

A Study on Innovative Parenting Technique: Green Parenting

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Abstract

A child is God's gift. Parenting is about teaching children to develop good habits and become good citizens. Green parenting is about bringing up the child in eco-friendly ways. In this concept, the child is taught the importance of environment and its conservation. Under green parenting, parents use different methods in order to raise the babies in green ways such as providing organic food, using cloth diapers instead of disposable diapers, giving lead-free toys, minimizing usage of plastic products etc. Parents may also swap the "gently used" clothes and toys to conserve the resources. The concept of green parenting is quite popular in western countries, but the awareness for the same is less in India. The empirical studies for green parenting are rare in India. Therefore, the present study tries to empirically highlight the awareness and practices towards the novel concept of green parenting in Anand and Gandhinagar region of Gujarat and the study is supplemented by the commendable work of Children's University based in Gujarat in the area of child education and development.

Keywords: Child care, Environment, Green parenting, Natural parenting.

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1. Introduction

Children are the backbone of any society. The things taught to them in the early childhood turns out to be a habit and discipline. The sum total of early teachings is reflected in the personality, when the child grows into adult. Parenting is about teaching children the values and lessons they will need to grow into productive, responsible adults. A sorry state of affairs exists in the present day condition. Lavish use of natural resources, without making an attempt to conserve it, has led to serious environmental problems like global warming, and pollution of land, water and air. High use of plastic products, electronic gadgets etc has resulted in creation of non-bio-degradable and e-waste, which are difficult to decompose, leading to accumulation of waste (often called as landfills). Thus, in order to save the deteriorating environment, it has become essential that children are inculcated with the methods of conserving environment and using eco-friendly products (30 Blogs With Eco-Friendly Parenting Tips, 2012).

Raising children in a green way means developing a closeness with nature, using bare minimum artificial products, living life in the lap of nature with the things gifted by nature, respecting and protecting the nature. It is a dire need of the hour to conserve, protect and enlarge the natural green environment for the existence of human and animal species on earth. With the advent of global warming, there is an alarming threat of extinction of species. Amidst this environment, if the new generation is taught the lessons of judicious use of resources, replenishing it and relying on the principles of Mother Nature, then it would be a blissful act to save the races on earth. Green parenting practices encompass: minimizing the use of disposable diapers, laundry load for babies, plastic product and toys, bottle feed, electronic equipments such as cell phones and video games etc. In order to raise and feed the babies in green ways, parents should prefer giving green products to their babies (Wagener, 1997).

In view of this, the present study highlights the theoretical conceptual framework on green parenting, which describes the details of baby care products used by parents for their young ones. The empirical part of the study focuses on the variety of baby products and baby food used by parents. It also tests the perceptions of parents of Anand and Gandhinagar region, towards eco-friendly practices and checks their awareness towards the innovative concept of green parenting. The paper throws light on the effective work of Children's University. Children's University (CU) based at Gandhinagar aims to guide stakeholders and beneficiaries (children from age of 9 months to adolescents of 18 years, their parents, teachers, teachers-educators, curriculum designers, policymakers

and volunteers working in the area of child development and education) on the path leading to genuine child development and education per se (Children’s University Brochure –English, n.d.).

2. Conceptual Framework on Green Parenting

Parents want to get variety of articles exclusively used for babies to make them happy. Parents are certainly spending high on such items. In 2008, parents in UK spent £23 million a week on baby equipment, baby toiletries and prams/pushchairs. Among this confusing array of choices, the baby market boasts an array of products for environmentally concerned parents such as organic bedding, food and formula (Pendry, Mewse, & Burgonye, 2012). The following section reviews the impact of using various articles exclusively used for babies and the possible green solution for such items in Table 1.

Table 1: Baby Care Products

Items	Usage	Effect	Solution
Bibs	A garment worn hanging from the neck on the chest to protect clothing from spilt food. Bibs are frequently used by children, especially infants	Increase in laundry load and landfills if made of plastic	Use of washable cloth pieces instead of using plastic bibs and being careful while feeding infants so that such bibs are not needed at all
Diapers (Nappy)	A piece of toweling or other absorbent material wrapped round a baby’s bottom and between its legs to absorb and retain urine and faeces	Landfills	Washable cotton cloth
Diaper Pail	A specialized trash (bin) to store dirty diapers	Landfills	Use of simple trash that should be emptied very often
Diaper Changing Pad	Soft cover used while changing baby diapers	Landfills	Use of cotton mattress

Baby ointment or Barrier Cream	Moisturizes and smoothens baby's skin by forming an effective barrier against dryness	May harm if not suited to baby skin	Use of age old castor oil
Disposable Wipes	A disposable moistened medicated paper towel, usually supplied in a plastic drum or packet, used for cleaning babies	Landfills	Washable Wet Cloth
Plastic Infant Tub	For giving bath to baby	After use it could be recycled or donated to library (if gently used).	Reuse with the help of swapping library
Baby Soap	For bathing baby	Skin becomes highly sensitive	Conventional homemade "ubttan" could be used
Baby Soft-Bristled Hair Brush	Combing the baby hair	Landfills	Use of normal but wide toothed comb
Crib and Crib Mattress	Used for baby bedding	Foam used in it may lead to baby allergies	Use of nontoxic mattress
Infant Safety Seat for Car	Fits babies snugly during the first year or so while driving the car in rear seat or forward seat	Landfills	Hold the baby and avoid going out very often with small babies
Reclining Stroller	Used to carry a baby until the baby is able to walk sufficient distance on his/her own	Landfills. Chemical - treated fabrics in it can be dangerous to baby.	Slings or baby carrier

