1   **NATIONAL SCENARIO OF ACADEMIC BACKWARDNESS AMONG SCHOOL GOING RURAL CHILDREN**

2

3   **ABSTRACT**

4   Most of the states in India are facing the problem of academic backwardness especially in rural villages. Academic

5   stresses in children can be present as physical, behavioural or emotional problems. The causes for a rural child being poor in

6   academics are varied and range from physical causes to psychological causes, the later being more common. The present study was

7   carried out **in** order to find out the reasons of academic backwardness among rural school children between the ages of 11-17 years

8   and to provide results-based remedial solutions and interventions. For this purpose, samples were selected from different villages of

9   nine states in India that include: Assam (Jorhat), Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad), Haryana (Hissar), Himachal Pradesh (Palampur), Uttar

10   Pradesh (Pantnagar), Rajasthan (Udaipur), Maharashtra (Parbani), Punjab (Ludhiana), and Uttarakhand (Dharwad). A checklist to

11   assess the academic backwardness among school children was prepared, covering statements on three major aspects: Academic,

12   Health and Familial. Data analysis was done by using frequency, percentage distribution and Chi-square tests. Results revealed that

13   the majority of rural school children from nine states were having problems related to studies due to academic reasons whereas in one

14   state (i.e., Parbhani), children were having problems related to studies due to health reasons.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a universal truth that all children are basically the same but are different up to a limit from each other physically, mentally, educationally and socially. It is therefore, not unusual to find in the classroom, many students who do not benefit much from the usual classroom teaching mostly designed for the normal or average student. It is a known fact that each student of the class brings a unique set of characteristics to the classroom: different background knowledge, intelligence and a unique learning style, a variety of interests and varied parental support and expectations. To anticipate that each student would learn in the same way, at the same speed and using the same material is an unrealistic expectation. Every student possesses different intelligence, interests, learning styles and educational problems that may influence academic achievement. It is an important to investigate these variables as they may affect educational backwardness.

Students generally face various educational problems. Because of these problems, the students may not concentrate upon their studies and become educationally backward. Hence, many problems related to teachers and teaching, social atmosphere, organizational or administration and cultural causes, may be responsible for low academic achievement. Under these circumstances,

30   the students are surrounded by many problems which may be related to poor self-concept, lack of family involvement and

31   encouragement, damaging peer pressure, cultural deprivation, emotional problems and physical illness.

32   The cause of academic backwardness may be anywhere; right from the home to the grading system or even the examiner.

33   Scholastic backwardness contributes to school dropout, especially after the primary school years (Kamat, 1934) and should be

34   recognized and remedial measures initiated, in primary classes for best results. At present, children are identified much later and as a

35   result, optimum benefit of remedial education is not obtained. It is important to identify the risk factors for scholastic backwardness so

36   that these children can be identified early and corrective measures initiated.

37   Children are the future human resource of our country. Academic performance is given prime importance in Indian society

38   since it is an important way to improve one's life. Academic backwardness is one of the commonest educational problems

39   encountered in rural children. It is a big concern among parents and teachers in present day competitive society. It not only results in

40   the child having low self-esteem, but also causes significant stress to the parents. It is usually a reflection of a larger underlying

41   problem in children. Also, a majority of India people still live in villages and so, the issue of rural education in India is of utmost

42   importance. There is a dire need to analyze poor school performance systematically so that proper interventions can be given in this

43   direction. If not worked upon, it will eventually lead to dropout of children.   It is reported that around 20% of school children have

44   scholastic backwardness (Karande & Kulkarni, 2005)

45   Despite governmental efforts, huge investment and many innovative programmes, academic backwardness remains

46   alarmingly high in many states of India. In this context, it is not only the provision of schooling facilities and quality of education, but

47   also other household and social factors that play a major role in influencing the academic backwardness in rural areas. It is very

48   important to understand the family and parental characteristics and various other factors to examine the reasons for this trend.

49   Therefore, it is necessary that not only the teachers but also the parents of the backward students root out the causes of the

50   backwardness and create an environment where such students take interest in educational activities and make their academic

51   achievement high. The aim of the present study was to identify the underlying risk factors for scholastic backwardness in school-

52   going rural children.

