

# Academic Achievement of the Scheduled Caste College Students in Manonmaniam Sundaranar University

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The objective of the study was to find out the influence of the psychological factors on the academic achievement of the scheduled caste (SC) college students of the Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. Results showed that the SC students were above average in their academic achievement. These students were also found to have freed themselves from psychological deprivation as they possessed good temperament, good adjustment, high self-concept and high level of independence. One problem of the SC students, as the study indicates, is their high anxiety levels.

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## INTRODUCTION

There are many children whose academic achievement in schools do not match their mental abilities. And then there are many others whose academic achievement is higher than their mental capabilities. There must exist certain aspects of in children's personalities, which enable the latter to be more successful than what their latent abilities would warrant. Also, there must be other variables of a personality, which restrain the former in their academic pursuits and force them to follow the achievement their mental capabilities warrant.

To support such an observation, many researchers have reported significant association between certain non-cognitive factors and academic achievement (Cattell, 1967; Dhaliwal, 1971; Gopalacharyulu, 1984; Gupta, 1983; Jahan, 1985; Hussain, 1977; Sharma, 1979).

### *Extroversion/Introversion and Academic Achievement*

Several British studies seem to confirm the academic superiority over the extrovert (Entwistle, 1972; Entwistle and Brennan, 1971;

Entwistle and Enwistle, 1970; Lavin, 1965). Likewise, many investigators from different countries (Cole, 1974; De Barbenza and Montoya, 1974; Dessent, 1977; Ennis, 1973; Gaffrey, 1974; Garret, 1978; Gouer, 1976; Lee, 1975; Mandal and others, 1974; Meehan, 1975; Orme, 1975; Somasundaram, 1980; Srivastava and Saxena 1979; Talley, 1976) have shown that introversion is positively associated with high academic achievement.

### ***Self-Concept and Academic Achievement***

Bhatnagar (1969) and Shivappa (1969) have reported positive relationship between academic achievement and self-concept of high school students. Pratibha and Sharma (1970) found that students with an average level of self-concept scored higher in achievement than those who had a very high or low self-concept.

Vasantha (1970) found that urban and rural students differed in their self-concept scores and achievement scores. She also found that boys had significantly higher scores than girls. Pratibha and Bhullar (1974) and Saraswati and Gaur (1979) state that the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement is positive and significant. Other studies (Pathni, 1985; Singha, 1983; Sundaram, 1983; Sween, 1984) have also found positive correlation between self-concept and academic achievement.

### ***Independence and Academic Achievement***

Studies have also shown that independent students tend to choose abstract, analytical majors such as mathematics, engineering and physics, while dependent students tend to choose majors that deal more directly with people such as social work, nursing and the humanities.

### ***Temperament and Academic Achievement***

Walson (1960) found that low achievers tended to be nervous and resistant. Klienmuntz (1969) found under-achievers to be ineffectual, pessimistic, procrastinating, anxious and worried. Robers (1969) found over-achievers to be serious, honest, industrious, modest, obliging and steady, while the under-achievers were defensive, resentful, demanding, stubborn, rebellious and inconsistent in temperament. Agarwal (1975) and Sharma (1981)-found under-achievers comparatively less emotionally mature.

### ***Adjustment and Academic Achievement***

Studies in the area of academics as related to adjustment have been made by many researchers, including Sundaram (1983). Rao (1963) studied university students' academic performance and reported that the over-achievers tended to differ significantly from normal achievers. Vighnoi (1974) found that high-achievers were better adjusted than low-achievers in five areas of adjustment as well as total adjustment scores.

### ***Anxiety and Academic Achievement***

Research in general indicates that achievement anxiety affects academic achievement. As per Donal's (1973) study, anxious children are prone to lower levels of achievement. Sinha (1974) found that manifest anxiety symptoms had a debilitating effect upon academic achievement. Deshpande (1984), Mehrotra (1986), Sundaram (1983), and Vishnoi (1975), reported that anxiety played an important role in pulling down achievement, perhaps to a greater extent in the case of under-achievers than in the case of over-achievers. A negative relationship between anxiety and academic achievement is thus established from the above studies.

The psychological characteristics cited above - extroversion / introversion, self-concept, independence, temperament, adjustment and anxiety have been found to influence a student's academic achievement.

There are many studies which prove that the scheduled caste (SC) students are found to be lower in their academic achievement when compared to their counterparts from the general castes, mainly because of their psychological deficiencies, for example Verma and Sheikh, 1992. However, some of the studies on the SC students show that they are as good as the students of the privileged classes in many of these characteristics.

As each state or locality of a country, especially like that of India is unique in its character, customs and traditions, the research findings of a given state or locality can have neither identical nor the same implication for the others. Therefore, a study of the above mentioned psychological characteristics of the SC students seems to be essential to identify the factors influencing the academic achievement of the SC students in colleges affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.

