

Amenable Factors responsible for Poor School Performance of Students: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Poor school performance is a common problem faced by schools, parents and physicians. Poor school performance (PSP) can be defined as a school achievement below the expected for a given age, cognitive skills, and schooling. 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; hence poor school performance should be analyzed scientifically. This article reviews the causes for students to have poor school performance.

Keywords: Factors; amenable; school performance

INTRODUCTION

Students in India spend one third of their waking time in school related activities, with girls spending more time than boys, mainly because academics is given prime importance by parents and society alike. Poor school performance (PSP) can be defined as a school achievement below the expected for a given age, cognitive skills, and schooling (Rebollo et al., 2007; Fonseca, 2008). Poor school performance is a common problem faced by schools, parents and physicians and 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 students; hence scholastic backwardness should be analyzed scientifically. Researches have estimated that 10-37% of students have academic problems (Rozario, 1991). Seldom is a single cause unequivocally identified, for poor school performance.

Prevalence

Studies confirm that a large percentage of school dropouts in India are due to unsatisfactory academic performance (Pratinidhi et al., 1992). The prevalence may be the same or slightly more than the western figure of 20% of the child and adolescent population (Zill and Schoenborn, 1990).

Epidemiological Studies

In the last two decades there has been phenomenal growth of interest in students with normal intelligence, but who do not learn normally in the classroom. There is an increased awareness in the parents, teachers and other professionals working with children in the west that certain specific



disabilities can cause failure to learn academically and this, in turn can seriously limit life opportunities. The estimated prevalence rates for specific learning difficulties in the west are 8 to 10 percent, with higher rates for boys; the ratio for boys and girls being 3:1. In India, parents and teachers are deeply concerned about scholastic backwardness of children. Scholastic backwardness is a very common complaint in the child guidance and child psychiatric clinics. Yet, the teachers, the parents and the mental health professionals are generally unaware of the giant strides made in the Western educational system to deal with scholastic problems. However, constraints on manpower and economic resources pose problems which appear insurmountable in the Indian setting. There is a need to focus on scholastic problems, their nature, assessment and intervention at school, in community and clinic settings; these need to be pragmatic rather than ideal.

Etiology

Poor school performance has a multifactorial etiology:

Neurodevelopmental disorders

Specific learning disability: Specific learning disabilities (SpLD) viz. dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant unexpected, specific and persistent difficulties in the acquisition and use of reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia) or mathematical (dyscalculia) abilities despite conventional instruction, average or above average intelligence, proper motivation and adequate sociocultural opportunity. SpLD, an invisible handicap, constitute an important cause of poor school performance in students and are presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction.

ADHD: ADHD may be accompanied by learning disabilities, depression, anxiety, conduct disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder. ADHD makes the individuals less available for learning because of the activity level, inattention, and/or impulsivity.

Slow learners: Children with an IQ range of 70-89 are classified as slow learners. Slow learners are those with below average cognitive abilities who are not disabled, but who struggle to cope with the traditional academic demands of the regular classroom.

Mental retardation: Children with mental retardation, with IQ below 70 have a generalized learning deficit differing from specific learning disability such as dyslexia, which is significant in severity. The common genetic causes of MR include Down's syndrome, Fragile X, and Klinefelter's syndrome.

Language disorders: From 1% to 13% of the population have either a developmental expressive or receptive language disorder. As most learning takes place in schools through the medium of language, children with language disorders struggle in school.

Autism spectrum disorder: Autism exists with any level of intelligence, but many individuals with autism suffer also from learning disability. The core features of autism - social, emotional, communication and language deficits interfere at all levels learning and psychosocial functioning.

2. Emotional disorders

Emotional disorders such as anxiety, obsessive-compulsive, mood disorders, depression, and psychosomatic disorders are common in students. Conduct disorders, oppositional defiant disorders are also seen in students frequently and may occur as comorbid with ADHD.

3. Environmental factors

Poor school performance may also be due to environmental factors especially at home, school and friends.

4. Medical factors

This may be the direct effect of the condition itself, or due to effects leading to recurrent school absenteeism, adverse effects of medication, poor self-esteem affecting motivation and performance. Common chronic conditions such as asthma, allergies, repeated otitis media, lead poisoning, cancer, epilepsy, cerebral palsy type 1 diabetes mellitus, hypothyroidism, hearing loss – even unilateral and visual impairment, are known to be associated with poor academic performance.

Review

There are many studies in the review of literature to understand the reasons for poor school performance, which are as follows:

Studies are conducted to explain the role of multiple factors for poor school performance. (Krande & Kulkarni, 2005), reported the following reasons for children to underperform at school, such as medical problems, below average intelligence, specific learning disability, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, emotional problems, poor socio-cultural home environment, psychiatric disorders and even environmental causes, which implicated that multidisciplinary evaluation is usually necessary before making the final diagnosis and to come up with a treatment plan early so that child can perform up to full potential.

Various researches studied the study habits, health factors and the social influence affecting scholastic performance of adolescents. (Saraswati et al., 2009), recognized the social influence, study habits and health factors affecting scholastic performance of adolescents and compared these factors among the adolescents between 2 categories of schools (Corporation and private schools). The results of the study indicated that the incidence of poor study habits and social factors were increased in low achievers of corporation schools, which implicated that it is feasible and worthwhile to identify the determinants of scholastic performance and plan intervention strategies at each school.

Results in the similar lines were reported by (Nair et al., 2003) wherein daily study patterns, family environment, education status of parents, personal distractions and attitude towards studies were observed as factors affecting scholastic performance, in 1892 adolescents of 13 to 19 years age group belonging to different category of schools. Results implied that poor concentration in studies, lower studying daily lesions, lower education status of father and unhappy family were predictor variables of poor scholastic performance.

Some of the most recent researches focused on the, role of visual media on school performance. (Sharif et al., 2010) conducted a 24 month, four wave longitudinal telephone study of a national sample of 6486 youth aged 10 to 14 years, by using exposure measures: latent construct for screen exposure time (weekday time spent viewing television/playing videogames, presence of television in bedroom) and variables for movie content (proportion of PG-13 and R movies viewed). Outcome measures: self and parent reports of grades in school. Effects of media exposures on change in school performance between baseline and 24 months were assessed using structural equation modeling. Information about hypothesized mediators (substance use, sensation seeking, and school problem behavior) was obtained at baseline and at the 16 month follow up. Results indicated that both these aspects of visual media use adversely affect school performance by increasing sensation seeking, substance use, and school problem behavior.

CONCLUSION

Scholastic achievement has become an index of child's future in this highly competitive world. Healthcare and educational professionals must be qualified to identify students at risk for poor school performance, guide the family and refer the children to a multidisciplinary rehabilitation program, and seek an etiologic diagnosis.

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