

SOCIAL AND MEDICAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN

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This study was conducted in an English Medium School for evaluating the performance of school going children in light of various factors. The students belonging to business class had poor performance (68.75%) as compared to Government Servant's Class in which 62.5% students had good performance. Those who were having irregular sleep (75%), playing hours (62.5%) timing of meal (87.5%), watching the T.V. programmes (87.5%) and reading newspapers, books and magazines (50%), showed poor performance, while the children having good performance were regular in their sleep (87.5%), playing hours (100%), timing of meals (81%), watching the TV (94%), and reading newspapers, books and magazines (94%). It was further observed that the poor performance group was dependent upon tuition by some teacher while the good performance group was helped in study by the parents or other family members.

The child's personality and intelligence is partly inherited and partly the product of social environment. There are many other factors like culture, neighborhood, medical and health problems, etc., which affect the performance of a child at school.

However, these have not been studied in detail especially in a developing country like Pakistan. The factors such as social class of parents, their occupation and their own level of education have obvious implications for the development of a normal child.

But in this study, we preferred to discuss in very simple non-technical language the social and medical factors affecting the school performance of a child. We therefore, planned a small scale, pilot study into the students of an English medium school the majority of whom belonged to a good socio-economic class.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of medical and social factors on school performance of children and to suggest, how to improve their abilities.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this study we selected 64 students of an English medium school of Haripur; a proforma was prepared. Part one of the proforma covered basic information like name, sex, age, home address and academic- record of every student included in this study. Part 2 and 3 of proforma were related to social and medical factors; the variables for social factors carried questions about father's and mother's education, occupation and hobbies of child, etc.; while medical variables covered history of prolonged or serious illness, major injury, birth order of child in the family and other necessary information regarding health problems were recorded.

The basic information about each child was taken from school record and other information about social and medical variables were collected from mother of each child, by our interviewer, a lady health visitor, who visited the home of every- child and interviewed the mother. We selected 64 students, 8 each from class 1 to class 8. The intelligence tests developed in the West are not standardized for our population⁴. Therefore, we selected four students from each class two at the top and two at the bottom according to the academic performance record of the school. The students at the top end of the class constituted "good performance" and two at the bottom comprised "poor performance" group.

Table -1: Cases: 64 Students

Performance	Male	Female	Total
Poor	18	14	32
Good	24	8	32
TOTAL	42	22	64

Table-1, Total Number of cases.

There were 64 students included in this study, 32 poor performances and 32 good performances. The number of males was 42 and females was 22. The age range for poor performance students was from 5 years to 14 and a half years and for good performance students was from 6 years to 12 years.

Table -2: Occupation of Fathers

Occupation	Poor Performance		Good Performance	
	No	%	No	%
	Businessman	22	68.75	12
Private Service	6	18.75	-	-
Govt. Service	4	12.5	21	62.5
TOTAL	32	100	32	100

Table-2, Father's Occupations.

The majority of the fathers of the poor performance i.e. 68.75% belonged to business group and of good performance i.e. 62.5% belonged to Government servant group.

Table – 3: Education of Parents

Education	FATHER		MOTHER	
	Poor Performance	Good Performance	Poor Performance	Good Performance
	No %	No %	No %	No %
Illiterate	8 25 00	4 12 50	10 31.25	12 37 50
Middle	-	2 6 25	6 18 75	10 31 25
Matric	10 31 25	6 18 75	12 37 50	6 18 75
Inter	8 25 00	8 25 00	2 6 25	4 12 50
Graduate	2 6 25	6 18 75	2 6 25	-
Post Graduate	4 12 50	6 18 75		
TOTAL	32 100	32 100	32 100	32 100

Table-3, Parent's education.

This table shows educational level of the parents of both poor and good performance group of students. The results show that majority of the mothers of both poor and good performance group were either illiterate or below middle class level i.e. in case of poor performance students 50% of mothers, and in case of good performance students 69% of mothers were below middle class or illiterate. It was interesting to note that out of 64 mothers of both groups of students only one mother was graduate.

Educational level of fathers was better than mothers for both groups of students. Out of 32 fathers of poor performance students, 6 were graduate and out of 32 fathers of good performance, 12 were graduate and there were 25 fathers illiterate in case of poor performance and 12.5% in case of good performance.

Helper	Poor Performance		Good Performance	
	No.	%	No.	%
Mother/Father	4	12.5	22	68.75
Elder Brother	2	6.25	4	22.5
Tuition	20	62.5	2	6.25
Himself	6	18.75	4	12.5
TOTAL	32	100	32	100

Table-4, Who helped the students in their studies.

