

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Relationship between mental health academic achievement and educational aspiration of high school children from single parent families

■ Sushmita B. Matti, Sunanda Itagi and B. Shreela Matti

SUMMARY

Family structure has a greater influence on children psychological as well as academic success and aspiration. Children from single parent families face many problems pertaining to mental health, academic success and educational aspiration. This study examines the relationship between mental health, academic achievement and educational aspiration of high school children from single parent families which was conducted during 2019-2020. A total of 240 children (120 from urban area and 120 from rural area) of 13-16yrs were selected from Dharwad taluk. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire scale was used to assess the level of mental health of children. Children previous year annual examination grades were recorded to know the academic achievement of children. Mazumdar Educational Aspiration Inventory scale was used to know the level of educational aspiration of children. The outcomes of the study highlighted that, mental health was significantly associated with locality of children where, urban children have more mental health problems as compared to their counterparts in rural area. Academic achievement and educational aspirations were significantly associated with locality of children. Children from rural area had poor academic achievement and low educational aspiration than urban children. It was interesting to note that mental health was not correlated significantly with academic achievement of children in both the regions. However, mental health was negatively and significantly correlated with academic achievement of children in rural area. Which indicates that as mental health problems increases educational aspiration among children decreases. Further the study indicated that academic achievement was not significantly correlated with educational aspiration of children in urban and rural areas. It was noted that there is a need for intervention programmes to improve the mental health, academic success and educational aspiration among children from single parent families.

Key Words : Single parent family, High school children, Mental health, Academic achievement, Educational aspiration

How to cite this article : Matti, Sushmita B., Itagi, Sunanda and Matti, Shreela, B. (2022). Relationship between mental health academic achievement and educational aspiration of high school children from single parent families. *Internat. J. Plant Sci.*, 17 (1): 37-42, DOI: 10.15740/HAS/IJPS/17.1/37-42, Copyright@ 2022:Hind Agri-Horticultural Society.

Article chronicle : Received : 26.09.2021; **Revised :** 12.10.2021; **Accepted :** 09.11.2021

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Family plays an important role in overall development of the child. It is the support system in which it helps the child to mould themselves to become an independent individual. In the modern era, due to drastic change in family structure children are facing many problems in their developmental areas. One of the reasons is being a child of single parent families. Single parent family means either a father or a mother is alive. Due to increase in divorces, parental separation, death of one of the spouses, single parent adoption etc (Salami and Alawode, 2000 and Azuka-Obieke, 2013). Are the reasons for increase in number of single parent families. It is hard for the single parents to manage both work and look after their children. Due to poor parent-child relationship children from single parent families experience problems in different domains such as psychological, emotional, behavioural and social.

Mental health has a crucial role in overall child wellbeing. With a positive mental health children can handle their situations positively, able to cope up with their emotions, helps to build positive relationship with others and able to face the challenges of day to day life. Children from intact families have better mental health as compared to children from one-parent families (Gul *et al.*, 2017 and Hannighofer *et al.*, 2017). Children in one-parent families experience many mental health related problems, such as emotional problems, conduct problems, peer problems, prosocial and hyperactivity problems. However, children especially with a mother-headed families exhibit more of mental health problems than their counterparts. This is due to poor mental health status of mother have negative impact on child's mental health (Tobias *et al.*, 2010). Poor mental health indirectly affects the children educational achievement also.

Family acts as a strong pillar to their children academic success. Involvement of both the parents in their academics strengthens the child's confidence level and helps the child to perform better in their academics. Whereas in single parent families due to parental negligence, lack of parental participation in their children academic activities and poor socio-economic status children unable to excel in their academics. Due to this children may often absent from school, have low self-esteem and perform low in academic achievement. Poor academic achievement in turn negatively influences the low educational aspiration among children.

Educational aspiration is the one which signifies the children level of aspiration for their higher educations. Children with positive parental support, love and affection

desire for higher education. Whereas children from single parent families have low ambitions is mainly due to low parental educational level, parental low expectations from their children, negligence towards children's education, low family capital and disturbed family structure (Garg *et al.*, 2007; Park, 2008 and Wang and Ngal, 2011).

Recent studies pointed out that mental health is significantly related with academic achievement and educational aspiration of children (Almorth *et al.*, 2018 and Zeratsion *et al.*, 2015). Children with positive mental health perform better in academics and aspire for higher educational aspirations. However, negative mental health affects the children career and quality life. Hence, there is a need to understand the mental health and academic achievement of children from single parent families to plan intervention programmes to enhance the parental involvement and improve the mental health, academic achievement and educational aspiration of children from single parent families.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

