

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Academic achievement of high school children from single parent families

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

SUMMARY

Academic performance is very important to achieve success and capability in future for a student. One way to know academic performance is through academic achievement. This study examines the academic achievement of high school children from single parent families which was conducted during 2019-2020, on a sample of 240 (120 urban and 120 rural) high school children through purposive sampling technique from 8 urban and 9 rural high schools of Dharwad taluk. A self-structured questionnaire was used to collect the demographic characteristics and general information of the children. Academic achievement of children was measured by referring the children's previous year grades in annual examination from school records. The socio-economic status scale was used to assess the socio-economic status of high school children. The study results revealed that, urban children showed better academic achievement than rural children. Boys in both the regions had low academic achievement than girls. First born children achieved high in academics than later borns in urban area. Negative correlation was observed between number of siblings and academic achievement in rural area. This indicates that, as number of sibling increases academic achievement of children decreases. In rural area, children residing with their mother had high academic achievement than children residing with their father. In urban area, children from nuclear familial had better academic achievement than children from joint families. Poor socio-economic status significantly influenced the academic achievement of children in both urban and rural area. On the whole it was noted that, more than 50 per cent of rural children need support and guidance to improve their academics.

Key Words : Academic achievement, Single parent family, High school children

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Adolescence is a transitory period between childhood and adulthood. During this period an individual is seen neither as a child nor as an adult. The period of adolescence is very important to the development of an individual. Any laxity on the part of the parents in assisting and guiding the adolescents may result in academic backwardness and development of unwholesome behaviours. The foundation of what a person becomes in the society is laid in the home and at

the initial stage of life. Parents therefore have important roles to play in seeing to it that the youths acquire the appropriate social, psychological, moral and academic development (Salami, 2000).

Academic performance among children suggests that children's academic performance improve when both parents are actively involved in their education. Academic achievement refers to a child's performance in school, measured not only by grade reports, but also by teacher observation and the student's own self perception.

Numerous studies have documented that growing up with a single parent is negatively associated with children's educational outcomes in the United States and western European countries. The low student academic achievement of children of single-parent families was due to less parental involvement in a child's day-to-day activities, and low parenting resources. It was also noted that children in single parent families are three times more likely to drop out of high school than children from two-parent families. Because the single parents are the primary and frequently the sole source of financial support of the family, they have less time to help children in their studies, are less likely to use consistent discipline, and have less parental control, and all these conditions may lead to lower academic achievement (Abankwa, 2013). Hence, the present study was taken with an objective to know the influence of personal and familial characteristics on academic achievement of high school children from single parent families.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was conducted on sample of 240 (120 urban and 120 rural) high school children of aged 13-16yrs selected from 8 urban and 9 rural high schools of Dharwad taluk. Purposive sampling method was used to select the sample. A self-structured questionnaire was used to collect the demographic characteristics of the children such as gender, age, ordinal position, number of siblings, child's residing status, type of family, size of family and period of singlehood. Academic achievement of children was measured by referring the children's previous year grades in annual examination from school records. To measure the socioeconomic status of the children Socioeconomic Scale by Aggarwal (2005) was used. Differential research design was used to study the comparison between academic achievement and personal variables of the urban and rural children. Chi square test was used to study the association between personal

characteristics and academic achievement of children.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The distribution of demographic characteristics of the high school children from single parent families are given in Table 1. With regard to personal characteristics, equal percentages of boys and girls are taken from urban as well as in rural area. It is noted that 38.3 per cent of urban as well as rural children belong to 14-15 yrs of age group, while equal proportion (30.8%) of children belong younger and older age group. More than half of the children (60%) are later born. Most of the children (87%) have 1-3 siblings and majority (75.4%) of them are residing with their mother.

In case of familial characteristics, it is interesting to note that, majority (62.9%) of children are belonged to nuclear families. More than half of the children (54.5%) belonged to medium size family. Majority (66.2%) of the children experienced 0-5yrs of single parent family structure. More than half of the rural children (53.9%) and 46.1 per cent of urban children belonged to middle socio-economic status and the remaining 45.8 per cent of urban and 36.7 per cent of rural children belonged to poor socio-economic status.

