

An Intervention Study among Scholastically Backward Graduate Students in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Scholastic backwardness in college students may arise from a combination of psychological, environmental, and systemic factors. Despite the emphasis on educational excellence in the state of Kerala, the issue of scholastic backwardness persists among a subset of college students. The absence of localized research in Kerala necessitates a comprehensive study to provide actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and counselors. The study aims to assess the academic motivation and self-esteem of graduate students. Understanding the relationship between academic motivation and self-esteem is imperative to devise effective interventions. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring the effectiveness of an integrated intervention program that combines educational awareness sessions, motivational training, study strategies, and art therapy to improve academic performance and emotional well-being among scholastically backward young adults. The findings suggest that consistent implementation of such programs can help bridge academic gaps, improve retention rates, and empower students to achieve their potential. The study highlighted the importance of holistic approaches that go beyond academic remediation to include emotional and social development.

Keywords: Scholastically Backward Students, Academic motivation, Self-esteem Intervention, Kerala

INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a cornerstone for individual and societal development, equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute meaningfully to their communities. A section of students in higher education institutions struggles academically, often labelled as scholastically backward. These students fail to meet the expected performance standards despite adequate resources and opportunities. Scholastic backwardness in college students may arise from a combination of psychological, environmental, and systemic factors. Among these, academic motivation and self-esteem are crucial psychosocial constructs influencing a student's ability to perform. Academic motivation encompasses intrinsic and extrinsic drivers that encourage students to engage with and persist in their studies. Self-esteem reflects a student's confidence in their abilities and their

overall sense of worth. Low levels in either domain can create a cycle of poor performance, diminished confidence, and disengagement. Scholastically backward students often find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of poor academic performance and low self-esteem. Their academic struggles are compounded by a lack of engagement, poor study habits, and a failure to appreciate the importance of education in their lives. In many cases, traditional educational strategies do not fully address the complex needs of these students, leaving them feeling disengaged and disheartened.

In India, the state of Kerala stands out with its high literacy rate and robust educational infrastructure. Despite the emphasis on educational excellence in Kerala, the issue of scholastic backwardness persists among a subset of college students. In the context of Kerala, this paradox raises significant concerns. While the state's educational policies and infrastructure promote access and equity,

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the persistence of academic underachievement highlights the need to address the underlying psychological factors. This disparity underscores the inadequacy of existing interventions in addressing the unique needs of these students. Academic motivation and self-esteem are widely recognized as critical determinants of student success. However, limited research has explored these constructs in the context of Kerala's higher education system.

By focusing on academic motivation and self-esteem, this study aims to shed light on how these constructs influence the academic outcomes of scholastically backward college students. Understanding the relationship between academic motivation, self-esteem, and scholastic performance is imperative to devising effective interventions. Moreover, the absence of localized research in Kerala necessitates a comprehensive study to provide actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and counselors. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring the effectiveness of an integrated intervention program that combines educational awareness sessions, motivational training, study strategies, and art therapy to improve academic performance and emotional well-being among scholastically backward graduate students.

Research Objectives:

General Objective:

To conduct an integrated intervention program to improve the academic performance and motivation in scholastically backward graduate students.

Specific Objectives:

1. To assess the self-esteem of the respondents
2. To evaluate the achievement motivation of the respondents.
3. To prepare an intervention module on academic enrichment.
4. To explore the benefits of intervention module among the participants.

Review of Literature:

Review of Literature of studies related to academic performance, academic motivation and self-esteem done in the past ten years in India are explained in this section. Roy and Sarkar (2015) conducted a study in Kolkata (West Bengal) in which they analyzed the socioeconomic factors affecting the performance of backward students. Findings indicated that poverty, lack of parental education,

and inadequate resources were key challenges. Study done by Naik and Pillai (2016) in Mumbai (Maharashtra) examined the role of emotional intelligence training in fostering resilience and motivation. The intervention enabled students to manage emotions effectively, leading to improved scholastic performance. Mukherjee and Basu (2017), investigated the impact of nutritional programs like midday meals on cognitive and academic outcomes in rural schools of rural West Bengal. The study showed a direct correlation between improved nutrition and enhanced academic performance. Menon and Iyer (2018), studied the impact of blended learning methods, combining traditional and digital approaches, on low-performing students in Kerala. Results showed improved engagement and academic success. Study in Odisha by Das and Sinha (2018), analyzed how teacher motivation impacts student outcomes. Motivated teachers demonstrated better classroom strategies, leading to improved student engagement and performance. Patil and Deshmukh (2018) explored the impact of motivational workshops on self-efficacy among low-performing mathematics students in Pune in Maharashtra. The workshops emphasized goal-setting techniques and regular feedback, resulting in improved problem-solving skills and confidence.