53

54   **METHODOLOGY**

55   **Sample Selection**: The total sample from all nine states for the study constituted 1350 school children/students (i.e., 150 children

56   from each center) studying in 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th standard from nine respective zones. These children belong to the age group of 11-

57   17 years and the sample comprised an equal number of boys and girls from each center.

58   **Tool and its description:**

59 A checklist on academic backwardness was prepared by the All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) HDFS Scientists to

60 assess the reasons for academic backwardness among school children. It was comprised of 40 statements which were divided into

61 three major categories: Academics, Health and Familial.

62

63 **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

64 **Table 1: Academic problems among academically backward children of nine states**

S.no	Items	AAU, Jorhat	ANGRAUH	CCSHAU, ...	CSKHPKV Palampur	GBPAUT, ...	MPUAT	MAU, Parbhani	PAU, Ludhiana	UAS, ...	Chi Square	Significance
1.	I don't understand what teachers teach in the class.	20 (16.0)	88 (59.0)	59 (39.3)	80 (53.33)	86 (57.0)	35 (23.3)	106 (70.66)	25 (16.66)	51 (34.0)	191	$p < 0.01$
2.	I don't like few subjects; that's why I am lagging behind.	65 (52.0)	108 (72.0)	72 (48.0)	41 (27.33)	70 (47.0)	70 (46.6)	100 (66.66)	50 (33.33)	75 (50.0)	102	$p < 0.01$
3.	I feel that some subjects are hard.	76	102	101	65	96	107	101	58	98	67.	$p < 0.01$

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5

#	Statement										Total	p
		(60.8)	(68.0)	(67.3)	(43.33)	(64.0)	(71.3)	(67.33)	(38.66)	(65.3)	5	
4.	Studies seem to be beyond to my capacities.	12 (9.6)	95 (63.0)	29 (19.3)	82 (54.67)	65 (43.0)	50 (33.3)	112 (74.66)	6 (4.0)	46 (30.7)	291	p<0.01
5.	I postpone studies for examination time.	29 (23.2)	21 (14.0)	74 (49.3)	63 (42.0)	40 (27.0)	110 (73.3)	30 (20.00)	10 (6.66)	57 (38.0)	228	p<0.01
6.	I feel that studies are a burden.	28 (22.4)	92 (61.0)	19 (12.7)	35 (23.33)	27 (18.0)	65 (43.3)	102 (68.00)	9 (6.0)	38 (25.3)	260	p<0.01
7.	I am unable to continue the tasks related to study.	24 (19.2)	99 (66.0)	65 (43.3)	69 (46.0)	62 (41.0)	95 (63.3)	115 (76.66)	30 (20.0)	44 (29.3)	195	p<0.01
8.	I am unable to give answers to all questions in the exams.	82 (65.6)	103 (69.0)	107 (71.3)	42 (28.0)	82 (55.0)	34 (22.6)	102 (68.00)	41 (27.33)	83 (55.3)	187	p<0.01

No.	Statement											
		)						)	)			
9.	I write slowly.	57 (45.6)	107 (71.0)	92 (61.3)	53 (35.33)	82 (55.0)	26 (17.3)	95 (63.33)	38 (25.33)	91 (60.7)	167	p<0.01
10.	I am afraid of studies.	10 (8.0)	89 (59.0)	12 (8.0)	38 (25.33)	33 (22.0)	21 (14.0)	102 (68.00)	8 (5.33)	36 (24.0)	314	p<0.01
11.	I find teaching methods in the classroom are boring.	10 (8.0)	57 (38.0)	33 (22.0)	18 (12.0)	34 (22.0)	24 (16.0)	126 (84.00)	12 (8.0)	31 (20.7)	347	p<0.01
12.	School hours seem long to me.	29 (23.2)	72 (48.0)	26 (17.3)	53 (35.33)	39 (26.0)	36 (24.0)	75 (50.00)	24 (16.0)	32 (21.3)	92.1	p<0.01
13.	My written and oral language is not good.	40 (32.0)	106 (71.0)	71 (47.3)	41 (27.33)	81 (55.0)	46 (30.6)	115 (76.66)	26 (17.33)	60 (40.0)	194	p<0.01