## **PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The present study examines the personality characteristics of the SC college students and their academic achievement. The specific questions covering different aspects of the study are expressed as the objectives of the study:

1. To find out the level of the academic achievement of the SC college students.
2. To make an appraisal of the stature of the SC college students in respect of their psychological characteristics.
3. To find out the difference in the academic achievement of the students with regard to the background variables of gender, subject of study, course of study, and locality.
4. To find out the correlation between the academic achievement of the SC college students and the above mentioned background variables.
5. To find out the correlation between the academic achievement of the SC college students and the following psychological characteristics:
  - extroversion / introversion,
  - self-concept,
  - independence,
  - temperament,
  - adjustment, and
  - anxiety.
6. To find out the difference between
  - the SC boys and the SC girls,
  - the SC Arts students and the SC Science students,
  - the SC undergraduate students and the SC postgraduate students, and
  - the SC rural and SC urban studentswith regard to the correlation between their academic achievement and the above mentioned psychological characteristics.

## **HYPOTHESES**

The hypotheses of the study are as follows:

1. The academic achievement of the SC college students is low.
2. The SC college students are deficient in the psychological characteristics.

3. There is no significant difference between the SC students categorised on the basis of the background variables with regard to their academic achievement.
4. The academic achievement of the SC college students is not significantly correlated with the background variables.
5. The academic achievement of the SC college students is not significantly correlated with psychological characteristics.
6. There is no significant difference between
  - the SC boys and the SC girls,
  - the SC Arts students and the SC Science students,
  - the SC undergraduate students and SC post-graduate students, and
  - the SC rural and SC urban students,with regard to the correlation between their academic achievement and the psychological characteristics.

## **METHOD**

The sample of the study comprised 642 college students who were randomly chosen from different strata of the population. The study covered the three district areas, namely Nellai Kattabomman, V.O. Chidambaranar and Kanyakumari. The sample included in the study had the following stratifications: male/female; Arts/Science; undergraduate/post-graduate; and rural/urban.

The investigator used the Multi-Dimensional Personality Inventory prepared and standardised by Agarwal (1979). It measures six dimensions of the personality. These dimensions are: extroversion/ introversion, self-concept, independence, temperament, adjustment and anxiety. Each one has been considered as a form of psychological make-up of the individuals under investigation.

The scores for academic achievement was obtained from the university examination marks. These marks were changed into standard scores before computation.

The scores obtained by students on the personality test and academic achievement were subjected to the statistical analysis for testing the stated hypotheses. The statistical techniques used to test the hypotheses were percentage analysis, 't' test, point biserial correlation, and tetra choric correlation.

## **RESULTS**

### ***Findings Related to Academic Achievement***

The SC college students of the MSU are found to be above average (67 per cent) in their academic achievement. The SC students studying in colleges affiliated to the MSU, irrespective of their gender difference (males 69 per cent; females 63 per cent), nature of course of study (Arts 67 per cent; Science 66 per cent), level of course of study (undergraduate 67 per cent, post-graduate 75 per cent), and urban-rural living (rural 67 per cent; urban 69 per cent), show above average levels of academic achievement.

### ***Findings Related to the Nature of Psychological Characteristics***

1. *Extroversion/Introversion*: The SC college students studying in college affiliated to the MSU, irrespective of their gender difference, nature of the course of study, level of the study, and urban-rural living are predominantly introverts.
2. *Self-Concept*: The SC college students of the MSU, except those studying in post-graduate courses manifest high self-concept.
3. *Independence/Dependence*: The SC students, irrespective of their gender difference, nature of course of study, level of the course of the study and rural-urban living, manifest higher level of independence.
4. *Temperament*: The SC students irrespective of their gender difference, nature of the course of study, level of the course of study and rural-urban living, manifest good temperament.
5. *Adjustment*: The SC students irrespective of their background variables are good in adjustment.
6. *Anxiety*: All the categories of the SC students studying in the colleges affiliated to the M.S. University except the males and those studying in the PG courses possess high anxiety.

### ***Findings Related to Academic Achievement and Background Variables***

The academic achievement of the male SC students of the MSU is found to be significantly higher than that of the female students. Similarly, the academic achievement of the SC college students studying Arts subjects is found to be significantly higher than that of the Science SC college students. Likewise, the academic achievement of the

post-graduate SC college students is found to be significantly higher than that of the under-graduate SC college students. The academic achievement of the urban SC students is found to be significantly higher than that of the rural SC students.

*Findings Related to the Correlation between the Academic Achievement and Background Factors*

Gender is found to be a significant correlate of the academic achievement of the SC college students of the MSU. Similarly, the course of study (under-graduate/post-graduate) is found to be a significant correlate of the academic achievement of the SC college students.