Rani and Kumar (2019), studied the role of digital learning tools in STEM education, demonstrating that interactive apps and virtual labs enhanced student engagement and academic outcomes, especially for backward learners in Chennai (Tamil Nadu). Study conducted in Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) by Pandey and Singh (2019) examined the influence of parental involvement on the academic performance of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. The study highlighted that active parental participation through regular communication, home support, and engagement with school activities significantly improved students' academic outcomes. Sharma *et al.* (2020) investigated challenges posed by language barriers in English-medium schools for backward learners in Jaipur (Rajasthan). The study identified communication gaps, lack of linguistic support, and cultural disparities as key factors hindering academic performance and proposed bilingual teaching strategies to mitigate these issues. Choudhary and Patel (2019) evaluated cooperative learning strategies in group-based settings in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The approach encouraged teamwork and mutual support, leading to better academic outcomes. Kaur and Singh (2019)

explored how physical activities and sports improved concentration and academic performance in students of Punjab. The study revealed that regular engagement in structured physical activities enhanced cognitive skills and focus.

Khan *et al.* (2020), investigated the role of vocational training in enhancing the motivation of backward learners in Jharkhand. Training programs linked to employability increased engagement and aspirations. Studies done in Kolkata (West Bengal) by Das *et al.* (2020), evaluated the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in reducing academic anxiety. The study revealed that regular mindfulness sessions improved concentration, reduced stress, and boosted students' academic performance. Gupta and Arora (2020) developed intervention programs to enhance adolescent resilience, emphasizing self-regulation and problem-solving skills. The program improved students' ability to cope with academic pressures. Agarwal *et al.* (2021), Bihar Implemented peer mentoring programs for low-performing rural students. The initiative fostered confidence, peer support, and improved scholastic outcomes.

Verma *et al.* (2021), introduced peer-assisted learning models for mathematics, where students in NCR Delhi, collaborated in groups to solve problems. The intervention improved mathematical understanding and fostered a sense of community among underperforming students. Rao *et al.* (2021) highlighted the impact of positive reinforcement and personalized feedback on student engagement in their study conducted in Hyderabad. The study showed that teacher-student interactions tailored to individual needs significantly boosted academic performance and participation. In the research study done in Bengaluru, Meena and Rao (2022) addressed gender disparities in academic motivation and performance. The study suggested tailored interventions to enhance self-confidence and equal opportunities for boys and girls, reducing the performance gap. Reddy and Narayanan (2022) examined the correlation between parental education levels and scholastic backwardness in study done in Chennai. The study found that higher parental education positively influenced students' academic success. Shukla and Mehta (2023), studied the effects of community engagement programs on motivation of students in Varanasi. Activities like community clean-ups and awareness drives enhanced self-esteem and a sense of responsibility among students.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design is utilized for this study, aiming to assess the effectiveness of a structured intervention program that combines educational awareness, motivational activities, study skills, exam strategies, and creative art therapy in improving the academic performance, motivation, and emotional well-being of scholastically backward students.

Sample Selection:

The target population for this study include undergraduate students enrolled in their second year at the institution. Specifically, students identified as scholastically backward based on academic performance assessments conducted by their respective teachers is the focus. A total of 64 students is selected to participate in the intervention. This number ensures a manageable group size for effective intervention while providing sufficient data for analysis.

Data Collection Tools:

To assess the effectiveness of the intervention, data will be collected using the following tools:

Academic Performance Records:

These records collected from the institution's academic database to assess students' performance before the intervention, to screen the students for selection as samples.

Self-Esteem Scale:

A standardized self-esteem scale by Morris Rosenberg administered to assess students' self-confidence and emotional well-being before the intervention.

Academic motivation scale:

Assessment of students' Academic motivation is conducted to obtain a baseline data of the students. Academic motivation Scale by Vallerand *et al.* (1989).

Data Analysis:

Data is analysed by Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). Data is presented in tables and figures.