No.	Statement											
14.	I feel it is difficult to understand my teacher's language.	14 (11.2)	48 (32.0)	12 (8.0)	58 (38.67)	42 (28.0)	15 (10.0)	74 (49.33)	9 (6.0)	49 (32.7)	157	$p<0.01$
15.	My teacher's behaviour seems to be biased.	44 (35.2)	23 (15.0)	33 (22.0)	19 (12.67)	31 (21.0)	18 (12.0)	48 (32.00)	20 (13.33)	31 (20.7)	49	$p<0.01$
16.	Behaviour of my classmates is not good with me.	14 (11.2)	27 (18.0)	18 (12.0)	75 (50.0)	66 (44.0)	10 (6.6)	81 (54.00)	26 (17.33)	31 (20.7)	202	$p<0.01$

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

a. Academic reasons: With regard to academic reasons, Table 1 revealed significant difference among all centers with respect to various aspects of academic reasons. More than half of the children in Hyderabad (59%), Palampur (53.33%), Pantnagar (57%) and Parbhani (70.66%) showed difficulty in understanding the subjects. Respondents from Jorhat (60.8%), Hyderabad (68%), Hissar (67.3%), Pantnagar (64%), Udaipur (71.3%), Parbhani (67.33%) and Dharwad (65.3%) felt some subjects are hard to understand. High percentages of children reported an inability to answer the questions in the exams from six centers: viz Jorhat, Hyderabad,

72 Hissar, Pantnagar, Parbhani and Dharwad. More than fifty percent of the respondents from Hyderabad, Hissar, Pantnagar, Parbhani

73 and Dharwad reported being slow in writing as a reason for academic backwardness. A majority (73.3%) of respondent from Udaipur,

74 Parbhani (84%), and Hyderabad (71%) reported studies were a burden, and boring teaching methods in the classroom and poor written

75 and spoken language respectively were obstacles for them. The child is called backward not only because he/she is a slow learner but

76 also he/she is not using an effective learning style. Owing to this, the child may forget lessons at examinations and show low

77 academic achievement and therefore be seen as a backward student. According to Dunn and Dunn (1986), multi-style learners tend to

78 achieve more and score better than learners with one or two learning styles. As such, it is inferred that learning styles do make an

79 impact on the students' overall academic achievement. Nair et al., (2003) in a similar study found that daily study patterns, family

80 environment, education status of parents, personal distractions and attitude towards studies were observed as factors affecting

81 scholastic performance.

82 **Table 2: Familial problems among academically backward children of nine states**

S.no	Items	AAU, Jorhat (N=125)	ANGRAU, Hyderabad	CCSHAU, Hisar	CSKHPKV, Palampur	GBPAUT, Pantnagar	MPUAT, Udaipur	MAU, Parbhani	PAU, Ludhiana	UAS,	Chi square	Significance
1.	My home environment is not conducive for studies.	36 (28.8)	83 (55.0)	41 (27.3)	39 (26.0)	65 (43.0)	9 (6.0)	12 (8.00)	31 (20.66)	28 (18.7)	154	p<0.01
2.	My siblings disturb me in my studies.	31 (24.8)	57 (38.0)	53 (35.3)	32 (21.33)	22 (15.0)	34 (22.6)	104 (69.33)	23 (15.33)	19 (12.7)	186	p<0.01
3.	My family members engage me more in activities other than studies.	7 (5.6)	52 (35.0)	49 (32.7)	30 (20.0)	36 (24.0)	45 (30.0)	129 (86.00)	30 (20.00)	30 (20.0)	281	p<0.01
4.	I have to do other work due to financial constraints.	13 (10.4)	33 (22.0)	1 (0.7)	29 (19.33)	53 (35.0)	08 (5.3)	94 (62.66)	27 (18.00)	29 (19.3)	239	p<0.01
5.	Actually my parents don't want me to continue my studies.	4 (3.2)	33 (22.0)	2 (1.3)	30 (20.0)	42 (28.0)	00	75 (50.00)	6 (4.0)	23 (15.3)	232	p<0.01
6.	My family occupation interrupts me in my studies.	19 (15.2)	32 (21.0)	1 (0.7)	37 (24.67)	27 (18.0)	22 (14.6)	90 (60.00)	20 (13.33)	25 (16.7)	177	p<0.01