Feeding Bottles/ Sipper Bottles	A baby bottle is a bottle with a nipple to drink which is typically used by infants and young children when a mother does not breastfeed, or if someone cannot (as conveniently) drink from a cup, for feeding oneself or being fed. In particular it is used to feed infant formula, expressed breast milk or pediatric electrolyte solution	Landfills. Can lead to bacterial infection if the bottles are not properly sterilized.	Breastfeeding for minimum six months and BPA free plastic bottles could be used
Pram or Push Chair	A four-wheeled carriage for a baby, pushed by a person on foot	After use it could be recycled or donated in library (if gently used).	Reuse with the help of swapping library
Cradle	A baby's bed or cot, typically one mounted on rockers	After use it could be recycled or donated to library (if gently used)	Reuse with the help of swapping library
Teether	An object or device, such as a teething ring, for a baby to bite on during teething (Colourful plastic)	Lead content in plastic causes cancer	Wooden teether could be used
Baby Walker	A light frame on casters or wheels to help a baby learn to walk	After use it could be recycled or donated in library (if gently used)	Reuse with the help of swapping library
Baby Powder or Talcum Powder	For keeping babies away from bad odour of perspiration	Skin becomes highly sensitive	Use Corn Starch

Mercury Thermometer	To read the temperature in case of fever	Throwing mercury causes bio-medical waste	Use digital thermometer
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Source: Author's Compilation.

3. Research Objectives

The basic objective of the study is to analyze the sensitivity of the parents towards environmental conscious way of raising and feeding the baby. However, the specific objectives are described as below:

1. To describe the demographic profile of the parents in terms of gender, occupation, education and income.
2. To analyze the family composition pertaining to their kids in terms of type of family (nuclear/joint), number of children and their gender, nurturing and schooling of their babies etc.
3. To scale the usage pattern of variety of baby products and baby foods used by the parents.
4. To check the awareness of the responding parents towards the concept of Green (Eco) Parenting.
5. To study the perceptions of the parents towards various green ways of raising and feeding babies.
6. To explore various parenting behaviour for inculcating green habits among their kids.
7. To understand the activities and appreciate the role of Children's University.

4. Literature Review

Parenting is the most challenging adventure of life, it requires lot of skills and patience, followed by rewards (Greene, n.d.). It is a common desire of parents that their children should be happy and healthy. Green parenting is about raising the children with a conscience towards the values of conservation and environment. It takes a different form in each family, but the effort is there to live more eco-friendly and naturally while supporting the children (Lance, 2011). Green parenting is economical, conserving of resources, living by nature and it encourages children to love the earth (Wagener, 1997).

A noted pediatrician and a leading voice of the green baby movement- Dr. Allen Greene, has made a significant contribution in the literary work on green parenting,

through his two popular books. In the book, *“Raising Baby Green: The Earth-Friendly Guide to Pregnancy, Childbirth and Babycare”*, he has advised parents on how to make healthy green choices for pregnancy, childbirth and baby care from feeding the baby the best food available to using medicines wisely. In another book titled, *“Feeding Baby Green: The Earth Friendly Program for Healthy, Safe Nutrition During Pregnancy, Childhood, and Beyond”*, he has advised on how to transform a baby’s eating habits that would positively impact their health and development for rest of their lives. The pediatrician has included everything a parent needs to know about creating healthy, nutritious meals that help avoid childhood obesity and prevent childhood disease (Greene, n.d.). Informative exhaustive tips on bonding, feeding, caring, diapering, thrifty toy shopping, understanding non-verbal communication, using baby friendly strategies, teaching the lessons of helping, giving and receiving etc are described in the work of McCourt (n.d.). The studies pertaining to children can be segregated into various heads like food and nutrition, diapering and toxic exposure, nurturing tips, healthcare tips, childcare tips, toy selection, suggestive practices and other study.

4.1 Food and Nutrition

Prenatal stage is very crucial stage, in which the physical and mental development of embryo depends on the food consumed and the thoughts conceived by mother. The primary focus at such stage is special nutritional factor that supports the healthy pregnancy, avoidance of toxic substances and ways to create a natural bond between the mother and the child could be referred as natural principles of life (Nagel, 2006).

After immediate postnatal phase, breastfeeding for initial six months, infant formula (certified by United State Department of Agriculture -USDA) is considered beneficial. After six months along with breast-milk, solid food could be supplemented for serving the extra requirement of nutrients like iron in a growing baby. In the time course of six months to nine months, textured changed food like lumpy, mashed or chopped food, single cereal infant food, homemade solid food, organic fresh fruits and veggies, mild tasting food could be given. Homemade ready to use infant waning food could be given to children compared to the factory produced food which is a source of obesity and explodes illness (Anand, 2008 & Chang, n.d.).

Best Start Meilleur Depart (2013) expressed the benefits of homemade food that it saves money, offers variety, babies get used to different textures and tastes and baby eats the same food as what family eats. In India, under ‘The Infant

Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods Act, 1992', restriction on marketing of infant formulas, feeding bottles and commercial weaning foods have been put.

Greene (2010) advised on feeding babies with green vegetables, and giving new food every day make babies apt and adaptable to the next type of food. He highlights the concept of nutritional intelligence, which refers to having an understanding about the interaction between the food that is eaten and the impact it creates, on health, disease immunization, well-being; and using this understanding to make improved food choices (Nutritional Intelligence, n.d.). Author observed that nutritional intelligence development had been largely ignored in US.

Further, Anand, (2008) depicted that using games to get baby eat, forcing food in baby's mouth, using food as a reward or punishment are couple of unhealthy practices which parents should not use. He further elaborated that doctors do not recommend any flavouring or nourishing agent to the milk.

Study conducted through projective technique in UK and Australia revealed that parents were aware about the constitution of "healthy" diet, but they still unwillingly permitted their children to eat unhealthy food, in order to minimize conflict level at shopping time and on dining table (Noble, Stead, Jones, McDermott, & McVie.,2007).

4.2 Diapering and Toxic Exposure

A typical study in western country on diaper need expressed that there was a substantial prevalence of diaper need in low-income families. Insufficient supply of diapers leads to poor infant care, maternal mental stress which caused negative impact on child's health, so it suggested considering diaper as a basic need and referring families to a local diaper distribution service to reduce parental stress (Smith, Kruse, Weir, & Goldblum, 2013). Parents believed that disposable nappies were considered popular, efficient and healthy system, despite leading to huge landfills. Parents chose cloth nappies as they are cost-effective, eco-buddy, health-friendly, highly comfortable and it assisted in inculcating early toilet training (Pendry, Mewse, & Burgonye, 2012).

