

A Study Factors Related to the Low Attendance in the Government Elementary Schools of Ranchi, Jharkhand

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Abstract

This research highlights that education serves as the fundamental cornerstone of societal growth, with schools playing a pivotal role in shaping a nation's future by fostering the holistic development of its citizens. A critical factor in academic success is consistent school attendance; however, frequent absenteeism hinders the progress of both students and teachers. While the government has implemented efforts to provide basic infrastructure in elementary schools, significant "invisible" barriers—such as personal family issues, sibling-related responsibilities, and teacher absenteeism—continue to impede student accessibility. The study concludes that improving attendance rates requires more than just physical facilities; it necessitates a collaborative effort between parents, teachers, civil society, and education officers to remove these persistent socio-personal barriers. Ensuring regular attendance is identified as the essential prerequisite for delivering quality education to all children.

Key Word: Low Attendance, Elementary School

Introduction

Education is one of the basic needs for human development and going to school regularly is crucially important for advancement of a student's academic and social skills (Ghosh et.al. 2017). It is one of the primary agents of transformation towards development. It is the series of activities which may either improve the immediate living conditions or increase the potential for future living. It may play an important role in bringing tangible benefits by developing the skills of the people. It may expand livelihood opportunities and increase earning potential and thus help in tackling the problem of poverty at large. The major role that education has been able to play is regarding knowledge inculcation and skill improvement of the person. Amartya Sen argued that providing primary education, we can bring for faster development in India.

Education is the principal factor in the development and growth of a child in preparing them to be a responsible and capable citizen. It is the most important asset we have because knowledge is the type of wealth that we will never lose no matter what we do, and the more we share it the more it increases. Elementary education is regarded as the foundation on which learning, growth and development of the individuals takes place. It is the primary objective of elementary schools to create the foundation on which growth and development of the individuals takes place. However, basic knowledge starts with elementary education without it none of our dreams will

be possible. Elementary education is like the first and foremost phase, we take in life; we will never be able to run if we don't learn how to walk. It plays a very critical role in ones educational life. Elementary education has certain targeted roles to play in a child's life such as enabling children to learn reading, writing, arithmetic, and creativity along with character building, critical thinking, logical judgement, communication and socialization skills, behavioural, social, cultural, cognitive, physical and emotional development. Elementary education helps pupil to build challenging and competitive environment among themselves that help to create competition and motivate them to work harder, better, and creatively bringing out the best out of themselves.

The key objective of the elementary education is to teach children to think analytically, to achieve high living standards, to face the challenges posed by technological development and advancement of citizenship and basic values. It provides safe and positive environment where effective learning can take place. Primary education aimed to provide an opportunity to have a team that is steady to interact. Elementary education enables students to make friends who facilitate acquisition and development of communication skills. It is the phase where students may be influenced positively or negatively. The future of a child is totally dependent on the elementary education. It would boost kids' self-confidence and offer child the skills they need for the long success in this competitive world. The growth is parallel to the future of our country, reflected through quality of the present education system. A school must stimulate curiosity in the young, impressionable minds and equip them with tools to be better human beings.

Earlier the education system was based on 10+2 pattern but now after National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 came into force and it has been changed to 5+3+3+4 structure. This policy has been revised after 34 years. In NEP focus is given on early childhood as it is the foundation age. Attaining foundational literacy and numeracy for all children will thus become an urgent national mission, with immediate measures to be taken on many fronts and with clear goals that will be attained in the short term (including that every student will attain foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3). The highest priority of the education system will be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school by 2025 (NEP 2020). NEP has taken initiatives to bring students to the schools. The first is to provide effective and sufficient infrastructure so that all students have access to safe and engaging school education at all levels from pre-primary school to Grade 12. Besides providing regular trained teachers at each stage, special care shall be taken to ensure that no school remains deficient on infrastructure support. The second is to achieve universal participation in school by carefully tracking students, as well as their learning levels, to ensure that they (a) are enrolled in and attending school, and (b) have suitable opportunities to catch up and re-enter school in case they have fallen behind or dropped out.

