

Study of prevalence and patterns of scholastic problems in school children of Nepal

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Introduction:

Scholastic backwardness is the slow or inadequate ability necessary to perform academic activities demanded by the school curriculum. Scholastic backwardness is being increasingly recognized as one of the important problems in children and adolescents which is one of the concern to both parents and teacher alike (Dort et al, 1980). Viewing scholastic backwardness in terms of poor academic achievement or repeated failure in grades, prevalence study in Nepal is almost lacking/ Indian studies showed prevalence rates in the range of 20 and 50% (Kapur, 1985, Rozario 1988). Specific aspect of scholastic backwardness had been studied in West such as reading retardation (Rutter et al 1970), arithmetic difficulties (Lewis et al, 1991). Because of lack of research in this area the problem is simply ignored by both teachers and parents. Present study aims to find prevalence of scholastic problems among school children of Nepal.

Methods:

It is a cross-sectional study of scholastic backwardness and psychological disturbances in six to eighteen years old students (grade 1-10) from government schools. Thirty districts selected randomly with equal representation from Mountain, Hill and Terai region of the country, thus 10 districts from each region were selected. A total of 3000 students selected following school registration ensuring 10 student from each grades using random number. Scholastic performance related information were collected using Child Behaviour Questionnaire (CBQ) form A and was rated by school teachers. The tool was adapted and tested reliability in Nepalese children population during the process of research. The scholastic backwardness was assessed through a single item on CBQ-A. Children rated as having 'very poor' scholastic performance were considered as scholastically backward for the purposes of this study (Rutter, 1967) and same was followed in this study. Data were analysed using SPSS for prevalence rate and level of significance.

Result:

The overall prevalence of scholastic backwardness found to be 6.67%, comprising 3.5% in boys and 3.17 % girls. More problems were observed in grade eight (11.29%), six (8.87%) and two (8.25%). Scholastic backwardness

problems found higher in psychologically disturbed students (12.6%) than among non-disturbed students (4.7%), more in families with lower socio-economic status. The problem of writing difficulties among students was 18.37% in total, higher among boys (10.34%) than the girls (8.04%) with statistical significance ($p=.05$), significantly higher among psychologically disturbed than non-disturbed ($p= 0.01$). Reading difficulties observed in 21.01% students, more common in boys (11.5%) than girls (9.5%), more in grades one, two and three. About 54.38% students found to have mathematical difficulties and more in boys (28.9%) than the girls (25.5%).

Conclusion:

Scholastic problems observed higher in primary level (grade 1-8), writing, reading and mathematical difficulties were observed as common scholastic problems. Findings of present study showed scholastic performance was poor in children having psychological disturbances than psychologically stable children. Thus school system should consider to address scholastic and psychological problems of children on time.

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