Babies have full control over the elimination functions (a process of getting rid of biological waste mainly excreta or faeces and urine) and so observant parents could work upon the timings and location of elimination functions through

diaper free –elimination communication (parents in order to teach their young-ones, often create a sound when they prepare their baby for elimination function, gradually kids learn that when the sound is made, it is the time for elimination function). This learning provides natural toilet and potty training to children (Nichols, 2000). In India and China, toddlers wear bottomless pants and attentive Indian parents hold their babies away from themselves to allow for potty opportunities (Avelino, 2014).

30 Blogs With Eco-Friendly Parenting Tips (2012) marked that it usually took 200-500 years to completely decompose a disposable diaper and it leads to landfills. Disposable diapers could be the cause of sharp rise in male infertility due to impaired normal cooling mechanisms of the testicles (Nichols, 2000). Childhood respiratory problems like asthma are linked to inhaling the mixture of chemicals emitted from disposable diapers (Stern, 2006).

Flushable diapers, washing diaper service, bleachfree diaper, cloth diaper can act as a substitute for throw-away costly disposable diapers. Researchers have come across a specific set of tips for diapering, such as, washing diapers in cold water, washing at full loads, sun drying instead of using dryer, using dry pail instead of soaking diaper, in order to conserve water and electricity resources (Nichols, 2000).

4.3 Nurturing Tips

Sensitizing children towards nature is important so that they learn to respect the quiet and enormous job done by nature in keeping us alive. Allowing children to play in mud, sand, water; taking them to park and planetarium will assist them to appreciate mother nature (Anand, 2008). Nagel (2006) also describes that modern culture significantly fails to imbibe feelings towards nature, in children. Thus, from the initial stage if the babies are brought up in the lap of nature, they tend to be eco-friendly and learn to give importance to nature and become conscious to conserve the same.

A stroller or pram is not crucial either. Babies are carried in arms, or as backpacks or worn in a sling. In addition to making it easier to navigate crowded places, baby-wearing facilitates attachment parenting techniques, breastfeeding and elimination communication (Avelino, 2014). Using bare minimum accessories to carry babies, leads to non-accumulation of plastic waste (which is non-biodegradable) and saves the resources which are used in manufacturing it.

4.4 Healthcare Tips

Anand (2008) in his book expressed that a readymade support of knowledgeable people is easily available in a joint family. Elders are sensitive and smart to understand the needs of new mother and new baby and supports through post-partum depression. The presence of grandmother in the home is always helpful in preventing unnecessary accidents and emergency visits to hospital. Homemade ayurvedic remedies should be given to children for curing problems like indigestion, cold etc. Nature cure (treatment through sunshine, water, fire, air and earth) is considered as the most effective way to cure. Homoeopathy is regarded as a gentle complementary system of medicine. 'Kaumar-Bhritya-Tantra' is an exclusive branch in Ayurveda which deals with child care, from intrauterine life till adolescence. After a certain level of age, regular exercise or boosting the inclination of child in the sports activity of his interest not only keeps him occupied but also inculcates the habit of remaining healthy and fit through outdoor activities.

4.5 Childcare Tips

Young-ones need special attention and tender care in the early stage. In a joint family the care of the child is easily done by the family members. However, in a nuclear family either parents have to rely on day-care facilities provided by crèche (government or private) or hire a maid. Parents of Arizona rely on family, friends and neighbours to supplement the time they spend caring their children. In the absence of child care subsidies and extended family supports, parents tend to stay at home for child care. Parents look for environments that are safe, supportive and educationally enriching when it comes to child care. Most parents struggle to pay for child care and they were willing to make personal sacrifices to ensure quality child care (South Phoenix Regional Snapshot, 2012).

4.6 Toy Selection

Referring to the resourceful blog on 30 blogs with eco-friendly parenting tips (2012), a large amount of useful information was gathered, such as, many toy companies produce toys which contain hazardous chemicals such as polyvinylchloride (PVC) and polycarbonate responsible for causing cancer. Toys made from non-toxic material, formaldehyde-free e-zero glue, organic colourant, natural fabrics, recycled and recyclable plastics and organic rubberwood should be given to children. Educational toys such as earthopoly board game or eco-flash cards can educate children on the burning environmental issues. To cut

down on cost aspect second-hand toys (after cleaning), toys made by local artisans, natural teething toys, organic cotton toys, natural bath toys, biodegradable toys, wooden toys, toys without plastic packaging, avoiding batteries toys (electronic toys, video games) could be preferred at the time of toys selection. Toddlers should be offered the toys which meet Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) specifications, are safe and free from lead content.

4.7 Suggestive Practices

Baby food is a myth, babies should be made to eat that food, which parents eat, as babies are quite noticing in what parents eat. It is also recommended to offer flavourful baby food and develop preference for variety of food to inculcate it permanently in future menu. (Greene, 2010). Baby should be allowed to feed himself with his fingers or spoon or cup. One of the parts of good food habits is not to pressurize baby for eating a specific food quantity, let baby decide on how much and when to eat (Anand, 2008). Watching allergic reactions when new food is offered is a must to avoid severe problems (Best Start Meilleur Depart, 2013).

Literary work of Anand (2008) very exhaustively yet minutely described the ways and means to nurture baby. With respect to ways of feeding, cup feeding is considered safer than bottle feeding. Proper sterilization of bottle and teat is must for ensuring health safety of baby. Glass bottles are safer than plastic bottles. Unbreakable thick material bottles with visible markings are strongly recommended by doctors. Children could be given dry fruits; items made from wholesome wheat, boiled drinking water, and taught hygiene manners.

30 Blogs with Eco-Friendly Parenting Tips (2012) provides useful and suggestive tips to parents. The information reservoir describes that environmental stewardship principle needs to be inculcated in children through acts like growing own food, buying things produced locally (to avoid transportation cost, no carbon emissions, less usage of pesticides and optimal use of arable land), saving electricity and water etc. Kids could be made to do eco-friendly chores such as composting, sorting recycling items, watering plants with leftover water from washing dishes, cleaning house with natural and reusable products, building cistern to store rainwater, switching off electrical appliances when not in use, avoiding standby mode of appliances etc. Such practices inculcated at an early age prove to be habits in children.

