Bright Underachievers: Prevalence and Profile

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ABSTRACT Six hundred adolescents in the age range of 15-17 yrs. were tested for their IQ. From these children, 120 bright children having IQ 110 and above were selected. Academic achievement of these bright children was assessed. Children were divided into high and low achievers following median –split method of marks. Academic performance of high and low achieving bright adolescents was found to be significantly different while their intelligence level was same. In this way existence of bright underachiever population was proved. Their profile was studied to get a general idea of their background.

INTRODUCTION

Intelligence is the greatest human resource. Individuals differ in their level of intelligence. The lowest level presents mental retardation and the highest level shows giftedness. In India, research and education for mentally retarded children have received considerable attention. Government as well as non – government agencies have made appreciable efforts in this field during last two decades. But the gifted Indian students, who need an equal amount of attention, remain neglected. The main reason of this neglect is the unfamiliarity with the concept of IQ and the uncommon use of intelligence tests. Most of the Indian parents do not understand the term IQ. Indian schools do not assess the mental abilities of students through intelligence tests. Age is considered the only criterion for admission to different grades and the academic performance of the students is considered the strongest indicator of their potential. Following this norm, the high IQ children who give poor performance in academics are labeled "dull" or "poor" by their parents and teachers. Hence, the underachieving gifted students remain unidentified and unattended. Though there is abundance of studies on academic achievement of Indian students in general (e.g. Ahmed, 1998; Budhdev, 1999: Devi et al., 1998; Khare, 1996; Taj, 1999; Malik and Balda, 2002), the problem of underachievement among bright students has not been studied specifically. Taking inspiration from large body of foreign research on gifted underachieving students, the present study was conducted with an aim to prove that, like western countries, the population of bright underachievers exists in India

also. The identification of this population may arise the interest of researchers and educators towards studying the needs and problems of these underachieving bright students and help them achieve according to their potential.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

The study was conducted in Hisar city of Haryana state. Six hundred adolescents in the age range of 15-17 studying in three schools (each with a different fee structure representing three economic groups) were included in the study.

These students were tested for their IQ with the help of Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children –Revised (WISC-R) devised by David Wechsler (1978). WISC-R is most widely used intelligence test allover the world. It has a Verbal Subscale and a Performance Subscale, each containing six subtests. Verbal scale yields Verbal IQ and Performance subscale yields Performance IQ. Verbal IQ and Performance IQ are summed up to give Full Scale IQ.WISC-R was administered individually to each child. From these children, 120 children having IQ 110 and above were identified as bright children.

The academic achievement of these students was assessed on the basis of average of percentage of marks obtained by them in last three examinations.

These adolescents were divided into 60 low achievers and 60 high achievers using median split of marks obtained.

Information related to students' profile was gained with the help of a schedule structured by the researcher.

RESULTS

Differences in IQ and Academic Achievement of High and Low Achieving Bright Children: The comparison of mean marks of high and low achieving bright adolescents were made using 't' - test. As it is clear from Table 1, there was no significant difference in the IQ of the two groups but their academic achievement was significantly different, t =5.54 p < 0.10.

Table 1: **Comparison of IQ and academic achievement of high and low achieving bright students**

	High achievers		Low achievers		t - value
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	
IQ	125.12	12.40	124.78	11.83	0.117
Percentage of Marks	73.65	12.72	61.27	12.27	5.54 **

** P<.01

Profile of Bright Underachievers: The profile of underachieving bright students has been shown in Table 2. About 58 percent students were male and nearly 42 percent were first born.

Table 2: Profile of bright underachievers

	F	%
Gender		
Male	35	58.3
Female	25	41.7
Birth Order		
First	24	41.7
Second	18	20
Third	12	20
Fourth	6	10
Fifth	1	1.8
Sixth	4	6.7
Mother's Education		
Illitera te	19	31.7
School level	29	48.3
College level	12	20
Father's Education		
Illiterate	6	10
School level	32	53.3
College level	22	36.7
Caste		
High	36	60
Middle	13	21.7
Low	11	18.3
Family Size		
Small	32	53.3
Large	28	46.7
Father's Occupation		
Service	25	41.7
Business	11	18.3
Agriculture	9	15
Labourer	15	25
Mother's Occupation		
Housewife	50	83.3
Working	10	16.7

Mothers of about 32 percent underachievers were illiterate and only 20 percent received education at college level. In case of fathers, only ten percent were literate and 37 percent had passed college. Sixty percent bright underachievers belonged to higher castes and about 53 percent came from small families. Fathers of approximately 42 percent adolescents were in service, about 18 percent were doing business, 15 percent belonged to farming community and 25 percent were labourers.on the other hand, majority of mothers, i.e. approximately 83 percent, were housewives and only 17 percent were working.

DISCUSSION

Research studies indicate a significant and positive correlation between IQ and academic achievement (Neisser et al., 1996; Anderson and Keith, 1997). It means higher is the level of intelligence of students, better would be their academic performance. In the present study, all the selected adolescents had high IQ with no significant differences and it was expected that their academic achievement would also be similarly high. But the low achieving group showed significantly poor academic performance. Hence, it can be said that the identified low achievers were not doing according to their potential.

CONCLUSION

The present study proves the existence of bright underachieving students in India. This unidentified population is in dire need of attention towards their problems and underlying causes. The talent of these children is being wasted and it becomes moral duty of researchers and educators to help these children in utilizing their potential to a maximum level.

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