

CAUSES OF ACADEMIC BACKWARDNESS OF RURAL SCHOOL CHILDREN IN SELECTED STATES OF INDIA: AN EVALUATION

ABSTRACT

Most of the states in India are facing the problems of academic backwardness especially in rural villages. Academic stress in children can be present as physical, behavioural or emotional problems. The causes for a rural child being poor in academics are varied and range from physical causes to psychological causes the later being more common. Present study was carried out in order to find out the reasons of academic backwardness among rural school children between the age group of 11-17 years and to provide results based remedial solutions and interventions. For this purpose, samples were selected from different villages of nine states in India which includes Assam (Jorhat), Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad), Haryana (Hissar), Himachal Pradesh (Palampur), Uttar Pradesh (Pantnagar), Rajasthan (Udaipur), Maharashtra (Parbani), Punjab (Ludhiana), Uttarakhand (Dharwad). The academic achievement of school children was used and covers three major aspects on health, academics and family. Data analysis was done using frequency, percentage distribution and Chi-square test. Results revealed that in the eight states, the academic factor was the cause of the students' poor achievement while in one state, Parbhani, health is the risk factor to the students' academic achievement.

KEYWORDS: Academic backwardness , Rural, School children

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 averages. 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 which may influence his academic achievement. Sharma et al. (2011) defined academic achievement as the outcome of the training imparted to students by the teacher in school situation. Halawah (2006) opined that academic achievement is accomplished by actual execution of class work in the school setting. It is typically assessed by using teacher's ratings and performance; it is multidimensional; it is intricately related to human growth and cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development; it reflects the whole child; it is not related to a single instance, but occurs across time and levels, through a student's life to his/her working life. It is an important fact that these variables definitely affect the 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 environmental,

organizational or administration and cultural causes, may be responsible for low academic achievement. Under these circumstances, the students are surrounded by many problems which may be related to poor self-concept, lack of family involvement and encouragement, damaging peer pressure, cultural deprivation, emotional problems and physical illness.

The cause of low academic achievement may be anywhere; right from the home to the grading system or even the examiner. Unrecognized and unmediated scholastic backwardness has a lifelong impact on the child affecting school completion or higher education, interpersonal relations etc. and it ultimately results in school dropout. Early identification, early intervention and adequate remediation are important and can make a big difference to the child's future.

Children are the future Human resource of our country. Academic performance is given prime importance in Indian society as it is an important way to **elevate** in one's life. Academic backwardness is one of the commonest educational problems encountered in rural children. It is a big concern among parents and teachers in present day competitive society. It not only results in the child having a low self-esteem, but also causes significant stress to the parents. It is usually a reflection of a larger underlying problem in children. Also, majority of India still lives in villages and so, the issue of rural education in India is of utmost importance. There is a dire need to analyze poor school performance systematically so that proper interventions can be given in this direction. If not worked upon, it will eventually leads to dropout of children. It is reported that around 20% of school children have scholastic backwardness (Karande & Kulkarni, 2005). In the words of Cyril Burt "An academically backward child is one who in the middle of the school career is unable to do the work of the class below that which is normal for his age. Academic backwardness can be defined as a school achievement below the expected level for a given age, cognitive skills and schooling.

Despite of governmental efforts, huge investment and many innovative programmes, academic problems which ultimately leads to dropout of children from school remains alarming high in many states of India. In this context, it is not only the provision of schooling facilities and quality of education, but also other household and social factors play a major role in influencing the academic achievements in rural areas. It is very important to understand the family and parental characteristics and various other factors to examine the reasons for the same. Therefore, it is necessary that not only the teachers but also the parents of the backward students must root out the reasons of the academic constraints and create such type of environment where such students take interest in educational activities and make their academic achievement high.

Objective:

The objective of the study was to identify the reasons for academic backwardness among school going rural children in selected states of India.

Hypothesis: Familial factors leads to major reason of academic backwardness among school going rural children followed by academic and health reasons.

METHODOLOGY

- 1. Sample Selection:** A total of 1350 school children from the nine states of India scored C, D and E grades were randomly selected. Each centre is represented by 150 school children belonging to the 7th -10th standards or grades and between the age group of 11-17 years of age.