As a suggestion to become *eco-friendly parent*, it has been advised to go for cloth

diapers or eco-friendly chlorine free disposable diapers, use food made out of organic formula sold in recycleable containers, BPA plastic free bottles or glass bottles, organic food, swapping of baby toys and clothes, wooden toys, purchase garage sold goods (gently used clothing and toys) and use gentle green cleaning products. Reusing, recycling and reducing usage of the products lead to avoiding commitments of a fresh set of resources in production, which in a way is conservation of resources (Lindsay, 2014). Use of 100% biodegradable wipes should be emphasized as the counter types of wipes leaves footprints for hundred of years to break down and unfortunatley results in landfills.

Habits such as gardening (importance of plants), composting (nature's full circle), shopping organic products (value of organic manure), recycling (optimization of resources), saving electricity (energy conservation), conserving water (running washers at full capacity), charity (removal of self-centeredness, affinity for animals), nature friendly vacations (exploring wonders of earth), nature day (telling nature stories, movies etc) and nature décor (beautifying with earthy décor) are some of the favourite tips to green the kids (10 Fun Tips to Green Your Kids, 2011).

Lead free, low VOC paint and PVC-free flooring and carpet should be chosen, avoid synthetic fragrance, dyes or chlorine bleach products, use homemade household cleaners, use glass bottles instead of plastic, never heat milk in plastic bottles, make locally grown organic food, use organic clothes (cotton, bamboo or vegetables dyes) and have everyone give only "gently" used gifts, clothes, gear and toys (Kaiser Permanente, n.d.). Guidelines for dressing are suggested as using those clothes that bear 100% certified organic cotton on the label of clothes. Using general library for books and buying second hand toys saves oodles of cash (Chang, n.d.).

4.8 Other Studies

Child Development Centers in US offer insights such as learning is more effective when it is child-directed in aesthetic environment through natural materials. A complete documentation of child's activity helps in exploring the interest area of child. Intermittent organization of formal parent-teacher conferences, family potlucks and picnics, parent workdays and parent education workshops are considered to be important for childhood training of children (West Valley College, 2012).

Some researchers have suggested their opinion in their literary work, regarding ways in which the recurring plastic waste can be made to zero by adopting green practices. Birthday parties generate huge amount of waste like disposable plates, cups and plastic cutlery, such problems could be addressed by throwing a green birthday party (features of green parties are: online invitation, garden party, homemade reusable decorations, cake frosting with natural colours, compostable plates, field activities, no gift wrapping, green gifting like wooden toys etc) (Chang, n.d.).

Researchers have observed that many shoppers have diverted themselves toward eco-friendly community. 68% of online shoppers expressed that purchasing eco-friendly products is important. Customers believed that eco-friendly products are costlier but they weigh the cost of social responsibility to health benefits and personal image. US customers considered an all time solution provider to eco-friendly products is PriceGrabber.co, which holds large variety of merchandising (Price Grabber, 2007).

From the above mentioned literature review, it may be observed that existing studies are mostly from foreign countries, exhaustively focused in the area of diapering, toys, food, child treatment and suggestive child care. Further, these studies are conceptual in nature. Empirical studies in the area of green parenting are far and few particularly for India and Gujarat. Hence, the present study is an attempt to bridge the existing gap.

5. Research Methodology

The study describing the green ways of feeding and raising the babies is based upon the descriptive research design. The primary data for the study was collected by survey. The sampling elements for the study were the parents (either mother or father) who have kids up to the age of five years. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire.

While popular psychology typically focuses on the role of mothers in child rearing, fathers are also immensely important in bringing up balanced, well-adjusted and happy children. Fathers in particular, influence a child's emotional, social and intellectual grounding (Haris, n.d.). Therefore, the research takes into consideration the opinions of fathers also while collecting the responses. The sample size for the study was 165 parents from Anand and Gandhinagar region of Gujarat. The sampling method was convenience and the period of the study was June 2014 to August 2014.

As the study targeted parents with the kids up to the age of five years, the researchers felt that the data can be collected from parents of children going to pre-primary schools/ kindergartens (KGs). The kids studying in playgroup, nursery, lower KG or senior KG classes of kindergartens fall in to the selected age group for the research. These schools regularly conduct meetings to interact with the parents. The researchers were advised by the principals of such schools to meet the parents during such meetings. Hence, with the permission from the head of these schools, the researchers personally contacted such parents at the time of meeting to collect the data for the survey. Keeping the background of the parents and their language comfort in mind, the questionnaires were prepared in vernacular language (Gujarati) as well as English.

Considering the research objectives, the questionnaire included information on variables such as demographic details of parents, details pertaining to kids, usage of various baby items related to food, clothes, toys etc, the awareness regarding the concept of green parenting, perceptions of the parents towards ways of raising and feeding their kids and their views about development of eco-friendly ways of inculcating green habits among their kids. For the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation and the inferential statistics such as Independent Sample *T*-test were applied. Information so obtained from the respondents was analysed and interpreted with the help of SPSS 12 and Microsoft Excel programmes.

6. Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion are divided into two parts. The first part analyzes the empirical work on green parenting and the second part highlights the role of Children's University in the form of a caselet.

Section I: Analysis of Empirical Work of Green Parenting

The details are discussed below under various heads.

Demographic Profile of Parents

Out of total 165 parents surveyed, 55% were mothers. The absence of single gender respondents indicates that fathers have also taken interest in responding to this survey (45%). The occupational profile suggest that majority of the respondents were salaried (42%), followed by housewives (29%), businessman (22%) and professionals such as doctors (7%). Further, the parents were having

good educational background. 68% parents were educated till post graduate or graduate level. In the questionnaire, the details pertaining to income was kept optional. 96 parents willingly stated their monthly income. The median monthly family income was reported to be Rs.30000 while maximum number of families was having monthly family income Rs.10000.

