

## ACADEMIC COMPETENCE AND SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE AT ELEMENTARY STAGE: ROLE OF PARENTAL EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

*The present study focused on role of parental education on academic competence of socially disadvantaged (scheduled caste and backward class students) vis-à-vis general category elementary school students across gender. Academic competence scale (2015) developed by Dilpreet Kaur, consisting of 20 items was administered on a sample of 300 elementary school students of Punjab (SC- 130; BC- 72; GEN- 98). After identifying elementary school students in terms of illiterate and educated groups of parental education in three way ANOVA (3×2×2) was employed on a sample of 115 elementary school students (SC- 52; BC- 20; GEN- 43). The significant mean difference in academic competence across social category and parental education were found to have varied patterns across gender group. Parental education has been found to influence academic competence of backward class elementary school students both for boys and girls and scheduled caste boys, where as such kind of influence is not visible for general category students. In other words parental education has been found to have a significant role in academic competence among socially disadvantaged elementary school students.*

**Keywords:** Academic Competence, Social Disadvantage, Gender, Parental Education

Universalisation of elementary education means universal access, enrolment, retention and quality attainment upto the age of 14 years. Universalisation of elementary education is for attainment of quality for learning. The right of children to free and compulsory education (RTE), act, 2009 is the legislation envisaged under article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards. Quality in education depends on optimal learning on the part of students and learning is dependent upon their academic competence - the combination of practical and theoretical knowledge, cognitive skills, behavior and value-leading to improved performance and having the ability to perform a specific role. Academic competence includes critical skills reading, writing, calculating, solving problems, attending questioning and studying needed for academic success (DiPerna, 1997; DiPerna & Elliott, 1999). Academic competence is interchangeably used with terms such as “academic performance”

and “academic success” (Rotheram, 1987; Henggler et al., 1991). Academic competence is associated with the knowledge and application of effective study skills which are associated with positive outcomes across multiple academic content areas and for diverse kind of learners.

Academic competence shows variation across gender, level of parental education and social disadvantage groups. Socially disadvantaged term first used to cover a large group factors, for handicapped children in schools, keeping them away from fully using their potentialities and who have parents of low educational level (Bernstein 1960). Socially disadvantaged child is the product of disorganized multi-problem with a family environment that militates against the child's capacity and willingness to learn (Keach et al., 1967). Socially disadvantaged and advantaged groups do not differ significantly in intelligence (Sutradhar, 1982). Scheduled caste and non-scheduled caste primary school students have been found to be par in academic achievement though they were having very low level of achievement (Devi, R. 1985).

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Gender had no significant impact on the study habits and academic achievement of scheduled caste and non-scheduled caste students (Bhan & Gupta 2010). General category and scheduled caste students do not differ significantly in study habits, attitude and academic achievement (Choudhary, 2013). Academic achievement of non-scheduled caste adolescents was significantly higher than scheduled caste students (Sethi et al., 2013).

The academic performance is influenced not only by intelligence but by several other factors, most important of which is the parental support he receives for his education. The children with comparatively lower intelligence but higher parental support perform better academic results than children with higher intelligence but lower parental support (Singh, +1980). High achieving groups were getting high amount of parental encouragement in almost all groups based on sex and urban-rural population (Agarwal, 1990). Students with high parental encouragement are more motivated to attain high academic achievement (Kao, 1995). Parents with a higher education level typically have more of an opportunity to become more involved in academic success (Bogensneider, 1997). Literate parents of the backward classes were quit highly aware of their children's education and try to give their children guidance and facilities for education. Parent's illiteracy and lack of facilities were the cause of low academic achievement (Borbora, 2001). Parents with low levels of education may not feel capable of assisting their children's academic life as they may not understand the material (Hill et al., 2002). In contrast, studies shows that some parents with lower level of education do become involved because of a desire for their child to involve upward mobility in the world and so their child achieves things they themselves could not (Hill et al., 2002). Parental acceptance and encouragement were positively related with academic competence and school success (Tanavi & Losh, 2003). However parental control had negative relationship with academic competence and school success (Lakshmi & Arora, 2006). Keeping in view the emphasis of education of socially disadvantaged students and adult literacy in achievement of the objective of education for all (EFA), the present study is an

endeavor to explore academic competence among socially disadvantaged elementary school students in relation to gender and parental education.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

To study academic competence among socially disadvantaged (SC and BC) elementary school students in relation to gender and parental education.

#### **METHOD**

##### **SAMPLE**

The sample for present study consisted of 300 government elementary school students of Patiala and Sangrur districts of Punjab (SC-130; BC-72; GEN-98).

##### **MEASURES**

Academic competence scale developed by researcher herself (Kaur, D., 2015) was used. The scale consisted of 20 statements under seven dimensions namely perceived academic competence for learning; critical thinking and motivation; study habits; behavior pattern; achievement motivation; personal strain and psychological hardiness to be responded on five point scale: always, most often, frequently, some times, never: The scale has content and criterion related validity (0.68) along with split-half reliability (with odd even method) and test-retest reliability coefficient being 0.85 and 0.87 respectively.

##### **PROCEDURE**

The academic competence scale was administered on selected elementary school students along with seeking information on gender and parental education (both paternal and maternal) ranging from illiterate to graduation and above. The elementary school students were classified in terms of parental education either being illiterate (N=80) or educated (N=35) and remaining 185 being semi-literate. The category wise distribution of elementary school students across two levels of parental education (Illiterate and educated parents) came out to be: (SC- 42/10; BC- 13/7; GEN- 25/18).

##### **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The academic competence mean scores of socially disadvantaged (SC and BC) and general category elementary school students in relation to their gender and parental education along with SDs are given in table1.