10

#	Statement											p
7.	Due to some family reasons I can't spare time for studies.	23 (18.4)	32 (21.0)	13 (8.7)	52 (34.67)	73 (47.0)	41 (27.3)	115 (76.66)	36 (24.0)	40 (26.7)	221	p<0.01
8.	There is no contribution of my family members in my studies.	18 (14.4)	72 (48.0)	46 (30.7)	79 (52.67)	65 (43.0)	58 (38.6)	135 (90.00)	21 (14.0)	36 (24.0)	269	p<0.01
9.	Due to lack of education, the expected cooperation from family members is lacking.	38 (30.4)	77 (51.0)	93 (62.0)	57 (38.0)	79 (53.0)	52 (34.6)	125 (83.33)	27 (18.0)	50 (33.3)	185	p<0.01
10.	My studies are affected due to family disputes.	23 (18.4)	21 (14.0)	10 (6.7)	30 (20.0)	49 (33.0)	05 (3.3)	85 (56.66)	22 (14.66)	34 (22.7)	183	p<0.01
11.	I can't study because of ill health of family members.	31 (24.8)	11 (7.0)	-	42 (28.0)	55 (37.0)	20 (13.3)	50 (33.33)	20 (13.33)	23 (15.3)	117	p<0.01
12.	Proper facilities for studies are not available in my home.	32 (25.6)	28 (19.0)	80 (53.3)	48 (32.0)	76 (51.0)	26 (17.3)	110 (73.33)	25 (16.66)	29 (19.3)	219	p<0.01
13.	There is no inspiration and guidance in my home for studies.	23 (18.4)	82 (55.0)	75 (50.0)	73 (48.67)	54 (37.0)	49 (32.6)	135 (90.00)	25 (16.66)	30 (20.0)	265	p<0.01

83 Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

84

85 ➤ **Familial reasons:** Table 2 throws light on the familial reasons of academically backward children. All centers differ significantly

86   in various aspects of familial reasons. About 83.33 percent, 62 percent, 53 percent, and 51 per cent of respondent from Parbhani,

87   Hissar, Pantnagar and Hyderabad respectively reported lack of education and lack of cooperation from family members as the

88   cause of academic backwardness. A proper facility for studies in the home was reported by participants in Hisar (53.3%), Pantnagar

89   (51%) and Parbhani (73.33%) centers. In Hyderabad, Hisar and Parbani (55.50 and 90% respectively), children reported no

90   inspiration and guidance in the home for studies, which was another reason of academic backwardness. Small percentages of these

91   children reported not having a conducive environment at home, distractions by siblings, involvement in household tasks, financial

92   crisis and financial disputes, poor family support and ill health of family members as causes for academic backwardness.

93 **Table 3: Health problems among academically backward children of nine states**

S.no	Items	AAU, Jorhat	ANGRAU, Hyderabad	CCSHAU, Hisar	CSKHPKV, Palampur	GBPAUT, Pantnagar	MPUAT, Udaipur	MAU, Parbhani	PAU, Ludhiana	UAS, Dharwad	Chi Square	Significance
1	My frequent illness hinders my studies.	44 (35.2)	17 (11.0)	26 (17.3)	69 (46.0)	73 (47.0)	4 (2.6)	25 (16.66)	21 (14.0)	33 (22.0)	169	p<0.01
2.	Sufficient food is not available for me.	21 (16.8)	21 (14.0)	-	58 (38.66)	47 (31.0)	-	30 (20.00)	7 (4.66)	15 (10.0)	169	p<0.01
3.	Due to depression I am unable to study properly.	36 (28.8)	33 (22.0)	-	81 (54.00)	67 (44.0)	1 (0.6)	100 (66.66)	13 (8.66)	39 (26.0)	327	p<0.01
4.	My school is far from my home so I get tired.	56 (44.8)	24 (16.0)	32 (21.3)	61 (40.67)	65 (43.0)	60 (40.0)	105 (70.00)	33 (22.0)	48 (32.0)	138	p<0.01
5.	Often I feel tried so I am unable to concentrate on my studies.	38 (30.4)	33 (22.0)	30 (20.0)	51 (34.0)	56 (37.0)	40 (26.6)	125 (83.33)	37 (24.66)	48 (32.0)	195	p<0.01
6.	My frequent absentia in school because of illness affects my	34 (27.2)	19 (13.0)	24 (16.0)	39 (26.0)	49 (33.0)	1 (0.6)	75 (50.00)	15 (10.0)	38 (25.3)	145	p<0.01