Family Composition

65% of the parents lived in a joint family system, whereas 35% lived as nuclear families. There was an average one girl and one boy with maximum up to two in a single family. It could be inferred that in a small-sized families, modal number of kids were two. The average age of the first kid was observed to be 3 years and 1 year for the second kid. As the average age was reported to be 3 years, majority of the kids (90%) were admitted to pre-primary schools/kindergartens. Further, only 6% parents had hired care-takers (baby-sitters) to look after their kids.

A noteworthy point was known in qualitative discussion. The nuclear families relied on baby sitters for the care of their young ones, as such families were devoid of grandparental support, it connects with the reviewed literature (South Phoenix Regional Snapshot, 2012). In joint families grandparents were found to be handy-support to look after the kids. A contradiction was observed when the joint families despite the presence of grandparents hired a babysitter. The reasons cited for the same was that kids were notorious and it was difficult for old-aged grandparents to run behind the kids. Parents of the kids, in order to provide a kind of hand-holding support to kids and grandparents, hired baby sitters, who had to work under strict surveillance of grandparents or other elderly family member.

Usage Pattern of Variety of Baby Products and Baby Foods by Parents

Here, the parents were asked to rate the usage of various baby products and baby foods on a usage scale of 1 (Never), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often) and 5 (Always). The study also checked the statistical differences in the opinions of mother and father respondents for the use of such items with the help of independent sample T-test. The following hypothesis was formulated.

H₀1: There is no significant difference in the opinion of mother and father respondents for the use of various baby products and baby foods.

Table 2: Descriptive and Test Statistics (Independent Sample t-test) for Use of Baby Food and Baby Products

Use of	Mean of Mothers' Opinion	Mean of Fathers' Opinion	t Values	2-Tailed Sig. Value (p-Values)	Hypothesis Rejected/Not Rejected
Diaper	2.34	2.39	0.23	.82	Not Rejected
Stroller	1.86	1.64	(1.23)	.22	Not Rejected
Ready-to-eat baby food	2.09	2.59	2.43	.02	Rejected
Canned baby food	1.81	1.68	(0.68)	.50	Not Rejected
Organic fruits and vegetables	4.11	4.21	(1.00)	.32	Not Rejected
Baby wipes	3.33	2.29	(1.54)	.13	Not Rejected
Plastic toys	3.53	3.72	0.98	.33	Not Rejected
Bottle feeding	1.97	1.83	(0.61)	.54	Not Rejected
Plastic bottles	2.72	3.09	1.51	.13	Not Rejected
Glass bottles	2.00	2.24	1.09	.28	Not Rejected
BPA free plastic toys and bottles	2.59	2.17	(1.85)	.07	Not Rejected
Toy swaps	1.86	2.29	2.21	.03	Rejected
Clothing swaps	1.83	2.12	1.41	.16	Not Rejected
Electronic gadgets for kids	2.50	2.77	1.40	.16	Not Rejected

Note: Figures in brackets are negative values.

The statistical results are produced in Table 2. From Table 2, it may be observed that the mean values for use of various items as listed above were observed to be less than three except for the use of organic fruits and vegetables (4.11-Mothers and 4.21-Fathers), plastic toys (3.53-Mothers and 3.72-Fathers), baby wipes (3.33-Mothers) and plastic bottles (3.09-Fathers). It suggests that the parents were rarely using the items such as disposable diapers, strollers, ready-to-eat baby foods, canned baby foods, bottle feeding, glass bottles, BPA free plastic toys, toy swaps, clothing swaps and electronic gadgets for kids, but often used organic fruits and vegetables, plastic toys, baby wipes (as per fathers' opinion) and plastic bottles (mothers' opinion). The average number of diapers used by the parents is 13 per month with a standard deviation of 29. A myth was discovered that parents considered fresh fruits and vegetables to be organic. It indicated that parents lacked awareness to identify organic products, which are grown without using artificial harmful, insecticides and pesticides.

Further, it may be observed from Table 2 that the 2-tailed significance values (p-values) for use of all such items were observed to be greater than 0.05 except for ready-to-eat baby food and toy swaps. This means that there was no significant difference in the opinions of mother and father respondents for the use of above mentioned items except the ready-to-eat baby food and toy swaps. For ready to eat baby food and toy swaps, it may be inferred from the mean values that fathers as compared to mothers opined to use more of ready-to-eat baby food and toy swaps. The mean values for the usage of ready-to-eat baby food and toy swaps were still below three.

Based on the suggestive tips by the experts for green parenting as described in the literature review section, the following part compares the actual behaviour of the respondents surveyed with the ideal practices.

The use of diapers, strollers and baby wipes clog up the landfills and their use should be avoided if possible as suggested by experts. The respondents' behaviour in the present study conforms this fact. Eco-friendly parenting suggests that instead of using ready-to-eat baby food and canned food, one should go for home-made food which is free from any chemicals. As per the findings of the study, the parents use less of ready-to-eat baby food or canned baby food; rather they prefer giving more of organic fruits and vegetables. This finding again reinforces the green parenting of the respondents. Further, experts recommend minimum use of plastic toys and bottles as they contain chemicals that are harmful to the health of babies. Here, the findings contradict as the responding parents use more of plastic toys, bottles and consider less use of BPA free plastic products. The literature suggests that the use of plastic could be replaced by glass bottles but again the parents are rarely using glass bottles as per the present study. There was reluctance to use glass bottles because glass is a fragile item and if it breaks, it would hurt the baby. So to avoid accidental events, parents did not use glass bottles.

The new concept of green parenting suggests that parents should consider their family and friends with kids of varying ages for toy and clothing swaps. It not only saves money but also the storage space and the kids get to use a variety of toys and clothing. The parents in the present study rarely invited such toy or cloth swaps from others. Qualitatively it was discovered that Indian parents believed in giving first-hand toys and clothes to their children, based on their economic condition. It was believed that though less in number but a set of personalized toys and clothes were a symbol of dignity of own belongings. Parents

had a mindset that generalized or secondhand toys and clothes were only used by families of economically backward society and not the affluent middle class families.