Table 2 results displayed that, in urban area 35.8 per cent of children scored A grade whereas in rural area 37.5 per cent of children secured B grade. The mean value of academic achievement of urban children (75.09 ± 11.37) was higher than rural children (71.6 ± 12.1). There was a significant association ($\chi^2=10.084$) and difference ($t=2.275$) found between academic achievement and locality of high school children from single parent families. This indicates that urban children had high academic achievement than rural children. Because urban children are studying in good school environment and get good quality education, access to various resources and attend tuition classes which facilitate them to score high on academics. Whereas in rural area, due to lack of availability of resources in both home and school, parental negligence towards child's education, irregular attendance and aspiration for familial works leads to low academic achievement among rural children. Faisal *et al.* (2016) study results are in line with the current study, which indicated that rural children showed low academic scores than urban children. They reported that 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

Table 1: Distribution of high school children from single parent families on personal characteristics (n=240)

Personal characteristics	Categories	Urban (n=120)	Rural (n=120)	Total
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Gender	Male	60 (50)	60 (50)	120 (50)
	Female	60 (50)	60 (50)	120 (50)
Age (yrs)	13-14	39 (32.5)	35 (29.2)	74 (30.8)
	14-15	46 (38.3)	46 (38.3)	92 (38.3)
	15-16	35 (29.2)	39 (32.5)	74 (30.8)
Ordinal position	First born	52 (43.3)	44 (36.7)	96 (40)
	Later born	68 (56.7)	76 (63.3)	144 (60)
Number of siblings	None	10 (8.3)	8 (6.7)	18 (7.5)
	1-3	103 (85.8)	106 (88.3)	209 (87)
	4-6	7 (5.8)	6 (5.0)	13 (5.4)
Children residing status	With father	26 (21.7)	33 (27.5)	59 (24.6)
	With mother	94 (78.3)	87 (72.5)	181 (75.4)
Familial characteristics				
Type of family	Joint	38 (31.7)	45 (37.5)	89 (37.1)
	Nuclear	82 (68.3)	75 (62.5)	151 (62.9)
Size of family (no. of members)	Small (1-3)	28 (23.3)	36 (30.0)	64 (26.6)
	Medium (4-8)	68 (59.3)	63 (52.5)	131 (54.5)
	large (9-20)	24 (17.4)	21 (17.5)	45 (18.9)
period of singlehood (years)	0-5	78 (65)	81(67.5)	159 (66.2)
	5-10	23 (19.2)	12 (10.0)	35 (14.6)
	>10	19 (15.8)	27 (22.5)	46 (19.1)
Socio-economic status	Lower middle	65 (54.1)	76 (63.3)	141 (58.8)
	Poor	55 (45.8)	44 (36.7)	99 (41.2)

Table 2 : Association between academic achievement and locality of high school children from single parent families (n=240)

Academic grades (%)	Urban (n=120)	Rural (n=120)	χ^2 value
	n (%)	n (%)	
A ⁺ (90-100)	22 (18.3)	18 (15.0)	10.084**
A (70-89)	43 (35.8)	31 (25.8)	
B ⁺ (50-69)	32 (26.7)	26 (21.7)	
B (30-49)	23 (19.2)	45 (37.5)	
C (00-29)	-	-	
Mean±SD	75.09±11.37	71.6±12.11	
t value			2.275*

* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

home.

Table 3 represents the association between academic achievement and personal characteristics of high school children from single parent families. Majority (65%) of girls in urban area and 51.7 per cent of girls in rural area had high academic achievement, whereas most of the rural boys (71.7%) and 56.7 per cent of urban boys secured medium academic achievement. Gender

was significantly associated with academic achievement in both urban ($\chi^2=5.673$) and rural area ($\chi^2=6.806$). This showed that girls had better academic achievement than boys in both the regions. Because girls have positive perceptions about education and hard work attitude towards studies than boys. Similar outcomes observed in Salami and Alawode (2000) study. The possible reason might be that, girls practice a lot with their conversational

styles than boys. The Ward (2008) study outcomes revealed that, girls had high academic achievement than boys in single parent families.