Need of the Research

Low attendance of student is a serious issue in Government schools. Many efforts have been taken by the Government to promote student engagement in learning in school but still students are not coming to school regularly. Low attendance in school create problem both for teacher and student. Teacher must repeat the lesson taught due to frequent absent of students and unable to complete the syllabus on time. Absenteeism of students disturbs dynamics of teaching learning

environment and adversely affects overall well-being of classes (Segal, 2008). Low attendance is the prelude reason for wastage, deployment of resources, affects augmentation of individual knowledge and sometimes social obligations, which shirk the whole community of student and spin an impact on society and nation too. Government has taken many initiatives to reduce absenteeism among students but there are many factors which force students for not attending school regularly. Sometimes, school environment, teacher and season play vital role in attendance of students. Further, infrastructural facilities which includes toilet, drinking facilities, distribution of books, playing material, availability of classroom, teaching learning material, regularity, and availability of teacher for taking class etc. contribute for low attendance. Lack of female teacher and distance of school from home is also one of the factors of low attendance. Most of the family did not allow the girls students to attend school if lady teacher is not placed in the school. Sometimes students remain absent as they must earn for their family. Seasonal absence from the school results in poor relation with peers, friends, and teachers and automatically it creates dislike for the studies which resulted in absence from the school (Sahin and Arseven, 2016).

There is not any defined reason for not attending the school by students as there are variety of reasons with which students are dealing. Karlberg et al. (2020) reported that a positive school climate was associated with less unauthorized absenteeism when the climate was rated by students in the school. Thapa and Sarkar (2019) revealed that due to livelihood pressure at home and the double burden of household chores and income-generating work along with inadequate support from school made it challenging for children to complete elementary education. Aseefa (2018) reported that the causes of absenteeism are teaching is not connected to life of child, low parent education and negative attitude towards teachers.

The above analysis indicated different causes of low attendance in schools in various countries. No study reported that was conducted in Jharkhand specially in Government elementary schools. On the other hand, Jharkhand is a state dominated by tribes and many areas are difficult to access due to forest and mountains. Therefore, need was felt to study 'Factors Related to the Low Attendance in the Government Elementary Schools of Ranchi, Jharkhand'.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the causes of low attendance of students in elementary schools.
2. To study the infrastructure facilities, resource materials and human resources available with schools having low attendance.

Scope of the Research

This research project was delimited to 10 elementary schools selected from Ranchi district of Jharkhand state. Further, the study was confined to 10 HMs and 20 teachers at elementary level.

Method

The present study was conducted on low attendance of students in Government Elementary Schools of Jharkhand. The aim of the study was to study the causes of low attendance in Government Elementary Schools. The investigator used quantitative research approach and survey method to study the different causes which affects low attendance of students in school from the perspectives of teachers and HMs.

Sample

The sample selected for the study was 10 elementary schools, 20 teachers and 10 HMs. Schools were purposefully selected from the Ranchi district of Jharkhand State. Then, all HMs and 20 teachers are involved in the data collection process. The investigator used following self-developed tools for data collection as per the objectives of the study.

Major Findings

1. Children studying in elementary school go to work to earn money for the family is one of the causes of low attendance. Nobody in the family to send children to school as both parents go for work is one of the causes of low attendance as expressed by more than 68% of teachers.
2. Children are involved in domestic work/help parents in work, take care of siblings etc. for which they miss the school. Further, parents do not encourage children for going to school regularly may be the cause of low attendance.
3. Majority of parents migrate from one place to another place for searching job so children are also migrate along with parents for which children could not attend school regularly.
4. Abusive home environment of children does not encourage and monitor children to attend school regularly. Further, homesickness of children may be one of the factors of low attendance.
5. Due to lack of teachers in school, students are not meaningfully engaged in learning for which students do not come to school. 46% of the SMC does not help school in bringing all children to school regularly.
6. More than 30 percent of teachers believed that students are not coming to school due to less interest in studies, poor in studies, lack in basic reading and writing skills and have inferiority complex.
7. More than 70% of teachers responded that students do not attend school during harvesting season, rainy season and after long vacations.
8. All HMs expressed that playing materials are not adequately available in all the schools like cricket is available in only 30% of schools and volleyball in 60% of schools which may be one of the causes of low attendance.
9. Less than 50% of schools have playground which helps in making the students physically fit. It is the basic infrastructure facility for a school. Not having playground in school discourages students to attend school regularly.
10. All HMs reported that due to lack of toilet facility in schools may lead to low attendance of students specially girls.