The results show that only 6 students out of 32 (18.75%) of poor performance were helped by their parents and elder brothers and 20 students out of 32 (62.5%) were taking tuition. In case of good performance students, 26 out of 32 (81.25%) were helped by parents and elder brothers and there was only one who was taking tuition.

Table – 5: Hobbies

Hobbies	Poor Performance		Good Performance	
	No	%	No	%
Regular in Sleeping	24	62	28	87.5
Regular in Playing	20	62.5	32	100
Regular Timing of Meals	28	87.5	26	81
T.V. Viewer	28	87.5	30	94
Reading Newspapers. Books and Magazine	16	50	30	94

Table-5, Habits/Hobbies of the children.

This table shows that 20 out of 32(62.5%) of poor performance and 100% of good performance were playing different games regularly. 8 out of 32(25%) of poor performance and 30 out of 32 (94%) of good performance students were regular readers of books and magazines etc. Other habits of sleeping, timing of meals and T.V. were same for the both groups of students.

Table – 6: Birth Order of the Child in Family

Birth Order	Poor Performance	Good Performance
First Child	16	6
Second Child	4	4
Third Child	6	12
Fourth Child	4	8
Fifth Child	2	2
TOTAL	32	32

Table-6 Birth order of the child in his family.

This table shows that 16 out of 32 (50%) of poor performance students were first child of their family, but in case of good performance 20 out of 32 (62.5%) were intermediate of birth order in their family.

Table -7: Delivery attended by

Delivery attended by	Poor Performance	Good Performance
Doctors	16	16
L.H.V.		2
Trained Midwife	2	2
Self-Trained Dai	12	12
Relative	2	-
TOTAL	32	32

NOTE: 48 deliveries out of 64 were conducted at home and there was no medical problem in pregnancy

Table-7 Medical History

The results show that out of 64 students, 48 (75%) were born at their homes and 32 out of 48 deliveries (66%) were attended by self-trained dais and other para medical staff. There was no history of any infection or abnormality during pregnancy or delivery of all 32 cases included in this study. There was no history of prolonged illness or major injury of any student.

DISCUSSION

This is essentially a pilot study. There are limitations of small sample size, and we do not have a standardized instrument to quantify the academic achievement. However, we feel that the sample is fairly representative of a private school population. Moreover, in view of the fact that there are no standardized academic achievement tests available at present as specified by Jones et al ⁵ we feel academic performance in their own class is a valuable indicator of the children's level of academic achievement.

It is interesting to note that no major medical factors could be identified for affecting the school

performance of children. As these children belonged to upper social class, it appears that they had better antenatal and postnatal care as well as better health surveillance so that they did not have any major physical or mental abnormalities to affect their performance at school.

However, the social factors apparently had an important role. It appears that children of government servants performed better than the children of businessmen. This may be related to the better education of the fathers of the children who are in government service. They may also be able to devote more time with their children than the businessman's group. It is also obvious from the fact that in case of good performance students, more than 80% were helped by parents or relatives and none had any tuition. It appears that it is the contact with and supervision by parents rather than tuition in studies which helps to improve the academic performance of children. Another interesting finding which emerges from this study relates to extracurricular activities of children. A high proportion of good performance children either played some game (100%) or were regular readers of magazines or books (94%). This may well be due to the fact that they did not have to spend extra time in tuition.

It is not possible to generalize from this study. However, this study has served to highlight some of the important factors in educational development of the children. Similar studies on larger scale are needed to confirm the findings of this study and test the hypotheses generated by present data.

No definite recommendation regarding tuition can be made, but our study does indicate that tuition does not improve school performance. Children whose parents take personal interest in their studies appear to do better than children who are left to tutors.

It is suggested that teachers should take more interest in the social background of children and try to help them as much as possible. Once a month meeting with the parents of especially those children whose performance is not satisfactory, should be arranged. If both the parents and teachers start taking personal interest in a child the performance of the child is greatly expected to improve. Although there is a definite role of genes in the intelligent quotient (I.Q.) of a child, but more important in the development of the mental potential is the environment and it is the right of every child to be provided with the optimum environment for attaining his/her maximum mental potential.

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WHEN I WAS THERE (IN MEMORY OF GHUFRAN. AN AUDIOVISUAL EXPERT)

*I TOOK Photographs
Of Occasion Great and Small*

*I was there, upstairs, downstairs
Here, there and everywhere*

*When I fell ill
I could take no photographs*

*Of those last few days
In the college atmosphere*

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