*Table 1: Mean and SDs of Academic Competence Scores of Elementary School Students with respect to their Social Category, Gender and Parental Education.*

Social Category	Parental Education	Gender	N	Mean	SD
Scheduled Caste	Illiterate	Boys	20	64.65	8.77
		Girls	22	67.09	8.28
	Educated	Boys	5	56.60	1.01
		Girls	5	72.00	1.41
	Total		52	65.08	4.86
Backward Class	Illiterate	Boys	9	65.22	7.18
		Girls	4	63.25	4.08
	Educated	Boys	4	51.25	0.83
		Girls	3	49.00	0.81
	Total		20	57.18	3.22
General Category	Illiterate	Boys	13	59.92	5.51
		Girls	12	64.66	7.37
	Educated	Boys	9	64.88	7.32
		Girls	9	62.33	7.91
	Total		43	62.94	7.02
Total		115	61.73	5.03	

Table 1 indicates that scheduled caste elementary school girls of educated parents have highest academic competence mean score (M= 72.00) and backward elementary school girls of educated parents have minimum mean score (M= 49.00). The remaining mean scores were between these two groups.

In order to study the main effects along with their interactional effects social category, gender and

parental education on academic competence of the elementary school students, statistical technique of three way-analysis of variance ( $3 \times 2 \times 2$  factorial design involving three types of social category i.e. SC, BC & GEN, two types of gender i.e. Boys & Girls and two levels of parental education i.e. Illiterate & Educated) was applied on the means academic competence scores. The summary of ANOVA is given in table 2

*Table 2: Summary of Analysis of Variance (Social Category  $\times$  Gender  $\times$  Parental Education): Academic Competence*

Sr. No.	Sources of Variance	SS	DF	MS	F
1	Social Category (A)	133.75	2	66.87	8.11**
2	Gender (B)	20.82	1	20.82	2.52
3	Parental Education (c)	68.78	1	68.78	8.34**
4	A $\times$ B	32.2	2	16.1	1.95
5	A $\times$ C	67.22	2	33.61	4.07*
6	B $\times$ C	0.81	1	0.81	0.09
7	A $\times$ B $\times$ C	2056	2	1028.02	124.75**
8	Within	5661.12	103	54.96	
9	Total	8040.7	114		

\*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01

The table 2 indicates that there is significant main effect of social category on academic competence of elementary school students ( $F= 8.11$ ;  $P<0.01$ ). The backward class elementary school students scored significantly lower than scheduled caste elementary school students on academic competence ( $M= 57.18$  vs  $65.08$ ;  $t= 4.15$ ;  $p>0.01$ ) and also from general category elementary school students ( $M= 57.18$  vs  $62.94$ ;  $t=2.52$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). However scheduled caste and general category elementary school students did not show significant mean difference on academic competence ( $t=1.61$ ;  $p> 0.05$ ). The F value for main effect of gender did not turn out to be significant ( $F= 2.52$ ;  $p> 0.05$ ). The elementary school students showed significantly mean difference in academic competence across low and high levels of parental education ( $M= 64.13$  vs  $59.34$ ;  $t=3.19$ ;  $p< 0.01$ ), F value ( $8.34$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) being significant at 0.01 level. The F values for the interaction effect of gender with social category ( $F= 1.95$ ;  $p> 0.05$ ) and parental education ( $F= 0.09$ ;  $p>0.05$ ) did not turn out to be significant, showing that non-significant gender difference in academic competence being independent of social category and parental education. However the interaction effect of social category with parental education turned out to be significant ( $F= 4.07$ ;  $p< 0.05$ ), thereby meaning that significant main effects of social category and parental education are dependent on each other. Also the triple interaction of social category, gender and parental education turned out to be significant ( $F= 124.75$ ;  $p< 0.01$ ). It means that the significant double order interaction of social category and parental education is dependent upon gender to explain academic competence of elementary school students. It may be seen from figure 1 and 2 that. Elementary school students with low parental education have significant better academic competence than those with high parental education for backward class elementary school students both for boys and girls ( $t= 3.13$ ;  $p<0.01$  and  $2.52$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). However such a difference remains significant only in case of scheduled caste boys ( $t= 2.17$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and not in scheduled caste girls ( $1.33$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). Also elementary school students with low and high parental education did not show significant difference in academic competence both in case. Of general category boys and girls ( $t= 1.54$  and  $0.71$ ;

$p>0.05$ ). Thus it is evident that parental education has varied level of influence on academic competence of elementary school students across social disadvantage.

### CONCLUSIONS

The parental education does not influence academic competence of elementary school students belonging to general category and girls of scheduled caste whereas it has a significant influence in case of backward class elementary school students both boys and girls as compared to only boys of scheduled caste elementary school students.

### EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- It is well known fact that academic performance of school students is not very satisfactory the main reason being lack of academic competencies such as: reading, writing, calculating, solving problems and attending questioning etc. To improve academic competence teachers should enable students to develop study habits and inculcate study skills to optimize learning.
- It is not the mastery of content but mastery of competence skills in teaching and learning process. Students need to be encouraged to write stories, essays, role playing in teaching of history and language subjects, ask divergent questions, play with words and numbers so that students can think and answer in a varied ways and means for improving the academic competence skills.
- This calls for focusing on academic competence skills of elementary school students especially those belonging to socially disadvantaged groups particularly backward class students. Teachers should require experiential knowledge through field work about the lives of scheduled caste and backward class to understand the cultures and school-home linkage. Also policies and programmes concerning the educational development of scheduled caste and backward class groups will have to be revised in a major way. It is necessary to reach out to those who are socially disadvantaged, to coax them, and draw them out, and to utilize the facilities provided for their benefits so they can use those facilities to enhance their academic competence skills.

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