No.	Statement										Total	
	studies.											
7.	I frequently suffer from headache.	29 (23.2)	17 (11.0)	38 (25.3)	97 (64.67)	46 (31.0)	2 (1.3)	79 (52.66)	19 (12.66)	45 (30.0)	239	$p<0.01$
8.	I frequently suffer from stomachache.	18 (14.4)	23 (15.0)	32 (21.3)	34 (22.67)	46 (31.0)	4 (2.6)	65 (43.33)	17 (11.33)	24 (16.0)	104	$p<0.01$
9.	I am unable to study properly because of vision problems.	19 (15.2)	13 (9.0)	17 (11.3)	21 (14.0)	41 (28.0)	0	35 (23.33)	11 (7.33)	21 (14.0)	63	$p<0.01$
10.	I feel physically weak which affects my studies.	20 (16.0)	15 (18.0)	26 (17.3)	24 (16.0)	52 (35.0)	0	90 (60.00)	15 (10.0)	19 (12.7)	238	$p<0.01$
11.	My studies are affected due to lack of concentration.	53 (42.4)	67 (45.0)	66 (44.0)	42 (28.0)	59 (39.0)	34 (22.6)	115 (76.66)	17 (11.33)	63 (42.0)	167	$p<0.01$
12.	My studies are affected because of my worries and restlessness.	19 (15.2)	72 (48.0)	-	74 (49.33)	60 (40.0)	12 (8.0)	95 (63.33)	23 (15.33)	34 (22.7)	271	$p<0.01$
13.	I am unable to hear properly in the classroom.	10 (8.0)	17 (11.0)	13 (8.7)	23 (15.33)	37 (25.0)	0	25 (16.66)	14 (9.33)	45 (30.0)	83	$p<0.01$

94   Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages.

95

96 ➤ **Health reasons:** With regard to health reasons, Table 3 showed all centers differ significantly in different aspects of health reasons.

97 Percentage distribution showed tiredness due to the long distances to schools reported by more than one third of respondents from

98 Jorhat (44.8%), Palampur (40.67%), Pantnagar (43%), Udaipur (40%), Parbhani (70%) and Dharwad (32%). More than half

99 (64.67% & 52.66 %) of the respondents from Palampur and Parbhani respectively reported frequent headaches. Sixty per cent of

100 children from Parbhani center reported that physical weakness was a cause which interferes in their studies. Many centers (e.g.,

101 Jorhat, Hyderabad, Hissar, Parbhani and Dharwad) had more than one third of the children who reported having problems with

102 concentration. Saraswati et al., (2009) also recognized in their study that social influence, study habits. and health factors are the

103 reasons affecting scholastic performance of adolescents. Factors responsible for backwardness are from their family environment,

104 school environment and their own health. So it is evident that social and family factors have a significant influence on the academic

105 functioning of children (Haneesh, Krishna, Sukumaran, & Riyaz, 2013).

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107

108   Table 4 depicts overall reasons of academic backwardness of rural school children. Major causes of academic backwardness were

109   reported as academic (39.21 %) followed by health (30.56 %) and familial (24.36 %) reasons. A similar trend was observed across all

110   centers except Parbhani. In Parbhani, health (64.56 %) is the major cause followed by academic (61.83 %) and familial (45.9 %)

111   reasons. Academic underachievement of children is a big concern among parents and teachers in the present day competitive society.

112   Previous studies similarly identified factors associated with scholastic backwardness to include physical illnesses, below average

113   intelligence, learning disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, psychiatric disorders, and family and school factors

114   (Mogasale, 2012).