The grading system followed in schools is as follows:

	Grade	Percentage %
1.	A	Above 85
2.	B	71-85
3.	C	51-70
4.	D	31-50
5.	E	6-30

2. Tool and its description:

Socio-economic status scale:

1. A standardized Socio-economic status scale by Aggrawal et.al (2005) was used to assess the family background information of students which includes educational and occupational status of parents, number of siblings, material possession, kind of locality, presence of farm animals, land holdings, number of earning members in the family etc.
2. A checklist on “Reasons of Academic Backwardness” was prepared by All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) HDFs Scientists to assess the causes for academic backwardness among school children. It comprised of 40 statements with yes or no options which were majorly divided into three categories: Academics, Health and Familial.

3. Procedure of data collection

The tools were administered on the subjects in the presence of the investigator after getting consent from school authorities. To respond, the subjects were required to tick mark any one alternative from the choices given, which they found most appropriate in their cases. Although clear instructions were given for each tool yet, the investigator always remained available for further clarifications. The respondents were requested to give accurate information and the assurance for the confidentiality of the information was given.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

S.no	Items	AAU, Jorhat (N=125)	ANGRAUH ydarabad	CCSHAU, Hisar	CSKHPKV Palampur	GBPAUT, Pantnagar	MPUAT Udaipur	MAU, Parbhani	PAU, Ludhiana	UAS, Dharwad	Ci Square
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
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
3.	I feel that some subjects are hard.	76 (60.8)	102 (68.0)	101 (67.3)	65 (43.33)	96 (64.0)	107 (71.3)	101 (67.33)	58 (38.66)	98 (65.3)	67.5
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
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
6.	I feel that studies are 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
7.	I am unable in continuing 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
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
9.	I write slowly.	57	107	92	53	82	26	95	38	91	167

		(45.6)	(71.0)	(61.3)	(35.33)	(55.0)	(17.3)	(63.33)	(25.33)	(60.7)	
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
11.	I find teaching methods in class room 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
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
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
14.	I feel difficulty 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
15.	My teacher's behavior seems to be bias.	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
16.	Behavior 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

88 **Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage**

89 Significant at 0.01% level of significance

90a. **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. More number of children reported inability to answer the questions in the exams from six centers viz Jorhat, Hyderabad, Hissar, Pantnagar, parbhani and Dharwad. Majority (73.3%) of respondent from Udaipur, 84 per cent from Parbhani, 71 per cent from Hyderabad reported studies as burden, boring teaching methods in class room and poor written and spoken language respectively. The child is called backward

97 not only because he is a slow learner but also he is not using an effective learning style. Owing to it, he may forget his lessons at
98 examinations that show his low academic achievement and turned him into backward student. According to Dunn and Dunn (1986),
99 multi-style learners tend to achieve more and score better than learners with one or two learning styles. As such, it is inferred that
100 learning styles do make an impact on the students' overall academic achievement. Respondents from Hyderabad (63%) and Parbhani
101 (74.66%) reported that studies seem to be beyond their capacities. Respondents from Hyderabad (66%), Udaipur (63.33%) and
102 Parbhani (76.66%) stated that they are unable to continue the tasks related to study such as daily home-work, revision of what is being
103 taught in class. Highest number of respondents from Udaipur (73.33%) stated that they have tendency to postpone studies during
104 examination time. It can be said that there are many direct or indirect factors which affects the overall academic performance of
105 children. Nair et al.(2003) in a similar study found that daily study patterns, family environment, education status of parents, personal
106 distractions and attitude towards studies were observed as factors affecting academic performance. Annual Status of Education Report
107 (ASER) 2016, showed that even though the number of rural students attending schools is rising but more than half of the students in
108 fifth grade are unable to read a second grade text book and are not able to solve simple mathematical problems.

Table 2: Familial problems that affect the academic performance of the students in the rural villages in the 9 states of India

S.no	Items	AAU, Jorhat (N=125)	ANGRAU, Hyderabad	CCSHAU, Hisar	CSKHPKV, Palampur	GBPAUT, Pantnagar	MPUAT, Udaipur	MAU, Parbhani	PAU, Ludhiana	UAS, Dharwad	Chi Square
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)	15 4
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)	18 6
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)	28 1
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)	23 9
5.	Actually my parents don't want that I should 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)	23 2
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)	17 7
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)	22 1
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)	26 9
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)	18 5
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)	18 3
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)	11 7
12.	Proper facilities for studies are not	32	28	80	48	76	26	110	25	29	21

	available in my home.	(25.6)	(19.0)	(53.3)	(32.0)	(51.0)	(17.3)	(73.33)	(16.66)	(19.3)	9
1.	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)	26 5