11. Art education and health and physical education teacher is available in only 13% and 7% of schools respectively, which may result in low attendance among students.
12. Regular HMs are available only in 17% of elementary schools and majority of schools are managed by In-charge HM, which may be one of the causes of low attendance.
13. Teaching learning material is the heart of teaching. But globe is available in 73% of schools but it is functional in 33% of schools, science kit is functional in 46.67% of schools and computer in 53% of schools. This may discourage students to come to school regularly as these items are necessary to make teaching learning effective.
14. Less than 50% of schools do not organize co-curricular activities. Science and cultural activities are organized only in 10% of schools. This may demotivate students to come regularly.
15. HMs reported that a smaller number of female teachers are positioned in elementary schools, which may be responsible for low attendance of students.
16. HMs expressed that in 40% of schools one room is available for each class which forces teachers to take multi-grade class in one room. The multigrade teaching may not satisfy all learners in understanding subjects which may be one of the causes of low attendance of students.
17. All the schools have SMC, but they are not helping school in bringing students to school every day.

Educational Implications

1. This study indicated that causes related to family and parents such as working of both parents, involvement of children in domestic work, taking care of siblings, migration of parents for work, during harvesting session, low aspiration of parents etc. are responsible for low attendance of students in elementary school. Students can only regularly attend school when parents take interest and monitor student's attendance. Parent must motivate and encourage their wards for attending school as free student from domestic work during school hours. It is required to create awareness for parents about importance of education in the life of children and how education can improve the quality of life. The Government departments as well as civil society, NGOs, local PRI members, SMC members, volunteers may take up this awareness programme for parents. The Government must use non formal education channels to educate parent in basic literacy and numeracy which can motivate parents to send their wards to school regularly.
2. Student related factors such as low motivation for study, poor in academic, lack of basic reading, writing skills, peer pressure, early marriage of girls etc. are identified as another important aspect of low attendance. Parents and teachers can work hand in hand to create motivation for education and develop basic literacy skills which are necessary for success in formal education. School can provide counselling service to all demotivated students to up their motivation for studies. Teachers can plan and provide extra classes in suitable time for providing basic literacy skills so that student can understand what is taught in school.
3. School related factors such as inadequate infrastructure, teaching learning resources, textbooks, lack of teachers, poor teaching strategy, multigrade teaching, lack of regular head teacher, participation of SMC etc. are leading to low attendance of students. Hence, basic infrastructure facilities like classrooms equipped with electricity, fans, blackboard etc. must

be provided which help school to provide better school environment. Conducive school environment can motivate and attract children to school regularly.

4. Teaching learning resources like science kits, mathematic kits, globes, charts etc. are essential to provide meaningful learning experience to student. It is found that majority of schools lack these resources. It is suggested to the Government for taking initiatives to provide minimum teaching learning resources to all elementary schools so that children can learn effectively which can help school to attract students.
5. Teacher is the backbone of school education system. It is not possible to increase attendance in schools without support and cooperation of teachers. All teachers may be provided training in child centered, art integrated and sports integrated pedagogy so that they can make classroom teaching livelier and more effective. This will motivate students to come to school regularly.
6. The problems of low attendance in Government schools need to be properly monitored and managed by the help of HMs, SMC, and PRI members. The study found that majority of schools are running by In-charge HM and SMC members are not cooperating to school in improving attendance. The Government may take urgent initiative to appoint regular HMs in all elementary schools who can take major academic decision for school development. Further, all SMC and PRI members may be oriented and encouraged to cooperate in the school development and bringing all children of their locality to school regularly.

Conclusion

Education forms the foundation of any society. The growth and development of society depends upon the quality of education imparted in schools. So, school plays an important role in moulding a nation's future by facilitating all round development of its future citizen. The attendance rate is important because students are more likely to succeed in academics when they attend school consistently. It is difficult for the teacher and the class to build their skills and progress if many students are frequently absent. The Government has been trying to provide basic facilities in elementary schools but still the students are not approachable because there are some problems which are beyond the curtain and it is not visible through naked eyes. The Government should take initiative to remove the barriers which are related to student's personal life like family problems, siblings issues, teacher absent etc. Finally, it can be said that these problems are not new, but with the passage of time, we are not able to eradicate it completely. The rate of attendance will not improve until and unless barriers are removed from the path of education. It can only be achieved by the cooperation of parents, teacher, civil society, and education officers. Once regular attendance is ensured, and then we can provide quality education to all children.

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