



Rationale of Scholastic Backwardness in Rural Children

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Abstract: Scholastic backwardness is being increasingly recognized as one of the important problems in children which is of concern to both parents and teachers alike (Dorr et al., 1980). It is reported that around 20% of school children have academic backwardness. Academic stress in children can present as physical, behavioral or emotional problems. A sample of 150 Scholastic backward children in the age group of eleven to seventeen years school going children studying in 6th to 12th classes was selected from the government school of selected villages of district Hisar by the researchers. Socioeconomic status developed by Aggrawal et al. (2005) and self structured inventory were used for the study. Results highlighted that majority of the respondents were in lower middle category of socio-economic status followed by poor category. Regarding reasons of academic backwardness, majority of respondents reported that they felt some subjects "hard", inability in giving answers to all questions in the exams and were slow in writing. Familial reasons of scholastic backwardness were lack of education of parents, lack of the expected co-operation from family members, non availability of proper facilities and no inspiration and guidance in home for studies as affirmed by more than fifty percent youth. Lack of concentration and frequent headache were the main health reasons for scholastic backwardness.

Keywords: Academic backwardness, Health reasons, familial reasons, academic reasons

I. Introduction

Education is an important wealth which a person can have in this world. In the modern competitive world in which academic achievements are considered important, scholastic backwardness causes tremendous stress for the students. Scholastic backwardness is one of the commonest educational problems encountered in children and consists of the fact that the child's performance at school falls below the expectations i.e. according to the level of intelligence. The causes for a child being poor in academics are varied and range from physical causes to psychological causes the later being more common. Factors associated with academic backwardness include physical illnesses, below average intelligence, learning disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, psychiatric disorders, family and school factors. Physical symptoms can be in the form of severe pain anywhere in the body (pain disorder). Pain disorder in children usually presents as severe head ache, abdominal pain, back ache, chest pain or pain in the limbs. Association between scholastic difficulties and psychological disturbance has also been recorded (McGee et al. 1986; Rutter et al, 1970; Schachter et al., 1991). In India however, very little work has gone into the understanding of scholastic backwardness, despite the increasing recognition of this area as an important one, at least in clinical practice. Several studies have reported that poor scholastic performance was associated with economic deprivation and disadvantaged family conditions (Davie et al., 1972; Rutter and Madge, 1976; Silva et al., 1985). Academic backwardness contributes to school dropout, especially after the primary school years and should be recognized and remedial measures initiated, in the primary classes itself for best results. At present, children are identified much later and as a result, optimum benefit of remedial education is not obtained. It is important to identify the risk factors for academic backwardness so that these children can be identified early and corrective measures initiated. The aim of the present study was to identify the reasons for academic backwardness in children.

II. Methods and materials

Three villages namely Devan, Kalwas and Muklan of Hisar district of Haryana state were selected under All India Coordinated Research Project. All the Govt. schools from selected villages were surveyed to collect the information of academic backward children on the basis of academic performance of children in the previous class and teacher's assessment /opinion. Thus, a sample of 150 academically backward boys and girls in the age group of 11-17 years, studying in 6th to 12th classes were selected for the present investigation. Self prepared inventory

was used to assess academic backwardness of children. This inventory contains three areas i.e. academic, familial and health, which include statements of various reasons responsible for academic backwardness. It consists of 43 statements. Each area consists of 16, 13 and 14 statements respectively. Socioeconomic status was also judged by Aggrawal *et. al.* (2005) scale. Data was analyzed to obtain frequency distribution and percentages pertaining to various variables.

III. Results and Discussion

Socio-economic status of Respondents

The collected data on socio- economic status were classified into six categories on the basis of the method prescribed by Aggrawal et al. (2005) scale. As far as socio-economic status of the academically backward youth is concerned, results of Table1 revealed that majority of the respondents (74.67%) were in lower middle category of socio-economic status in score range of 31-45 followed by poor (20 %) having scores in the range of 16-30. A very small number (5.33%) of them were from upper middle category of SES

Table 1: Distribution of respondents on socio- economic status n=150

Socio economic status categories	Score	Frequency (%)
Upper High	>76	-
High	61-75	-
Upper middle	46-60	8 (5.33)
Lower middle	31-45	112(74.67)
Poor	16-30	30(20)
Very poor	<15	-

Academic backwardness of children:

To find out the academic backwardness of children, possible reasons in three areas i.e. academic, familial and health were inquired and results of the same are explained in Table 2-4.