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Significant at 0.01% level of significance

Familial reasons: Table 2 throws light on the familial reasons of academically backward children. All centers differ significantly in various aspects of familial reasons. About 83.33 percent, 62 percent, 53 percent and 51 per cent of respondent from Parbhani, Hissar, Pantnagar and Hyderabad respectively reported lack of education and lack of cooperation from family member as the cause of academic backwardness. A proper facility for studies are not available in home was reported by Hisar (53.3%), Pantnagar (51%) and Parbhani (73.33%) center. Hyderabad, Hisar and Parbani (55,50 and 90% respectively) children reported no inspiration and guidance in home for studies was another reason of academic backwardness. Very little percentage of children reported that they are not getting conducive environment for studies at home, distractions by siblings, involvement in household tasks, financial crisis and financial disputes, poor family support and ill health of family members as a cause for academic backwardness. Almost fifty percent of the respondents from Udaipur stated that school hours seem be long which might hamper their studies. Majority of respondents reported that they don't have any difficulty in understanding Teacher's language and stated that behavior of Teacher's is not biased with them. Few respondents from Jorhat, Hyderabad, Parbhani and Dharwad reported that they don't like few subjects and that's why they are lagging behind in those subjects. Lower education status of the father and unhappy family were found to predict poor scholastic performance in adolescents in a study from Kerala (Nair MK, Paul MK, Padmamohan J., 2003). Topor. DR. (2010) also found in similar studies that academic achievement is significantly influenced by the socio-economic and cultural milieu of the family and parental involvement in school activities. . It was reported that disturbing factors at home including quarrels between parents and siblings, broken homes, substance abuse in parents and being burdened by domestic responsibilities were more in low achievers compared to high achievers (Florence MD, Asbridge M, Veugelers PJ., 2008). Obeta (2014) in his study found that home environment and socio-economic status of student's family influences the academic performance of children. Home environment includes parenting style, parental expectations, parental involvement in the child's school work and the way in which the child spends time after school affects the child's academic achievement to a large extent.

Table 3: Health problems that affect the academic performance of the students in the rural villages in the 9 states of India

S.no	Items	AAU, Jorhat (N=125)	ANGRAU, Hyderabad	CCSHAU, Hisar	CSKHPKV, Palampur	GBPAUT, Pantnagar	MPUAT, Udaipur	MAU, Parbhani	PAU, Ludhiana	UAS, Dharwad	Chi Square
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
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
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
4.	As 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
5.	Often I feel tired 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
6.	My frequent absentia in school because of illness affects my studies.	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
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
8.	I frequently suffer from stomach ache.	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
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
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
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
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

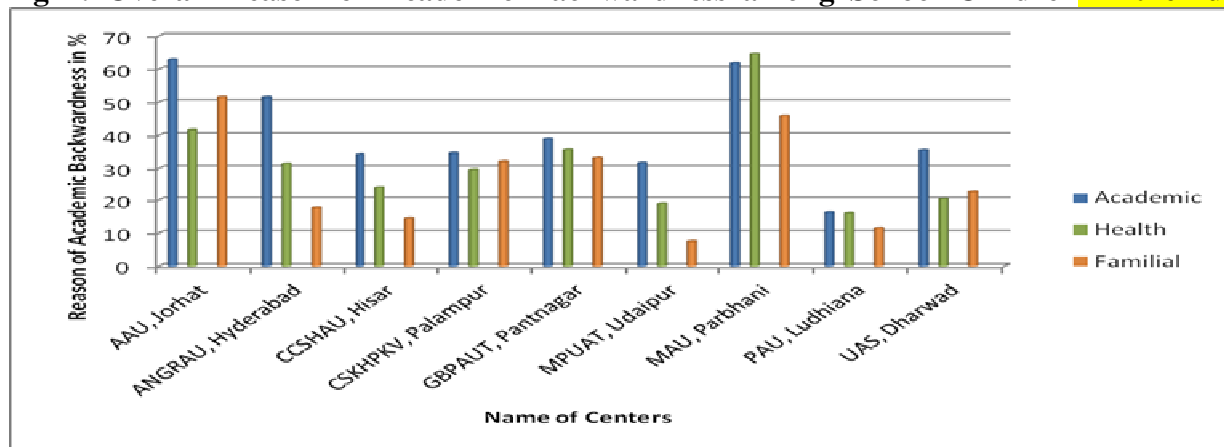
13.	I am unable to hear properly in the class room.	10 (8.0)	17 (11.0)	13 (8.7)	23 (15.33)	37 (25.0)	0	25 (16.66)	14 (9.33)	45 (30.0)	83
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Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Significant at 0.01% level of significance

