most frequently endorsed factors.

The third factor namely, *Excessively Concerned Parent* described a problematic parent behaviour as having excessive concern about the child's health and being over indulgent in his/her progress in school. The fourth factor was that of the *Indifferent Parent*, who hardly ever visited the school, took notice of the child's problems or held an opinion about him/her. Finally, the composition of the factor, *Imposing Parent* impressed that this parent used his/her academic degree, knowledge or professional experience as excuses for getting involved in his/her child's education and even tried to change the approach of the teacher.

Notably, three out of the five problematic parent behaviours, i.e., *Concern without Action*, *Excessively Concerned* and *Imposing Parent* occurred more frequently on the average despite the fact that these types of behaviors explained relatively lower percentage of variance (i.e., 10 to 6 percent). A comparison between the factor Means showed that all the factors of difficult parent behaviour were significantly different from each other barring the difference between *Concerned without Action Parent*, and *Excessively Concerned Parent*.

The observations from the thematic analysis of the teachers' 'descriptions' of the most difficult parent behaviour, helped arrive at six themes namely: 1. *Imposing / Blaming Parent*, 2. *Concerned without Action Parent*, 3. *Uncooperative Parent*, 4. *Irresponsible Parent* 5. *Rude/Disrespectful Parent* and 6. *High Expectation Parent*. Secondly, the teachers gave around 7 categories of 'reasons' for why they considered a parent as the most difficult one they were: 1. *Parents' Extreme Position towards their Wards*, 2. *Aggressive and Blaming Behavior*, 3. *Not Heeding the Teacher's Expectations*, 4. *Parents' high, Expectations*, 5. *Irresponsible Parents*, 6. *Teacher's Limitations and Inability in Handling the Problems* and 7. *the parent's Negative Impact Causing Behaviors for the Teacher*.

It appeared that the correspondence between the empirically derived factors of the difficult parent behaviour and the descriptive themes surfacing from the open-ended question was good. Moreover, the descriptive data helped delineate a couple of new dimensions of problematic parent behavior that were not seen frequently enough by the school teachers. These themes were recognized as: *High Expectations from One's Child* and *Rude, Critical Non-accepting of the Child's Fault*.

Lastly, the categories of 'recommendation' comprised of ideas like: *Listening to the parent without reacting, remaining polite, giving advice for guiding the child, interacting carefully and assuring the parent, explaining matters coolly and handling the child's difficulties plus keeping the proof of the parents' problematic behaviour and referring about the unacceptable behavior of the parent to the principal*. Apparently, all the ideas behind recommendation favoured using good interpersonal skills and polite etiquette, avoiding direct and aggressive confrontation and having patient interaction with the problematic parent.

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Conflict of Interest

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