Intervention Curriculum:

After obtaining verbal consent from the Heads of

Departments (HoDs) of all academic departments, a detailed explanation of the study's objectives and methodology was provided. HoDs collaborated in identifying eligible participants based on academic performance records. A total of 64 students identified as scholastically backward were recommended, including one advanced learner from the second-year undergraduate cohort of each department. Intervention is done with awareness sessions.

The intervention curriculum consists of six modules, each designed to address a key area of academic and personal development:

1. Importance of Education

- o This module will focus on the long-term benefits of education, career opportunities, and how education impacts the quality of life.
- o The goal is to help students understand the value of education beyond just academic achievement, emphasizing the connection between education and personal empowerment.

2. Motivation and Goal Setting

- o The module aims to foster motivation among students by introducing them to the concepts of self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and realistic goal setting.
- o Techniques such as visualization, positive affirmations, and peer support will be integrated into the sessions.

3. Study Skills and Exam Preparation

- o This module will provide students with practical study techniques, including time management, active learning strategies, and note-taking skills.
- o Strategies for exam preparation, such as stress management, question analysis, and revision techniques, will be a key focus.

4. Self-Development and Personal Growth

- o Focus on building students' self-esteem and confidence, while addressing barriers to learning and achievement.
- o Activities will be designed to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses, set personal development goals, and overcome self-doubt.

5. Creating a Positive Learning Environment

- o This module will focus on the importance

of collaboration, communication, and maintaining a positive mindset in learning.

- o It will also address the impact of a conducive learning environment and peer support on academic success.

6. Art Therapy for Emotional Expression

- o Art therapy will be used to encourage students to express their emotions and relieve academic-related stress.

The activities will include drawing, painting, and collaborative art projects, which aim to improve students' emotional resilience and cognitive skills. Each module will be delivered over an 8-week period, with one or two sessions per week.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Major findings of the study are explained in this section.

Self – Esteem:

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall sense of personal worth and value. It reflects confidence in one's abilities, self-respect, and acceptance. Self-esteem is measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, a 10-item self-report inventory rated on a 4-point Likert scale. A higher score indicates greater self-esteem.

Mean and standard deviation of self-esteem of respondents :

Mean and standard deviation of self-esteem of respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 : Mean and standard deviation of self-esteem of respondents

Mean	19.71
Std. Deviation	6.79

From Table 1, it is concluded that considering the total score of self-esteem of respondents, the mean value is 19.71 and the standard deviation is 6.79.

Distribution of respondents based on level of self-esteem:

The total self-esteem score as per the self-esteem scale ranges from 10 to 40. From the primary data analysis, it is concluded that 21.0% of the respondents have low self-esteem, 56.3% of the respondents have medium self-esteem, 22.7% of the respondents have

high self- esteem.

Academic Motivation:

Academic motivation refers to the drive or willingness of a student to engage in learning activities, set academic goals, and persevere in the face of challenges to achieve educational success. It encompasses intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing learning behaviors. Academic motivation of students is assessed by using the Academic motivation Scale by Vallerand *et al.* (1989). This scale assesses 7 types of constructs: intrinsic motivation towards knowledge, accomplishments, and stimulation, as well as external, introjected and identified regulations, and finally amotivation. It contains 28 items (4 items per subscale) assessed on a 7-point scale.

Mean and standard deviation of academic motivation of respondents:

In Table 2, the mean and standard deviation of academic motivation of respondents is shown. The mean value of academic motivation is 87.10 and standard deviation is 5.79.

Table 2 : Mean and Standard Deviation of academic motivation of respondents			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Academic motivation	87.10	5.79	64

Hypothesis Testing:

Relationship between self - esteem and academic motivation of students

H1: There is a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation of students.

H0: There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation of students.

Interpretation:

The Pearson's correlation is computed to identify the relationship between Self-esteem and academic motivation of students. The Pearson correlation value (r value) obtained is -0.090. The significant value obtained is 0.04 which is less than common significance level 0.05; hence this test rejects the null hypothesis. Hence the research hypothesis is accepted, which indicates that there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation of the students. The obtained r value is 0.90 which ranges between 0 and 1 there exists a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and

academic motivation of students (Table 3).