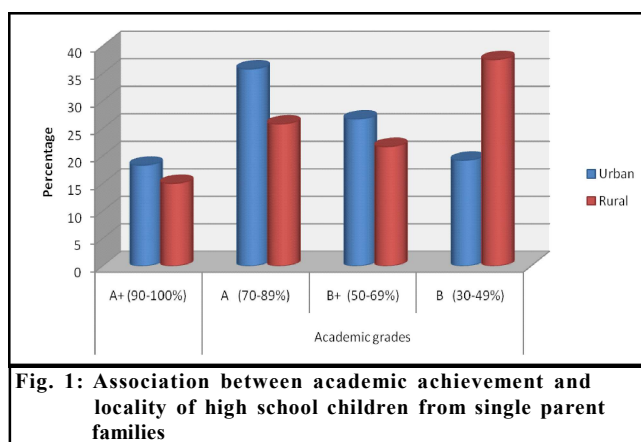
The present study was conducted on a sample of 240 children selected from urban (n=120) and rural (n=120) areas of Dharwad taluk. A total of 60 girls and 60 boys were selected each from both the regions. The age group of children was between 13-16 years. A purposive sampling technique was used to collect the sample. To measure the mental health of high school children Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) was used. Its reliability was found to be 0.72. the tool consists of 25 questions divided into 5 components such as emotional problems, peer problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity and prosocial behaviour. It's a 3-point likert scale ranging from not true to certainly true. The total score range from 0-40, in which higher score indicates the problematic status of a child. To measure educational aspiration of children Mazumdar Educational Aspiration Inventory (2004) scale was used. Its reliability was found to be 0.61. It consists of 55 items divided into 7 dimensions such as, past experience, goal period-long term and short term, efforts made and success achieved in the examination, education desired for personal development, level of education desired, education desired for self satisfaction and quality of education desired. It's a 5-point likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Higher the score indicates high educational aspiration among children. The correlation research design was used to study the relationship between mental health, academic

achievement and educational aspiration of the children.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the association between mental health and locality of high school children from single parent families. The results showed that 63.3 per cent of rural children and 45.8 per cent of urban children indicated normal mental health status. However, 24.2 per cent of urban children and 15 per cent of rural children showed abnormal mental health status. There was a significant association ($\chi^2=7.554$) observed between level of mental health and locality of children. This showed that, urban children had more mental health problems than rural children. This might be because, most of the urban children are from nuclear family, experienced less than five years of single parent family structure in which the children have more adjustment problems to the new environment and without the parental support they may experience mental health problems. Similar findings were observed in Alavi *et al.* (2010) study where children in urban experienced more mental health problems.

Association between academic achievement and locality of high school children from single parent families is depicted in Fig 1. The outcomes indicated that 35.8 per cent urban children secured A grade and 37.5 per cent of rural children secured B grade. There was a significant association found between academic achievement and locality of children. This depicts that rural children had low academic grades as compared to



urban children. This might be because of lack of availability of resources in both home and school, parental negligence towards child's education, irregular attendance and engaged in more of familial works children in rural area scored low academic grades. The study results are in line with the Faisal *et al.* (2016) study, which highlighted that rural children secured low academic scores than urban children. They reported low academics in rural children is due to lack of knowledge and exposure to the current issues, poor resources and facilities available in the school and home.

Fig 2. highlighted the association between educational aspiration and locality of high school children from single parent families. The results indicated that, majority (66.7%) of rural children and 55.8 per cent of urban children showed medium level of educational

Locality	Level of mental health (score range)			χ^2 value
	Normal (0-15) n (%)	Borderline (16-19) n (%)	Abnormal (20-40) n (%)	
Urban (n=120)	55 (45.8)	36 (30)	29 (24.2)	7.554*
Rural (n=120)	76 (63.3)	26 (21.7)	18 (15.0)	

* indicate significance of value at P=0.05

Level of mental health	Urban (n=120)			Modified χ^2 value	r-value	Rural (n=120)			Modified χ^2 value	r-value
	High n (%)	Medium n (%)	Total n (%)			High n (%)	Medium n (%)	Total n (%)		
Normal	35 (63.6)	20 (36.4)	55 (100)			32 (42.1)	44 (57.9)	76 (100)		
Borderline	17 (47.2)	19 (52.8)	36 (100)	3.705 ^{NS}	-0.068 ^{NS}	10 (38.5)	16 (61.5)	26 (100)	0.140 ^{NS}	0.083 ^{NS}
Abnormal	13 (44.8)	16 (55.2)	29 (100)			7 (38.9)	11 (61.1)	18 (100)		

NS= Non-significant

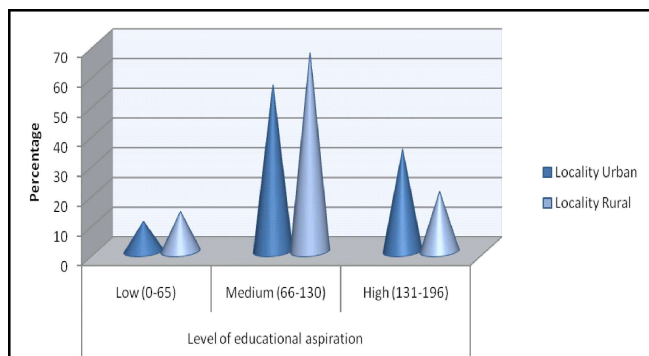


Fig. 2: Association of educational aspiration with locality of high school children from single parent families

aspiration, whereas 34.2 per cent of urban children and 20 per cent of rural children indicated high educational aspiration. Locality was significantly associated with educational aspiration of children, where urban children have better educational aspiration than rural children. Because in rural area, most of the parents are not much educated and engaged in low paid jobs, due to low parental expectations and lack of special attention towards their children’s education and limited opportunities to explore themselves hinders the children to aspire for higher education.

