

FAMILIAL SITUATION AFFECTING SCHOLASTIC BACKWARDNESS

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Abstract

Scholastic backwardness is a common phenomenon in school going children. The causes are complex and multi-factorial. Social-personal factors, neuro-developmental factors, family and school related factors can be the causes. Scholastic Backwardness affects child's education, achievements, self-esteem, employment and marriage prospects. Academic achievements are considered as a benchmark of child's intelligence. In today's competitive society, scholastic under-achievement of children is a major concern among parents and teachers. Scholastic achievement assumes significance as it is a key factor for personal and professional growth in most cases. Scholastic backwardness is a universal problem which affects academic and social progress of students. It is imperative for caregivers, teachers, parents, psychologists, and pediatricians to identify this condition early and take effective steps to help such students. Many studies have shown that academic achievement is significantly influenced by the parental involvement and cultural milieu of the family. This study aims to reveal how familial situation affects the scholastic backwardness of school children.

Key concepts: Family, scholastic backwardness, academic achievement



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Context of the Study

This study was conducted in connection with the research project of State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Kerala. SCERT Kerala, an institution that takes up research projects of General Education in the state. It has implemented a programme titled *THUNA* to identify the problems of scholastically backward students and to suggest remedies to rectify such problems. This programme was launched in 2017-'18. As the Academic co-ordinator of this programme, I was fortunate of look into the problems of Scholastic backwardness personally.

Need of the Study:

'The level of learning' and the 'ability of learning' are not the cognitive aspects of the child alone. The factors related to the child such as family, school, teaching – learning process and

media play important roles on framing these. Scholastic backwardness happens not only due to the lack of intelligence but also due to many other reasons like ill-health, situations that lead the child to be irregular in school, disfiguration, adverse family environment, emotional stress etc. These problems can be solved by a conscious scientific involvement. It is vital for a teacher to recognize the reason for the scholastic backwardness. Most of the studies show that scholastic backwardness exists in almost 30% of school students (Jayaprakash & Rajendran; 2016). Identification of the scholastic backwardness at an earlier state and taking steps to bring such children to the forefront has not been fully possible by the education system that exists in Kerala. The children with scholastic backwardness remain as a question mark pointing to the schools in the state. These children cannot reach up to the level of other children. It will be advantageous if the children with scholastic backwardness are provided with simplified curriculum and pedagogy rather than asking them to study the concepts which is not digestible for them.

Project entitled *THUNA* for identifying the children with scholastic backwardness and solving their problems was implemented in some schools in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. Two Upper Primary schools in Vitura Grama Panchayat and Four Upper Primary schools in Chirayinkeezh Grama Panchayat were selected for this programme. This programme, was aimed at the intensification of quality education in schools in Kerala.

Qualified Resource teachers were recruited to implement the study.

The Scholastically backward students identified by the concerned school teachers were evaluated by the resource teachers using specially prepared individual evaluation tools. Innate abilities, familial backgrounds, individual character and level of learning were identified. They were rated in a 3 point rating scale as Severe, Moderate and Mild. One to two periods individualized learning experience was provided by Resource teachers based on the language capability of the students.

The language capabilities of students identified were the following

1. Those who do not know the Malayalam alphabets
2. Those who know Malayalam alphabets but cannot build words using alphabets.
3. Those who know words but cannot read fluently.

The first category was given picture cards and enabled them to identify the alphabets.

The second category given picture cards to build the words.

Objectives of the Study:

- To identify the familial problems that leads the children to scholastic backwardness
- To find out the learning environment and facilities in the houses of children with scholastic backwardness

The details of previous studies of similar nature conducted are given below. Krishnakumar, Geetha, Ramakrishnan in 2006 conducted a study on effectiveness of individual education programme. It was found that the children of normal schools who were given individualized education had significant progress in learning. This study highlighted the need of Resource Rooms in schools.

A study on Scholastic Backwardness in Children was conducted by Haneesh, Krishnakumar, Soumya and Riyas in 2013 at Kozhikode Medical College on 110 students in the age group of 6 – 12. The findings of the study revealed that various social and familial problems are the cause for the scholastic backwardness in children.

Yet another study was ‘Reasons for the Scholastic Backwardness of Children having Average Intelligence Level’ conducted by Ashuthosh Santhosh in Bihar in 2012. This study was conducted on 125 children. Various factors like level of intelligence, family environment, social problems, etc. were identified as the reasons for scholastic backwardness.

There are many other reasons behind scholastic backwardness. This paper focuses only on the familial situations affecting scholastic backwardness. The sample is selected only from upper primary class students.