In urban area, majority (64.7%) of children are later born and had high academic achievement, while more than half of the first born children (59.6%) had medium academic achievement. Ordinal position was significantly associated ($\chi^2=7.021$) with academic achievement of children in urban area. Due to more responsibilities, stress and lack of support from younger siblings first born children scored low on academic achievement than later born children. On the other hand later born children have more support and guidance from their older siblings which motivates them to score high on academic achievement.

In rural area, majority (75%) of children without siblings had high academic achievement, while 66.7 per cent and 62.3 per cent of children with 4-6 siblings and 1-3 siblings scored medium academic achievement. There was a negative correlation (-0.210) observed between academic achievement and number of siblings in rural area. It indicates that, as increase in number of siblings decreases the academic achievement among children. Similar results were observed in Kerubo (2017) study, who stated that, due to more engaged in occupational work, parents in single parent families cannot concentrate on their children academics and children with more number of siblings have limited access to educational resources.

In rural area, majority (75.8%) of the children residing with their father and 54 per cent of children residing with their mother showed medium academic achievement, while 46 per cent of children residing with their mother secured high academic achievement. Children residing status was significantly associated ($\chi^2=4.709$) with academic achievement of children in rural area but not in urban area. The study results are parallel to Tarumi (2017) who showed that, due to low parental involvement in school, monitoring and discussion at home and poor parenting resources children from father-only families had low academic achievement. The similar results observed in Cheung and Park (2012) study, who stated that low parental engagement and low socio-economic status affect the academic achievement of children from father-only families.

Table 4 outcomes highlighted the association between academic achievement and familial characteristics of high children from single parent families. In urban area majority (61%) of the children from nuclear families had high academic achievement whereas, 60.5 per cent of children from joint families scored medium academic achievement. There was a significant association ($\chi^2=4.836$) found between academic achievement and type of family. Which indicates that children belonged to nuclear families had better academic achievement than children belonged to joint families. This might be because, children from joint families have to share resources with other family

Table 3 : Association between personal characteristics and academic achievement of high school children from single parent families (n=240)

Personal characteristics		Urban (n=120)				Rural (n=120)					
		High n (%)	Medium N (%)	Total n (%)	Modified χ^2 value	r-value	High n (%)	Medium n (%)	Total n (%)	Modified χ^2 value	r-value
Gender	Male	26 (43.3)	34 (56.7)	60 (100)	5.673**	-0.041 ^{NS}	17 (28.3)	43 (71.7)	60 (100)	6.806**	-0.095 ^{NS}
	Female	39 (65)	21 (35)	60 (100)			31 (51.7)	29 (48.3)	60 (100)		
Age (years)	13-14	21 (53.8)	18 (46.2)	39 (100)	0.210 ^{NS}	-0.041 ^{NS}	16 (45.7)	19 (54.3)	35 (100)	3.349 ^{NS}	-0.095 ^{NS}
	14-15	26 (56.6)	20 (43.5)	46 (100)			21 (45.7)	25 (54.3)	46 (100)		
	15-16	18 (51.4)	17 (48.6)	35 (100)			11 (28.2)	28 (71.8)	39 (100)		
Ordinal position	First born	21 (40.4)	31 (59.6)	52 (100)	7.021**	0.167 ^{NS}	16 (36.4)	28 (63.6)	44 (100)	0.983 ^{NS}	-0.210*
	Later born	44 (64.7)	24 (35.3)	68 (100)			32 (42.1)	44 (57.9)	76 (100)		
No. of siblings	None	6 (60)	4 (40)	10 (100)	1.103 ^{NS}	0.167 ^{NS}	6 (75)	2 (25)	8 (100)	4.421 ^{NS}	-0.210*
	1-3	54 (52.4)	49 (47.6)	103 (100)			40 (37.7)	66 (62.3)	106 (100)		
	4-6	5 (71.2)	2 (28.6)	7 (100)			2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)	6 (100)		
children residing status	With father	15 (57.7)	11 (42.3)	26 (100)	0.166 ^{NS}	0.166 ^{NS}	8 (24.2)	25 (75.8)	33 (100)	4.709*	-0.210*
	With mother	50 (53.2)	44 (46.8)	94 (100)			40 (46)	47 (54)	87 (100)		

* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

NS= Non-significant

Table 4 : Association between familial characteristics and academic achievement of high school children from single parent families (n=240)

Familial characteristics		Urban (n=120)			Rural (n=120)						
					Academic achievement						
		High	Medium	Total	Modified χ^2 value	r value	High	Medium	Total	Modified χ^2 value	r value
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)			n (%)	n (%)	n (%)			
Type of family	Joint	15 (39.5)	23 (60.5)	38 (100)	4.836*		16 (35.6)	29 (64.4)	45 (100)	0.593 ^{NS}	
	Nuclear	50 (61)	32 (39)	82 (100)			32 (42.7)	43 (57.3)	75 (100)		
	Small (1-3)	13 (46.4)	15 (53.6)	28 (100)	2.227 ^{NS}	0.075 ^{NS}	12 (33.3)	24 (66.7)	36 (100)	2.011 ^{NS}	0.102 ^{NS}
Size of family	Medium (4-8)	36 (52.9)	32 (47.1)	68 (100)			29 (46)	34 (54)	63 (100)		
	High (9-20)	16 (66.7)	8 (33.3)	24 (100)			7 (23.3)	14 (66.7)	21 (100)		
Period of singlehood (Yrs)	0-5	40 (51.3)	38 (48.7)	78 (100)	0.385 ^{NS}	-0.008 ^{NS}	33 (40.7)	48 (59.3)	81 (100)	1.019 ^{NS}	0.067 ^{NS}
	5-10	13 (56.5)	10 (43.5)	23 (100)			6 (50)	6 (50)	12 (100)		
	>10	11 (57.9)	8 (42.1)	19 (100)			9 (33.3)	18 (66.7)	27 (100)		
Socio-economic status	Lower middle	41 (63.1)	24 (36.9)	65 (100)	4.535*	0.233 ^{NS}	37 (48.7)	39 (51.3)	76 (100)	6.513**	0.207*
	Poor	24 (43.6)	31 (56.4)	55 (100)			11 (25)	33 (75)	44 (100)		

* and ** indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

members and most of the parents are self employed or labourers. Hence, having more number of children and work pressure, parents in single parent families cannot spend time with their children and help in their academics which lowers the academic success among children.

There was a significant association ($\chi^2=4.535$) observed between socio-economic status and academic achievement of children in urban area. Majority (63.1%) of the children from lower middle class showed high academic achievement whereas, more than half of the children (56.4%) from poor socio-economic class had medium academic achievement. In case of rural area, majority (75% and 51.3%) of children belonged to poor and lower middle socio-economic class, respectively showed medium academic achievement, whereas 48.7 percent of children from lower middle class had high academic achievement. There was a significant association ($\chi^2=6.513$) and positive correlation (0.207) found between academic achievement and socio-economic status in rural area. This indicates that as increase in socio-economic status increases the academic achievement among children. Due to low income and poor socio-economic status parents are unable to send their children to quality schools and able to provide limited academic materials to their children. Also lack of physical and educational facilities in both home and school affect the children academic achievement. The study results are in line with Omoruyi (2014) and Tobishima (2017) who revealed that, parental low socio-economic status affect the academic performance of children in single parent families.

Conclusion:

In brief, findings of the present study suggest that there was a significant association and difference observed between locality and academic achievement of children, where urban children had better academic achievement than rural children. Gender was significantly associated with academic achievement of children in both the regions, where girls had better academic achievement than boys in both urban and rural area. The academic achievement was significantly associated with ordinal position of urban children, where later born children showed high academic achievement than first born children. Regarding number of siblings, academic achievement was negatively correlated with number of siblings in rural area, which indicated that, as number of sibling's increases academic achievement of rural children decreases. Children residing status was associated significantly with academic achievement of children in rural area, where children residing with their mother showed high academic achievement than their counterparts in rural area. Children from nuclear families had better academic achievement than children from joint families. Socio-economic status was significantly associated with academic achievement of children in both the areas where, children belonged to lower middle class showed better academic achievement than children from poor socio-economic status. In conclusion, all hands should be on deck in ensuring that appropriate counseling programmes such as group counseling, family counseling, home visits, and supportive associations are needed to help children from single-parents and their parental

involvement to enhance academic performance of children at schools.

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