Table 2 indicated the relation between mental health and academic achievement of high school children from single parent families. Majority (63.6%) of urban children belonged to normal level of mental health secured high

academic achievement, whereas 55.8 per cent and 52.2 per cent of children belonged to borderline and abnormal level of mental health secured medium academic achievement. In rural area, children belonged to medium (61.5%), abnormal (61.1%) and normal (57.9%) level of mental health showed medium academic achievement respectively. There was not significant association and correlation observed between mental health and academic achievement of high school children from single parent families in both the regions.

Relation between mental health and educational aspiration of high school children from single parent families is highlighted in Table 3. The results showed that, more than half (66.7% and 52.7%) of the urban children belonged to borderline and normal level of mental health aspire for medium educational aspiration, while 48.3 per cent of children belonged to abnormal level of mental health aspired for medium educational aspiration. In case of rural area, 69.7 per cent of children belonged to normal level of mental health desired for medium level of educational aspiration whereas only 23.1 per cent of children belongs borderline level of mental health aspire for high educational aspiration. There was a significant negative correlation (-0.205) observed between level of mental health and educational aspiration of high school children in rural area. Which indicates that, as increase in mental health problems decreases the educational aspiration among children. This might be because due to

Table 3: Relation between mental health and educational aspiration of high school children from single parent families (n=240)

Level of mental health	Urban (n=120)					Rural (n=120)							
	Educational aspiration					Modified χ^2 value	r-value	Educational aspiration				Modified χ^2 value	r-value
	Low	Medium	High	Total	Low			Medium	High	Total			
n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)				
Normal	7 (12.7)	29 (52.7)	19 (34.5)	55 (100)			7 (9.2)	53 (69.7)	16 (21.1)	76 (100)			
Borderline	0 (0.0)	24 (66.7)	12 (33.3)	36 (100)	7.901 ^{NS}	-0.022 ^{NS}	3 (11.5)	17 (65.4)	6 (23.1)	26 (100)	7.755 ^{NS}	-0.205*	
Abnormal	6 (20.7)	14 (48.3)	9 (31)	29 (100)			6 (33.3)	10 (55.6)	2 (11.1)	18 (100)			

* indicate significance of value at P=0.05 NS=Non-significant

Table 4: Relation between academic achievement and educational aspiration of high school children from single parent families (n=240)

Academic achievement	Urban (n=120)					Rural (n=120)							
	Educational aspiration					Modified χ^2 value	r-value	Educational aspiration				Modified χ^2 value	r-value
	Low	Medium	High	Total	Low			Medium	High	Total			
n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)				
High	7 (10.8)	35 (53.8)	23 (35.4)	65 (100)	0.246 ^{NS}	-0.013 ^{NS}	7 (14.3)	32 (65.3)	10 (20.4)	49 (100)	0.086 ^{NS}	0.048 ^{NS}	
Medium	5 (9.1)	32 (58.2)	18 (32.7)	55 (100)			9 (12.7)	48 (67.6)	14 (19.7)	71 (100)			

NS= Non-significant

more household responsibilities on children and more stress along with average school environment and low parental motivation leads to low educational aspiration among rural children.

Table 4. depicted the relation between academic achievement and educational aspiration of high school children from single parent families. The results showed that, 58.2 per cent of urban children with medium academic achievement showed medium educational aspiration, whereas only 35.4 per cent of children with high academic achievement aspire for high educational aspiration. Same trend was observed in case of rural area. More than half (67.6%) of the children with medium academic achievement showed medium educational aspiration, whereas least per cent (20.4%) of children with high academic achievement aspire for high educational aspiration. Academic achievement was not associated and correlated significantly with educational aspiration of high school children from single parent families in both the regions.

Conclusion:

In brief, the findings of the present study highlighted that, there was a significant association found between level of mental health and locality of high school children from single parent families, where urban children have more mental health problems than rural children. Academic achievement was significantly associated with locality of children. Children from rural area have low academic achievement than urban children. In case of educational aspiration, there was a significant association found between level of educational aspiration and locality of children, where children from urban area have better educational aspiration than rural children. There was no significant association and correlation found between mental health and academic achievement of children from single parent families in both the regions. Mental health was negatively correlated with educational aspiration of high school children in rural area. Academic achievement was not significantly associated and correlated with educational aspiration of high school children in both the areas. In conclusion, urban children need more attention to improve their mental wellbeing. On the other hand, rural children need more attention to improve their academic achievement and educational aspiration. Hence, there is a need of intervention programmes for children from single

parent families to improve their mental wellbeing and excel in academics and aspire for high educational aspiration.

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