However, the subject of study (Arts/Science) and the locality (rural/urban) are not found to be significant correlates of academic achievement.

*Findings Related to Academic Achievement and Psychological Characteristics with Regard to Background Variables*

The psychological characteristic — extroversion/introversion — is a significant correlate of the academic achievement of the following categories of SC students: male students, students of Science courses, and undergraduate students.

The psychological characteristic — self-concept — is a significant correlate of the academic achievement of female students, Science students, undergraduate students and the rural students.

The psychological characteristic — independence — is not a significant correlate of the academic achievement of the SC students categorised on the basis of the background characteristics.

The psychological characteristic — adjustment — is not found to be a significant correlate of academic achievement, except for that of female students.

The psychological characteristic — anxiety — is a significant correlate of the academic achievement of the female students, Science students and undergraduate students only.

## DISCUSSION

The finding of a somewhat good academic achievement of the SC college students of the MSU is a socially encouraging one. It shows that they have started shaking off the shackles of their deprivation. The finding indicates that changes in the non-cognitive characteristics may have contributed to the favourable academic achievement of the

SC students. Moreover, the financial assistance given to them in the form of scholarships, freships, hostel facilities and reservations may have facilitated their educational advancement. Therefore, it may be concluded that the removal of handicaps in any form will enable them to adequately cope with the present educational demands.

Though the finding related to the academic achievement of the SC college students of the total sample indicates that these students belong to the above average categories, there are variations in their academic achievement with regard to background factors. Contrary to the current records of the academic achievement of male and female students of TAMIL NADU at all levels, male SC college students have registered a higher level of academic achievement than the female SC college students. This may be due to the differences in their academic pursuits. Though the male and the female SC college students stand an equal chance of benefiting from the various uplifting efforts made by the government and other agencies, in the utilisation of chances the male students seem to be dominating over the female students. Moreover, non-academic tasks at home, cultural inhibitions and familial discouragement may be having an adverse effect on the performance of the female SC students. This finding is contradictory to the finding of Rangari (1981).

Another rather strange finding is the not so good academic performance of the SC students pursuing Science courses. The SC Arts students having limited their ambition, perhaps achieved a confidence in their ability to realise it and consequently performed better than the SC Science students. On the other hand, it may be interpreted that the SC Science students may be feeling all along that they had bitten more than they could chew.

The post-graduate SC college students have shown a higher-level achievement than the under-graduate SC students. This may be the result of their inherent mental calibre coming out rather late and their acquired ambition. Students of urban areas have been found to have scored better in academic achievement than the students of rural areas. Though the rural students, who were a part of the subject of this study, spoke of financial support for their college education, the necessity to perform domestic chores, a non-intellectual home atmosphere, and an atmosphere of want have perhaps prevented them from aiming at the maximum academic standard fixed mostly by an upper caste elite. The findings of the present study in this matter is similar to those of Misra (1986), Pandey (1981) and Puri (1984).

On combining the findings related to difference in achievement due to background factors and the correlative background factors, it may be inferred that in the case of the males, the chances of scoring high in academic achievement are greater than those of the females as in the case of post-graduates over the under-graduates. But in the case of the subject of study (Arts and Science) and locality (rural and urban), such a strong relationship is not observed, though mean differences are noted between the two groups.

As far as the findings related to psychological characteristics are concerned the following interpretations could be given. The SC college students are predominantly introverts. Bhagoliwal (1985), Das (1973) and Verma (1986) have arrived at the same finding. In this study, it was found that extroversion/introversion is positively associated with high achievement. It has been well established that stable introverts are good achievers. Entwistle (1972), Entwistle and Brennan (1971) and Lavin (1965) were also of this view. It is probable that the SC college students were able to achieve higher chiefly because of their introvert nature.

By juxtaposing the finding with the predominance of introversion in the case of the SC college students, it may be concluded that by virtue of being introverts, male SC students, the SC students of the Science courses and under-graduate SC students may stand a better chance of being high achievers than the female or Arts, post-graduate or the rural or urban SC college students.

The SC college students of the different categories (except the post-graduate) students seem to possess high self-concept. This finding is contradictory to the generally accepted thesis that a child born in a SC family, is convinced very early in life that whatever be his/her efforts, achievement and academic achievement, his position in the rigid Hindu hierarchical society cannot be changed.

Again, it has been found that self-concept is a significant correlate of academic achievement (in the case of females, Science, undergraduate and the rural SC students). This finding is supported by Pratibha and Bullar (1974) and Saraswati and Gaur (1979). In the present study, respondents with high self-concept scored higher in academic achievement than those with low self-concept. It is in a way different from the findings of Pratibha and Sharma (1970).