Correlations			
Table 3 : Relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation			
		Self esteem Total	Academic motivation
Self esteem	Pearson Correlation	1	0.90
Total	Sig. (2-tailed)		.042
	N	64	64
Academic motivation	Pearson Correlation	0.90	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.042	
	N	64	64

Intervention with Intervention Module:

The intervention includes awareness sessions on various topics.

Details of intervention module:

Details of intervention module is shown in the following Table 4.

Table 4 : Details of intervention module	
Module	Content
Module 1	Education, Importance of Education
Module 2	Educational theories
Module 3	Purposes of Education
Module 4	Motivation as a tool
Module 5	Education for Individual Development
Module 6	Study tips and memory tips

Program Outline and Schedule:

Details of program outline and schedule are shown in the following Table 5.

Discussion and Finding:

The Pearson's correlation is computed to identify the relationship between Self-esteem and academic motivation of students. There exists a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and academic motivation of students.

Various aspects related to academic performance, motivation and goal setting and study habits of the respondents; observed before and after the intervention are explained in detail.

Academic Performance:

Pre-Intervention Status:

Analysis of academic performance records revealed that students performed below passing thresholds in some

Table 5 : Program Outline and Schedule

Session	Module	Duration	Key Activity
Day 1	Module 1: Importance of Education	1 hour	Lecture, Group Activity
Day 2	Module 2: Educational Theories	1 hour	Presentation
Day 3	Module 3: Purposes of Education	1 hour	Debate
Day 4	Module 4: Motivation as a Tool	1 hour	Lecture
Day 5	Module 5: Education for Development	1 hour	Reflection
Day 6	Module 6: Study and Memory Techniques	1 hour	Lecture and Discussion

subjects. Feedback indicated that students experienced anxiety and low confidence, contributing to poor academic outcomes.

Post-Intervention Improvement:

Students gave feedback that their academic scores showed a significant increase, after the intervention. Students exhibited better comprehension of subject material, attributed to improved study habits, strategic exam preparation techniques, and stress management strategies. Enhanced engagement in classroom activities was reported by subject teachers, further validating the intervention's success.

Motivation and Goal Setting:

Pre-Intervention Observations:

Baseline data indicated that most participants lacked intrinsic motivation and clear academic goals. Many struggled with self-doubt and exhibited a passive attitude towards learning.

Post-Intervention Results:

The awareness sessions on the importance of education and motivational activities led to a noticeable shift in students' perspectives. Exercises on goal setting, visualization techniques, and positive affirmations encouraged students to adopt realistic, achievable academic goals. Peer interactions during group activities fostered accountability and mutual encouragement, further enhancing their motivation levels.

Study Habits:

Pre-Intervention Status:

Students relied predominantly on last-minute rote learning and demonstrated poor organizational skills. They struggled with time management and lacked exposure to effective study techniques.

Post-Intervention Observations:

Sessions on study tips introduced participants to

active learning strategies such as concept mapping, summarizing, and group discussions. Exam preparation workshops focused on stress management, question analysis, and mock test practices, building students' confidence and reducing pre-exam anxiety. Feedback from participants highlighted that time management techniques and structured study plans significantly improved their focus and productivity.

Implications of the study:

This research holds significant value in the context of the Indian educational system, where scholastic backwardness remains a pressing issue. By focusing on an integrated intervention program, this study aims to provide a holistic approach to addressing the needs of scholastically backward students. The findings from this research could serve as a model for other educational institutions aiming to support similar students. The combination of academic interventions with creative therapies such as art therapy is relatively novel and may provide a unique contribution to social work and educational psychology.

Schools and colleges can adopt this intervention model to create inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse student needs. The study underscores the importance of integrating emotional well-being programs into traditional academic frameworks to foster holistic development.

Scope for Future Research:

The study opens avenues for exploring the long-term impact of similar interventions on academic success and personal growth. Future efforts should focus on scaling these interventions, ensuring sustainability, and incorporating feedback mechanisms to refine strategies. By doing so, institutions can play a pivotal role in shaping inclusive educational practices that support all learners, regardless of their initial academic standing.

Conclusion:

The intervention study aimed at addressing the challenges faced by scholastically backward students in a college setting demonstrated promising outcomes. The tailored interventions, which included personalized mentoring, skill-based training, peer support systems, and counseling, positively impacted the students' academic performance, self-esteem, and overall well-being. This study highlights the transformative potential of combining structured academic support with creative and motivational interventions, offering a blueprint for addressing the multifaceted needs of scholastically backward students.

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