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116

117   Table 4: **Overall reasons for academic backwardness of school children**

S.no	Category	AAU, Jorhat	ANGRAU, Hyderabad	CCSHAU, Hisar	CSKHPKV, Palampur	GBPAUT, Pantnagar	MPUAT, Udaipur	MAU, Parbhani	PAU, Ludhiana	UAS, Dharwad	Total
1.	**Academic**	554	1237	823	832	936	762	1484	392	853	7873

		(62.95)	(51.54)	(34.29)	(34.67)	(39.00)	(31.75)	(61.83)	(16.33)	(35.54)	(39.21)
2.	**Health**	298 (41.68)	613 (31.44)	464 (23.79)	578 (29.64)	696 (35.69)	369 (18.92)	1259 (64.56)	313 (16.05)	396 (20.31)	4986 (30.56)
3.	**Familial**	397 (51.56)	371 (17.67)	304 (14.48)	674 (32.10)	698 (33.24)	158 (7.52)	964 (45.90)	242 (11.52)	472 (22.48)	4280 (24.36)

118   Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages.
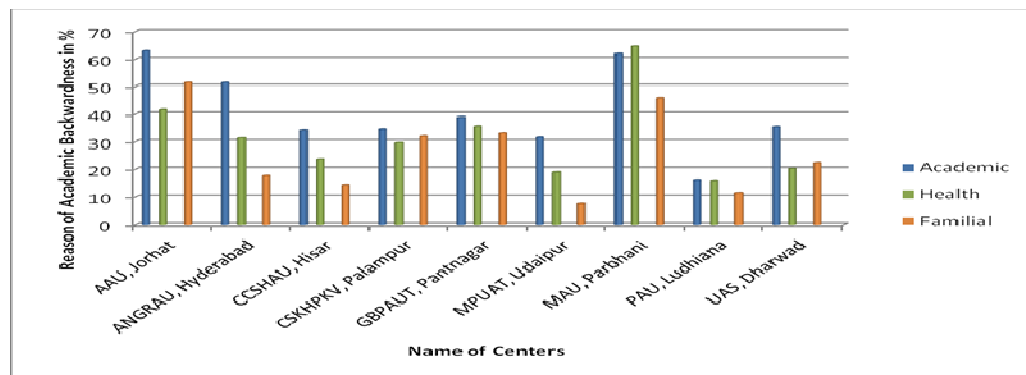
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Fig 1: Overall reason of academic backwardness of school children

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126   It can be concluded from the results that the leading cause for academic backwardness was related to academics. The reason

127   may be age of the respondents where very few of them considered study as a major concern or priority basis in comparison

128   with physical appearance, entertainment, etc. It may also be that the rural children are more confident with their vocation of

129   agriculture. Very few of them are exposed with the various job avenues available to them. When we examine the familial

130   reasons, it can be stated that illiteracy, unawareness, ignorance and scarcity of resources in the family are the key challenges

131   faced by students. Looking into health causes for academic backwardness, inadequate food, nutritional insecurity and poor

132   access to health facilities are evident factors. Despite several governmental efforts, wide gaps continue to persist in rural

133 education. Every child is a social asset; positive channelization of their competencies is a responsibility of all of us.

134 Unrecognized and unresolved scholastic backwardness has a lifelong impact on the child and adolescent, affecting school

135 completion, higher education, interpersonal relationships, prospects for employment, and marriage among other endeavours.

136 The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2016, showed that even though the number of rural students attending schools

137 is rising, more than half of the students in fifth grade are unable to read a second grade textbook and are not able to solve

138 simple mathematical problems.

139

140 **CONCLUSION:**

141 From the above study, it has been concluded that on a national level, not much is done to accommodate educationally backward

142 children. No special services are provided nationwide, nor are the services provided at a state or district level. It is up to the teachers

143 and parents to provide the help needed for educationally backward students to progress. There is an urgent need of special education

144 for the backward students. Such services may help in preventing huge wastage and stagnation and check the growth in numbers of

145 backward students. It is the duty of the government, society and educational institutions of this democratic nation, to ensure that such

146 children should be identified and then proper education and guidance should be provided to them according to their needs. Hence, any

147 child with difficulty in reading or arithmetic skills or deterioration in academic performance should be evaluated and managed

148 scientifically at the earliest possible moment. Improvement in academic performance will help the child to excel in future life. This

149   study will the help to identify problems of academic backward students and the relationship between these problems and academic

150   achievement so that program formulations and implementation of remedial programs can be organized in efforts to help these students

151   build a strong personality and more positive future prospects.

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