Methodology

Population and sample of the study

All upper primary class students in Kerala who are studying in Govt./Aided Schools in the Vithura and Chirayinkil Panchayaths in Thiruvananthapuram District, comprising 1 in urban, 2 each in rural and coastal and 1 in tribal areas. A total of 339 students were brought under the purview of the study. The details are given below.

Table 1 : Details of children with Scholastic Backwardness.

Name of Gramapanchayath	Name of School	Total Students in School	Teacher reported students with backwardness	Students with scholastic Backwardness (%)
Vithura	GHSS Anappara	85	42	29 (34.11%)
Vithura	Govt. UPS Vithura	779	169	153(19.64%)
Chirayinkizh	Palavila UPS	187	50	38(20.32%)
Chirayinkizh	GUPS Anathalavattom	22	13	11 (50%)
Chirayinkizh	GUPS Chirayinkizh	100	35	23(23%)
Chirayinkizh	GUPS Pillayarkulam	42	30	19(45.23%)
	Total	1215	339	273(22.46%)

Survey method is used for data collection. Percentile method is used for statistical analysis of the experimental data.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 2 : Educational Status of Parents

Educational status of parents	Father	Percentage	Mother	Percentage
Education 1-10	231	84.61	215	78.75
Plus two	22	8.05	32	11.72
Degree	4	1.46	16	5.86
No Education	16	5.86	10	3.66

Table 3 : Occupational status of Parents

Occupation	Coolie		Business		Abroad		Govt.		Others		No occupation		
	F/M	Father	Mother	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
No		205	64	4	1	30	2	2	4	18	29	14	173
%		75.09%	23.44%	1.46%	0.36%	10.98%	0.73%	0.73%	1.46%	6.59%	10.62%	5.12%	63.36%

Table 4 : Reasons for Scholastic Backwardness

Sl No	Reasons	Number	Percentage
1	Alcohol consumption of parents	159	58.24
2	Conflict in family	176	64.46
3	Single parent	46	16.84
4	Violence at home	36	13.18
5	Addiction to Television	215	78.75
6	Lack of Education of parents	26	9.52
7	Poor learning Environment at home	248	90.84
8	Lack of parental care in learning	241	88.27
9	Learning disability in children	10	3.66
10	Behavioral problems	25	9.15

Findings of the study:

The study clearly reveals variegated reasons behind children’s scholastic backwardness. Unsatisfactory learning environment as indicated by Poor learning environment in the table (90.8%) is found to be the chief cause. This is closely followed by the lack of parental care in academic matters (88.27%) which could be due to the poor academic background of the parents as more than 82% (78.75%+3.66%) of the parents have no college education. Addiction to Television programmes(78.75%),emerge as a main concern hindering the scholastic betterment .As reported in many previous studies, the domestic discords (64.46%) is taking its toll, preventing the children enjoying the fruit of knowledge The alcohol consumption of parents (58.24%) also is a large factor affecting the scholastic backwardness of children. .

The study also find that the economic background of the parents have a large bearing on the scholastic performance of children. Majority of the children come from economically backward conditions. The family income depends mainly on the job of the parents. Fathers of 75.09% children are daily-waged laborers and only a meager 0.73% fathers are in Govt. services. Most of the mothers (63.36%) are home makers as indicated by the study. This naturally affects the financial status of the family which in turn, affects the child's scholastic performance. The lack of proper financial support from one's family leads to scholastic backwardness.

Educational implications

The study could identify certain external factors that cause scholastic backwardness. They are mostly related to the home environment. Hence awareness programmes should be organized to educate the parents on proper responsible parenting and parental care. Economic backwardness caused by parents' unemployment and low income were found to be major factors behind scholastic backwardness. Hence various methods to support learning such as notebooks, pens, papers and pencils may be made available to them.

The study revealed that the role of parents is very crucial in reducing scholastic backwardness. Teachers and parents should meet constantly and as a part of it, arrangements should be made to keep parent's diaries in the school itself. Parental awareness programmes should be conducted occasionally. Necessary trainings should be given to Parents to manage children with scholastic backwardness. Convergence of various departments - education, local self government, health- are essential to accomplish this goal.

Conclusion

Factors such as low educational level of parents, substance use, parental separation/divorce and lack of involvement/supervision of parents in the studies adversely affect the scholastic achievement of children. Such children are more often absent from school and positively contribute to scholastic backwardness. Children with scholastic backwardness are usually identified as coming from broken homes/marriages or from homes where frequent fights between parents or domestic violence occur. A healthy family environment is essential for appropriate academic functioning. Relevant measures are to be taken by General Education department to orient the parents using appropriate reference materials. SCERT may take action to develop such materials to support general education department. Both of SCERT

and state agencies should cooperate and device measures and methods to overcome the scholastic backwardness.

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