Lastly the exposure to the electronic gadgets or appliances such as TV, cell-phones, computers, tabs etc. should be minimized as the radioactive rays from them are hazardous to health (Jain & Bagai, 2014; Radha & Gurupranesh, n.d.). In the present research, it is seen that parents provide very less exposure to electronic gadgets. So, overall it may be said that the parents' behaviour in the city of Anand and the Gandhinagar conforms to the green parenting techniques with the exceptions of few items such as use of plastic toys and bottles.

Laundry Load for Kids

Kids in family lead to increase in laundry loads exponentially. However, the green parenting behaviour suggested limiting the washing as far as possible. As per the findings of the present study, the average laundry load for kids was 7 pairs in a day with a maximum up to 50. Further, 34% of the respondents used washing machine and the average frequency for using the same was once a day. It is suggested that if the washing machine is used, it should be used at full loads for maximum efficiency. The lint filter in the dryer should be cleaned before each load to cut back on drying time. It was noticed in the research that respondents failed to adopt economical practices like drying clothes under sunlight and using machine for drying only during shortage of time or improper weather condition.

Perceptions of Parents towards Green/Eco-Friendly Practices

In order to check the perceptions of parents towards various green/ eco-friendly practices of raising and feeding the babies, they were asked to rate various positive and negative statements on an agreement scale of 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Further, the differences in the perceptions of father and mother respondents were identified with the help of independent sample *t*- test. The following hypothesis was formulated.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in the perception of mother and father respondents for various green/ eco-friendly practices of raising and feeding the kids.

Table 3: Descriptive and Test Statistics (Independent Sample t-test) for Eco-friendly Practices of Raising and Feeding Kids

Sl. No.	Statement	Mean of Mothers' Perception	Mean of Fathers' Perception	t Values	2-Tailed Sig. Value (p-Values)	Hypothesis Rejected /Not Rejected
1	It is convenient to use cloth diapers	3.20	3.35	0.78	0.43	Not Rejected
2	Disposable diapers are harmful to the environment (Adds to the landfills)	3.77	3.40	(2.04)	0.04	Rejected
3	Cloth diapered babies easily get potty trained	3.40	2.87	(3.08)	0.00	Rejected
4	Chemicals used for disposable diapers are harmful to the health of babies	3.93	3.36	(1.09)	0.28	Not Rejected
5	Use of disposable diapers is unavoidable	2.99	2.84	(0.83)	0.41	Not Rejected
6	Children should play outdoor games rather than electronic games at home	4.89	4.84	(0.06)	0.96	Not Rejected
7	One should wash, dry and iron baby clothes very often	4.11	3.53	(1.01)	0.31	Not Rejected
8	Parents should not swap used clothes and toys with other kids	3.53	3.48	(0.30)	0.77	Not Rejected
9	Use of plastic bags and bottles adds to the environment hazards	4.00	3.83	(1.02)	0.31	Not Rejected
10	Parents should provide ready- made baby food	3.14	3.24	0.43	0.67	Not Rejected

11	Parents should teach their kids at an early age about saving environment	4.26	4.31	0.42	0.68	Not Rejected
12	Parents should use toy library instead of buying new toys every time	3.71	3.68	(0.19)	0.85	Not Rejected
13	Mobile phones/Ipads/Laptops are good time pass activity for kids	2.12	2.44	1.74	0.08	Not Rejected
14	Parents should teach their kids at an early age about saving electricity	4.29	4.32	0.25	0.81	Not Rejected
15	Children should be allowed to play with mud and sand so that their creativity is not marred	3.41	2.95	(2.21)	0.03	Rejected
16	Children should not be allowed to use colourful soft toys and plastic toys as it contains lead, which out of the habit is sucked by babies in mouth	3.20	3.17	(0.13)	0.89	Not Rejected

Note: Figures in brackets are negative values.

The results are produced in Table 3. From Table 3 it may be observed that, the researchers made an attempt to check the perceptions of the parents towards cloth diapers versus disposable diapers through a series of first five statements. From the mean values of mothers' and fathers' perceptions, it may be said that their status was between neutral to agreement towards the convenience of using cloth diapers, potty training habits of cloth diapered babies, use of disposable diapers are harmful to the environment and chemicals used in such diapers are harmful to the health of babies. The parents' opinion regarding the use of disposable diapers as unavoidable was between disagreement to neutral. Further, from the 2-tailed significance values (p -values), it may be observed that except

the perceptions that disposable diapers are harmful to the environment and cloth diapered babies easily get potty trained, there were no significant differences in the perceptions of mothers and fathers for the remaining statements regarding the use of diapers. As far as the statistical differences are concerned, mothers' extent of belief that disposable diapers are harmful to the environment and cloth diapered babies easily get potty trained is more as compared to fathers. From this, it could be inferred that as mothers spend more time with kids, they are aware on the number of diapers changed for the baby during the day. In Indian families typically fathers seldom change the baby's diapers as they spend least time with their young ones due to their busy schedule. Mothers are observant to notice whether her kid has picked up potty training or not. So, on this point parents significantly differed in their perceptions.

The respondents strongly agree that kids should be allowed to play outdoor games rather than electronic games at home. Father and mother did not significantly differ in the opinion of their kids playing various indoor and outdoor games. However, they differed in their opinion regarding the perception that kids should be allowed to play with mud and sand for creativity. Female respondents believed in this practice more as compared to male respondents.

Further, the parents agreed that baby clothes should be washed and ironed very often with no difference in the perceptions of male and female respondents. However, the green parenting behaviour suggests minimizing the laundry load for kids. Father and mother respondents equally agreed to the fact that old clothes and toys should not be swapped. This is again contradicting to the green parenting practices. Creating awareness in parents could lead to change in perceptions and make them more responsible towards green parenting.