Health reasons: With regard to health reasons, table 3 showed all centers differ significantly in different aspects of health reasons. Percentage distribution showed tiredness due to long distance of school reported by more than one third of respondent from Jorhat (44.8%), Palampur (40.67%), Pantnagar (43%), Udaipur (40%), Parbhani (70%) and Dharwad (32%). More than half (64.67 & 52.66 %) of the respondent from Palampur and Parbhani respectively reported frequent head ache. 60 per cent of children from Parbhani center told that physical weakness as a cause which interferes in their studies. Many centers e.g Jorhat, Hyderabad, Hissar, Parbhani and Dharwad, more than one third of the children reported about lack of concentration. Saraswati et al. (2009) also recognized in their study the social influence, study habits and health factors are the reasons affecting scholastic performance of adolescents. Factors responsible for the backwardness are from their family environment, school environment as well as their own health. So it is evident that social and family factors have a significant influence on the academic functioning of children (Haneesh K.Krishna kumar.p. Sukumaran.S, Riyaz. A., 2013). School absenteeism was reported to be greater in students whose fathers were laborers or self-employed and whose mothers had lower educational levels (Saraswati S, Rao C, Hegde R., 2009). This may contribute to lower academic performance in children. Apart from socioeconomic factors and parental education, other factors in the family environment also influence academic functioning of children. A healthy family environment fosters academic achievement. **Mogasale** (2012) also found that factors associated with scholastic backwardness include physical illnesses, below average intelligence, learning disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, psychiatric disorders, family and school factors.

157 **Fig 1: Overall Reason of Academic Backwardness among School Children in the rural villages in the 9 states of India**



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159
160 Fig 1 depicts overall reason of academic backwardness of rural school children. Major causes of academic backwardness was
161 academic (39.21 %) followed by health (30.56 %) and familial (24.36 %) reasons. Similar trend was observed across all eight centers
162 except Parbhani. In Parbhani health (64.56 %) is the major cause followed by academic (61.83 %) and familial (45.9 %) reason.

163 The reason may be age of the respondents where very few of them considered study as major concern on priority basis in
164 comparison with physical appearance, entertainments etc. Specially, the Indian rural children are more confident with their
165 vocation of agriculture. Very few of them are exposed with the various job avenues available to them. When we peep into the
166 familial reasons, it can be stated that illiteracy, unawareness, ignorance and scarcity of resources in the rural families are the
167 key issues for academic problems. Looking into health cause for academic backwardness, inadequate food, nutritional
168 insecurity and poor access to health facilities are the answer to the questions. Despite several governmental efforts wide gap
169 continues to persist in Indian rural education. Every child is a social asset and positive channelization of their competencies is
170 responsibility of all of us.

171 **CONCLUSION:**

172 It can be concluded that causes of low academic achievement is due to academic reasons followed by health and familial.
173 There is a dire need to create awareness among children towards importance of education. Also, it is the responsibility of the teachers,
174 parents and society as a whole to provide the help and necessary guidance and inspiration needed for educationally poor children to
175 progress.

Recommendation:

This study throws light on the problems of academically poor students and its relation with academic achievement. Various program formulations and implementation of remedial program can be organized for such students which may help them for building a strong personality and future orientation. There is an urgent need of special education and attention for the academically poor students. It will help in saving huge wastage and stagnation and check the growth of students lacking behind in studies. It is the duty of the government, society and educational institutions of this democratic nation, to ensure that such children should be identified and then proper education and guidance should be provided to them according to their needs. Hence, any child with difficulty in reading or arithmetic skills or deterioration in academic performance should be evaluated and managed scientifically at the earliest. Improvement in academic performance will help the child to excel in future life.

Implications of the study:

This study will help policy makers and Human Development professionals to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying academic problems among rural students. It would be helpful for all the academicians, educators, Teachers, Counselors and other professionals dealing with rural Indian school students. This study will serve as useful reference material for future studies in this field. The data of the study would be highly useful for the teacher's and parent's to improve academic achievements of school student's

Consent: Consent from school authorities was taken for data collection.

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