Academic reasons: The data furnished in Table 2 regarding reasons pertaining to academic for scholastic backwardness of respondents. A close perusal of data focused that more than 60-70 percent respondents felt some subjects “hard”, inability in giving answers to all questions in the exams and slow in writing. Further, more than 40 percent also reported the reasons that they postponed studies for examination time; they disliked few subjects, unable in continuing the tasks related to study and poor language. Results got support from the accordance of Kapur and Jyothishenoy (1996) and Baker and Cantwell (1985) they also uttered that majority of academic backward found difficulty in reading and writing. A reasonable explanation regarding academic backwardness may be the poor ability of student, lack of practical and practice, improper guidance in junior classes and pressure of household and agriculture work. Further Sharma(1986) also advocated that specific use of praise and criticism by teachers for students is also likely to improve student's performance.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents on academic reason

n=150

S. no.	Academic reasons	Frequency	%
1	Unable to understand what teachers teach in the class.	59	39.3
2	Dislike few subjects that's why lagging behind.	72	48.0
3	Feel some subjects hard.	101	67.3
4	Studies seem to be beyond capacities.	29	19.3
5	Postpone studies for examination time.	74	49.3
6	Feel studies as burden.	19	12.7
7	Unable in continuing the tasks related to study.	65	43.3
8	Unable to answer all questions in the exams.	107	71.3
9	Write slowly.	92	61.3
10	Feel afraid of studies.	12	8.0
11	Teaching methods in class room are boring.	33	22.0
12	School hours seem long	26	17.3
13	Written and oral language is not good.	71	47.3
14	Feel difficulty to understand teacher's language.	12	8.0
15	Teacher's behavior seems to be biased.	33	22.0
16	Classmate's behaviour is not good with me.	18	12.0

Familial reasons:

The data furnished in Table 3 regarding familial reasons for scholastic backwardness of respondents. It is evinced from the results that the main reasons for scholastic backwardness reported by more than 50 percent of the respondents were lack of parent's education, lack of the expected cooperation from family members, non

availability of proper facilities for studies in home and no inspiration and guidance at home. Siblings' disturbance in studies, family members engaged children more in other activities than studies and lack of contribution of family members in their studies were the other reasons reported by more than 30 percent of the respondents. Results are inconsonance with Nair, Paul and Mohan (2003) they also highlighted that daily study pattern, family environment, educational status of parents, personal distraction and attitude towards studies were observed as factors affecting scholastic performance. A plausible reason behind these results may be that a lot of pressures on students due to parents desire that their children climb the ladder of performance to as high as possible.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents on familial reasons

n=150			
Sr	Familial reasons	Frequency	Percentage
1	Home environment is not conducive for studies.	41	27.3
2	Siblings disturb in studies.	53	35.3
3	Family members engaged me more in activities than studies.	49	32.7
4	Have to do other work due to financial constraints.	1	0.7
5	Parents don't want to continue my studies.	2	1.3
6	Family occupation interrupts me in studies.	1	0.7
7	Unable to spare time for studies due to family reasons	13	8.7
8	No contribution of family members in studies.	46	30.7
9	Lack of education and cooperation from family members	93	62.0
10	Family disputes affect studies	10	6.7
11	Unable to study due to ill health of family members.	-	-
12	Lack of proper facilities for studies at home.	80	53.3
13	Lack of inspiration and guidance for studies at home	75	50.0

Health reasons:

It is evident from the data presented in Table 4 that 44 percent of the respondents reported lack of concentration as main health reason that affects studies. More than 20 percent of them also reported that the school is far away from their home due to that they feel tiredness which makes them unable to concentrate on their studies and ultimately they frequently suffer from headache and stomach ache. Results are in corroborating with Saraswati *et al.* (2009), they also explicated in their study that major health problems recorded in adolescents were asthma, joint pains, migraine, acne, dandruff, refractory errors, and heart diseases, menstrual and dental problems which hinder in their studies. The probable elucidation of these results might be the poor health, unhygienic conditions, lack of knowledge, financial conditions and health facilities.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents on health reasons

n=150			
S. no.	Health reasons	Yes	%
1.	Frequent illness	26	17.3
2.	Insufficient food	-	-
3.	Depression	-	-
4.	Fatigue due to school distance	32	21.3
5.	Tiredness affect concentration	30	20.0
6.	Frequent absentia in school due to illness	24	16.0
7.	Frequent headache.	38	25.3
8.	Frequent stomach ache.	32	21.3
9.	Vision problems.	17	11.3
10.	Physical weak	26	17.3
11.	Lack of concentration.	66	44.0
12.	Worries and restlessness.	-	-
13.	Hearing problems	13	8.7

Overall reasons behind the academic backwardness of youth were parental education, occupation and family economic condition. Non availability of members in the family who can help in their education and lack of proper facility in the home/ village were also the important reasons. Other reasons behind this may be the lack of coaching classes of particular subjects in the rural area. More involvement in agriculture, caring of younger siblings and poor health conditions like headache, stomach ache and frequent illness due to their unhygienic environment were also the important reasons responsible for backwardness in studies.

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