The respondents agreed that use of plastic toys and bottles add to the environment hazards with no difference in the opinions of father and mother respondents. They were almost neutral to that the fact that children should not be allowed to use plastic toys as they contain lead which is harmful to the health of their babies. In the previous section, it has been observed that the use of plastic toys and bottles is higher by the respondents. Awareness on green parenting may play a key role in reducing the usage of plastic items.

The male and female respondents were almost neutral to the opinion of providing ready-to-eat baby food. Again, it has been noted previously that the same respondents preferred giving organic vegetables and fruits more as compared

to ready-made food. If parents were explained the negative impacts of using diapers, plastic toys, plastic bottles and baby food then they would change their opinion from neutral dimension. Such neutral opinion could be transformed through proper awareness. The parents would thus abstain themselves from using health hazardous items for their dear ones.

Parents strongly believed that they should educate their kids at an early age about saving the environment and electricity. Their opinion regarding use of toy library was between neutral to agreement. Only three respondents surveyed from Anand were the members of a toy library. The concept of toy library should be promoted in the city of Anand and Gandhinagar. Parents disagreed that the use of mobile phones/I-pads/laptops are good time pass activity for kids and there was no difference in the opinions of fathers and mothers.

Awareness of the Parents for Green Parenting (i.e. Environmental Conscious Way of Raising and Feeding the Baby)

The respondents were asked to rate their awareness for green parenting concept on a scale of 1(Never heard of) to 5(Know very well). The questionnaire included the meaning of green parenting in brackets as it might happen that the parents are following some of the green parenting practices but they were not aware about this term. The results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Awareness of Male and Female for Green Parenting

Awareness for Green Parenting	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	2.36	1.39
Female	2.51	1.38

From Table 4, it may be observed that the awareness of parents for green parenting practices was found to be less than 3. This means that they have only heard of this concept. They do not know much about green parenting practices. Further, the differences in their awareness were compared with the help of independent sample *t*-test. As per the findings, father and mother respondents did not differ significantly on their awareness for green parenting, $t(163) = -.699$, $p = .486$. It depicts the novelty of concept, which is required to be spread far and large among parents.

Section II: Caselet on Children's University

As and when new couples are expecting their young ones they too need to be educated on the various aspects, as they are entering a new phase of life. It is believed that proper prenatal education and care imparted to expecting mother creates a joyful experience for her. Parents always hunt for information on various aspects (like selection of food, healthcare tips, choice of toys, how to impart etiquettes and moral values in children, selection with respect to placing the kids in co-curricular, extra-curricular activities and making a right career choice for their kids) to tackle their children from early childhood till the child become adolescents. CU does immense work to educate couples and parents in three stages namely prenatal, postnatal and future growth and development of child. The details are discussed below.

Background of Children's University

It believes in the philosophy of every child matters, right from the stage when it is in the mother's womb. CU operates in four domains namely, *Research, Education, Teacher-Education and Extension (details mentioned in Table 5)*. Its primary motto is child's comprehensive development and education of child as autonomous spiritual being and protection of child from becoming a means to a system. Its research begins from the concept and identity of Indian child, his or her spiritual development to professional skill learning. Educational activities will be organically connected with research studies on children in womb to adolescents. CU publishes a magazine named, '*Balvishva*' dealing with various aspects of child development, knowledge and sensitivity (Children's University Brochure- English, n.d.).

CU aims to conduct full-time, part-time, distance, online degree, diploma, certificate courses, in the content areas of '*Jivan-Vidya*' (life education), '*Panchkos*' (education of five sheaths of soul), Indian thinking, culture, history, local wisdom, family education, holistic health, education of the gifted art and craft, aesthetics etc. CU will provide accreditation to those schools who have avowed to conduct teaching practices according to the set standards of CU brand. Such accredited schools will be provided information and assistance on real time basis for the development of children.

Table 5: Domains of Children University

<p>Research In</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prenatal care knowledge (pregnancy protection, health and psychological) among parents. 2. Medical knowledge and early stages of growth of child. 3. Growth of child under protective and proper environment. 4. Studies of development and formation of habit, manners and capacities relevant to childhood. 5. Detection and remedies of defects and deficiencies. 6. Studies and practical applications relating to special gifts or special help which could be nourished for growth and development. 7. Proper environment creation at home and various areas of child's activity. 8. Development of toys and tools that would enhance growth and cheerfulness in children. 9. Application of child psychology by pooling traditional knowledge of India and other countries. 10. Based on research, implementation of programme in courses of psychology, sociology, musicology, art etc and including the same in teacher's training. 11. Promotion of other set of programmes which promotes child's growth and development.
<p>Education and Training</p>	<p>It will conduct for students enrolled in CU for research in M.Phil, Ph. D and other doctorate programme relating to child education. Conducting teachers training programme for school teachers and Anganwadis teachers to impart the philosophy of CU, child-centered holistic education, elementary course related to history and Indian culture.</p>
<p>Extension</p>	<p>Implement telecasting of social education programme throughout state, which will stimulate all round care for child and child education. Promote visits to museums, exhibitions, and publications of brochures, pamphlets, occasional papers and other materials for promoting themes of child's care and education. Promote every child matters, balbhavans and development of Little Children's Theatre to promote dramatic activities.</p>

Source: Adapted from Children University.

Every child matters being the special feature of the programme of CU, under this programme following initiatives will be carried out: prenatal care, care of expectant mother, care of infant and toddlers, creation of environmental and atmospheric beauty, orientation of first parenthood, continuous parenthood education, music for young children, games for children, toys for children, learning tools, multilingual development of child, teaching mother tongue and other languages (like Sanskrit, Hindi, English, French etc), songs and stories for young children, stories, dramas, poems for various categories of children from groups of 4 years to 12 years, Kingdom of Art (drawing, painting etc), flowers, fruits, vegetables and nutrition for children, emphasis on physical education at different stages and introduction of gymnastics, swimming and yoga for betterment of children (A Synoptic Concept of the Children's University, n.d.).