Another interesting finding of the study is that the SC college students are found to be high in independence. They have happily come to possess this important characteristic, found usually in the

privileged ones. This finding is contradictory to the findings of Verma and Sheikh (1992). However, it is in agreement with the findings of Rath and Misra (1974) and Tiku (1990).

Independence is not found to be a significant correlate of the academic achievement of the SC college students. This means, that the SC students, whether they belong to the high independence or the low independence category, do not differ from one another in academic achievement. It is contradictory to the finding of Robers (1962).

In the case of temperament of the sample, the SC students are found have a good temperament. This may, probably, be one of the reasons for their academic success. The present finding is in agreement with the findings of Gupta (1978), Mishra (1985) and Sujatha and Yeshodhara (1986). Again, temperament is found to be a significant correlate of the academic achievement of the SC college students. In the present study, respondents with good temperament scored better than respondents with bad temperament.

When the correlation between academic achievement and temperament with regard to background factors is computed, it is found that there is significant correlation in the case of the male, Science, undergraduate and urban SC students, which means that in the case of the above mentioned categories, the above-average level of academic achievement may be due to the psychological characteristic temperament. The other categories of SC students (female, Arts, post-graduate and rural) may not have gained much because of their good temperament.

Another notable feature of the SC college students is that they are good in adjustment, an important constituent of a balanced personality. The present study reveals that deprivation does not have any influence over the adjustment behaviour of SC college students. Probably, this is one of the contributors for the above- average level of their academic achievement. This finding is corroborated by Choksi (1975), Sharma (1979) and Singh (1982), but is contradictory to the findings of Aggarwal (1970), Kamlesh (1981), Sen (1982), Sharma (1982) and Shiv Shankara (1981). Again, adjustment is not found to be a significant correlate of the academic achievement of the SC college students, except in the case of female students. This means that there may not be a significant difference in the academic achievement between the two groups of respondents, namely with good adjustment and those with poor adjustment. But in the case of the female students

alone, adjustment is found to be highly useful in promoting their academic achievement.

As far as anxiety is concerned, SC students belong to the high anxiety level. Again, there are variations in the level of anxiety of SC students when their background factors are taken into consideration. Male students experience low level of anxiety and female students experience high level of anxiety; undergraduate students experience high level of anxiety while the post-graduate students experience low level of anxiety. To some extent it explains the reasons for the difference in academic achievement.

It has also been found that anxiety is a significant correlate of academic achievement. Contrary to our expectation, it has been found from the present study that SC students with high anxiety scored better in academic achievement than students with low anxiety.

When the correlation between academic achievement and anxiety with regard to background factors is studied, it is found that there is significant correlation in the case of female, Science and undergraduate SC students only. Though it seems to explain the difference between the male and the female, the Arts and the Science and the under-graduate and post-graduate in academic achievement, it has led to an inexplicable finding with regard to rural and urban students, that is, the difference in the academic achievement of rural and urban students is not due to their level of anxiety.

## **CONCLUSION**

The SC college students of the MSU have reached an appreciable level of educational attainment. It is an encouraging phenomenon in view of the fact that their communities form the majority of the population of the three districts covered by the University. Moreover, these students are found to have freed themselves from psychological deprivation in as much as they have come to possess psychological traits like good temperament, good adjustment, high self-concept and high level of independence. This again is an encouraging achievement.

Fortunately, through their good temperament and good adjustment, the SC students have shown that they are happy about, if not enthusiastic about, the chances of socially integrating themselves with their erstwhile exploiters. Residence with non-SC students in hostels has to a large extent made this possible by at least driving the feeling of isolation into their subconscious, to die there, let us hope, in course of time.

One major problem of the SC college students on the psychological plane is their high anxiety levels. This problem is not easy to tackle. Research must be undertaken to find out its magnitude and probable reasons for it. One fair guess for its presence is their educationally and socially poor community background. Fear of disrespect and contempt from more fortunate sections of the student community; fear that given their poor background, they may not be able to compete successfully with the more fortunate ones; and fear that if they fail in their educational career, their future may be gloomy may cause high anxiety.

Such an explanation certainly implies the urgent need for fulfilling the requirements of the SC college students at this juncture. The factor responsible for such a negative reaction in individuals may also be the question of means for employments available through education. Since the present day college education does not guarantee a job, the higher education (which the SC college students are pursuing with very great difficulty) may in itself be a cause for anxiety. Therefore, the government and the other agencies should strive to provide them with necessary facilities to prepare themselves for a job or a career in the course of their study itself.

The design and application of effective preventive interventions depend, to a large extent, on empirical findings. The investigator believes the present study and its major findings will serve as foundation material for further research on this subject.

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