Activities of CU: Tapovan Research Centre

Prenatal education is a part of cultural way of life in Indian tradition. During pregnancy the child is affected by the physical, psychological and spiritual well-being of the mother. The Centre primarily aims towards researches in the eugenics and secondly guidance and education of pregnant mothers for giving birth to the child. It emphasizes on development and implementation of profound best practices in 'Garbh-Sanskar and Garbh-Vignana'. It is a centre for harmony of family and expecting mothers. Pregnant mothers are shown proper pictures, paintings, artifacts and through sessions of music and bhajans and an effort is made to cast a positive impact on the child in the womb. In order to develop cognitive aspects in pregnant mothers, techniques of mathematics, languages, science, story-telling and other subjects are adopted. Guidance regarding food habits, daily routine and thinking during pregnancy is inculcated in pregnant mother to make her delivery easy and joyful. Yoga-exercises are taught to maintain the reproductive health of pregnant women. Necessary medical treatment and expert counseling are also provided. Best types of books with inspirational content is issued from the library to prospective mothers. Variety of nourishing food is served to pregnant ladies at the Centre. CU provides research facilities for all-round development of newborn babies and pregnant mothers. It organizes training, group discussion and seminars for experienced and research-oriented doctors. CU counsels and continuously trains pregnant women, at the same time their work and progress, is evaluated as well as documented, in the form of reports and records. Contacts with 'anganwadi' workers and state government's department (Women and Child Development) are enhanced for the exchange of knowledge. CU makes efficient planning for counselors of centre (Tapovan Research Center Brochure –English, n.d.).

Activities of CU: ‘Vidyaniketan’

It is modern school incarnating the very thought and soul of CU. It aims to provide informal education of students studying from standard first to twelfth. CU would establish and administer such schools at select places in the state. It aims to grant model school status, to government and private schools under public-private partnership model (PPP). ‘Vidyaniketan’ will put into practice the defined philosophy of education based on Indian thinking and lead to ‘Panchkosh’ development of children. CU targets multifaceted development of children in the age group of 3-18 years through model schools. CU plans four kinds of ‘Vidyaniketan. The detail is in Table 6.

Table 6: Types of Vidyaniketan

Type of ‘Vidyaniketan’	Characteristics
Constituted	Established and managed by CU.
Affiliated	Status to be provided to those government, grant-in-aid or private schools, which follow curriculum, examination pattern, co-curricular activities and research work and training programmes.
Central	Established on the campus of CU and would act as flywheel for innovation.
Specialized	It will be one amongst the first (constituted) category, which would cater to the special needs of differently able children or develop unique skills (gifted areas of arts, drama, sports, reserved categories, girls etc).

Source: Children University.

‘Vidyaniketan’ will design syllabi, textbooks, teaching methods, evaluation systems and co-curricular activities at various levels. It will act as resource centre for education and training. As a part of ‘*Centre for Social Consciousness*’ it will take up various projects and conduct programmes in order to develop people and neighbouring communities. It will emphasize learning and teaching of knowledge and cultural heritage of country. It will render experiences of life-oriented aspects such as knowing the essence of self, living together and austerity. It would teach mother tongue (for developing competency) and soft skills (based on local and global requirement), foster relationship among students, teachers, principals, parents and villagers. It will familiarize conventional skills and talents, initiate

communion activities, plan pedagogy based on testing of student aptitude and interests. It strives to utilize available resources, provide counseling to all strata of parents and spread information of CU by organizing visits of schoolchildren around as well as build teacher-student interaction. Special activity calendar of 'Vidyaniketan' are children' fair, science fair, mathematics fair, drama, arts, music, exercise, sports, teacher training workshops in various subjects and personality development programme (Vidyaniketan Brochure-English, n.d.).

7. Conclusion

An attempt is made through this study to explore an emerging concept of green parenting. The concept focuses upon the environmentally conscious ways of raising and feeding babies. This is done through empirically examining the practices and perception of the parents in the Anand and Gandhinagar districts. The findings revealed that the usage of various baby items such as disposable diaper, stroller, ready to eat baby food, canned baby food, baby wipes, bottle feeding and electronic gadgets for kids was quite less among the parents. This suggests that the alternate choices that these parents make for their kids would go a long way in making our environment sustainable. In addition to this, it is found that they prefer using more of organic fruits and vegetables for their kids which is again a wholesome choice. However, the usage of plastic bottles and toys was considerable while swapping of toys and clothes as well as use of toy library was found to be quite less. The respondents held many perceptions in favour of green parenting practices. However, it was observed that the awareness of green parenting concept was quite less among them.

Being a green parent encompasses a lifestyle of making healthy choices that are often organic, natural and low in environmental toxins. Practicing green parenting would result in environmental benefits, social benefits and health benefits. The objective behind exploring this concept is to encourage and inspire parents and communities to improve the lives of their kids through the foods they eat and the world in which they live. Hence, the study recommends that the green parenting practices should be widely publicized through various media, literature, conferences/seminars/workshops etc. A systematic attempt can be made to educate the parents to lead by example in making healthy and organic choices that can go a long way in making our environment sustainable. It is said that the best gifts parents can give to their children aren't more plastic toys and fancy equipment but helping preserve the earth for the next generation.

Green parenting aims to nurture the children in the eco-friendly way. The caselet on CU incorporated in this paper also attempts to link the activities of the

university meant for all round development of children. CU through its versatile research, imparts lot of practical advice to expecting mothers at prenatal stage, to deliver healthy baby, by adhering to the stated norms in food, exercise, reading, listening and watching resourceful literature collected in its library. At postnatal stage, CU further serves as a link between parents and children. It educates the parents in such a way that it provides a roadmap to parents on how to raise their children in various phases of life. Parents learn how to create child conducive environment at home, setting do's and don'ts for their children in a friendly way, explaining the importance of moral values, heroism, etiquettes and various positive qualities of life through rich reservoir of stories and films (uploaded on its websites and library). CU through its rigorous simulation exercises (drawn from research) helps the parents to identify the interest area of their child from early stage, which can be looked upon for career development from the initial stage itself. Linking all schools to CU would turn out be a revolutionary step, in true child development. Admission to CU accredited schools would help in true development and growth of children. It will provide a platform to the child in which he or she wants to excel, rather than being dragged in the so-called system of education.

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