

Socio-demographic correlates of school refusal among primary school students in Ranchi City

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ABSTRACT


Introduction: School refusal has some distinctive features and it can affect the academic achievement of the students very negatively. Several socio-demographic factors are responsible for school refusal. This study intends to see the role of some socio-demographic factors in school refusal among primary grade students of five private schools of the city of Ranchi. **Methodology:** It was a Cross-sectional school based study on five private schools of Ranchi city. Total students approached were 1640, out of which 52 students were selected purposively as per the study criteria. Socio-demographic Data Sheet and School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised (SRAS-R) were used and descriptive statistics, independent samples t test, one way ANOVA and Bonferroni post hoc test were used. **Results:** Factors like gender of the students, parental education, monthly family income and family type have significant impact on school refusal behaviour of selected students. **Conclusion:** School refusal is a complicated problem and it has been influence by various factors.

Keywords: School refusal, demographic variables, parents, family, absenteeism

INTRODUCTION

School refusal ascribes avoidance of a child attending school and/or persistent difficulty staying in the school during the school time.^[1] According to Kearney and Silverman, school refusal is “child-motivated refusal to attend school or difficulties remaining in school for an entire day.”^[2] School refusals are associated with avoiding the negative affect provoked by the school setting, attention seeking behaviour and seeking tangible rewards from others.^[1-5] Nearly 5-28% of children have some aspect of school refusal behaviour at some point.^[6-8] However, school refusal is more prominently seen among the children enrolling to new school for the first time.^[3,4] Children entering

kindergarten or first grade, middle school, and high school have relatively higher risk of developing school refusal behaviour.^[5-7] School refusal can take place any point of school age; however, it gets heightened in the 5-7 years and 10-12 years and among children who do not have prior experience of being away from their homes.^[9-13] Family dysfunction is temporarily associated with school refusal. Families factors like ‘over dependency’, ‘absence of healthy interaction among family members’, ‘least interaction outside the family unit’, ‘communication problems within families’, ‘problems in role performance’ and ‘rigid family rules and customs’ and ‘unhealthy emotional attachment among members’ are seen to

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aggravate school refusing behaviour in children. In those families, children adopt school refusing behaviour to draw attention from their parents. In unhealthy and isolated families children are negatively reinforced and that leads to school refusal behaviour.^[14-18]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in five private co-educational secondary schools in Ranchi. Students having the history of absenteeism ≥1 day/week for last 3 months were considered in the study. Total 1640 students were selected initially, out of which 52 had fulfilled the criteria of the study. The class teachers’ helps were sought to select the samples. The selected students were assessed by socio-demographic data sheet and School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised (SRAS-R).^[19] Children of the age range of 6-12 years and studying in standard 1 to 5 were included. Students of either sex were included in the study. Written informed consents were taken from their parents. The SRAS-R^[19] was used to evaluate school refusal disorder symptoms in selected children and identify their reasons for avoiding school. Scoring the SRAS-R is based on a 0-6 scale, thus: 0, meaning “never”, 1, meaning “seldom”, 2, meaning “sometimes”, 3, meaning “half the time”, 4, meaning “usually”, 5, meaning “almost always” and 6, meaning “always”. The scale has the both parent and child versions. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences for windows version 20 (SPSS 20) was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics, t-test, one way ANOVA and Bonferroni Post Hoc tests were used.

RESULTS

Table 1 describes the socio-demographic profile of the selected primary school children. Table 2 is showing the comparison of the domains of SRAS-R as per the gender of the children. Significant differences were noted between the groups in Tangible Rewards of the *Parent Version*. Boys had scored significantly higher than girls in this area. In other areas no significant difference was noted.

Table 3 describes the comparison of the domains of SRAS-R as per distance of school from residence of the children. Distance of the school

from house does not have significant in the domains of the SRAS-R.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Profile of the Students (N=52)

Variable	Category	Mean / f	SD /%
Age (yr.)	Range 6-12	8.73	1.51
Gender	Boys	31	59.6
	Girls	21	40.4
Monthly Family Income (Rs.)	5,000-10,000	13	25.0
	10,001-20,000	26	50.0
	>20,000	13	25.0
Parental Education (Father)	Intermediate	19	36.5
	Graduate	22	42.3
	≥PG	11	21.2
Distance from the School (KM)	<5 KM	32	61.5
	>5 KM	20	38.5
Family Type	Nuclear	36	69.2
	Joint	16	30.8
Mode of Transport used to Reach School	Own Vehicle	25	48.1
	School Bus	27	51.9

Table 4 is showing the comparison of the domains of SRAS-R as per family type (N=52). Significant difference was noted between nuclear and joint family in the domain of Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity in the *Children Version* of the scale.

Table 5 showing the comparison among the respondents as per type of job of parents (N = 52). Mode of transportation does not have any significant on any domain of the SRAS-R. Table 6 showing the comparison among monthly family income (N = 52). A For comparison ANOVA (one way) was applied. As per monthly income three groups were developed, thus a) monthly income Rs. 5000-10,000, b) monthly income Rs. 10,001-20,000 and c) monthly income >Rs. 20,000. Significant difference was noted among these three groups in the domain of Tangible Rewards in *Children Version* of the SRAS-R. Significant difference was noted between the families with monthly income of Rs. 5000-10,000 and Rs. 10,001-20,000 in this area of the scale.

Table 7 showing the comparison as per the educational level of the parent (fathers) of the selected children (N=52). In the both Parent and

Child Version of the SRAS-R, significant difference was noted in the area of ‘Attention Seeking’. Children of the Graduate Parents (fathers) had significantly higher scores in attention seeking domains than children of

parents with higher academic qualifications (e.g. ≥PG). Similar kind of difference was seen between these two groups in the Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations domain of Child Version of SRAS-R.

Table 2: Comparison of SRAS-R sub scale scores as per gender of the students using t- test

Scale	Variables	Group (N 52)		t (df= 50)	p
		Boys (n=31)	Girls (n=21)		
School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised Parent Version	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	2.16±1.30	1.60±1.25	1.450	.153
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	1.81±0.91	1.42±0.80	1.651	.125
	Attention seeking	2.47±1.18	2.24±1.05	0.732	.468
	Tangible rewards	2.87±1.25	2.14±1.00	2.236	.030*
School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised Children Version	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	2.17 ± 1.15	1.89 ± 1.11	0.879	.384
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	1.96 ± 0.98	1.63 ± 0.79	1.294	.202
	Attention seeking	2.46 ± 1.07	2.45 ± 1.05	0.035	.972
	Tangible rewards	2.79 ± 1.02	2.40 ± 0.92	1.401	.167

*sig <0.05

Table 3: Comparison of SRAS-R sub scale score as per the distance of the school from their residence

Scale	Variables	Group (N 52)		t (df= 50)	p
		<5 KM (n=32)	>5 KM (n=20)		
School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised Parent Version	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	1.83±1.02	2.14±1.65	-0.822	.415
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	1.53±0.73	1.85±1.07	-1.292	.202
	Attention seeking	2.38±1.01	2.38±1.31	.006	.996
	Tangible rewards	2.59±1.07	2.55±1.42	.105	.829
School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised Children Version	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	1.97 ± 1.09	2.19 ± 1.20	-0.678	.501
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	1.71 ± 0.76	2.02 ± 1.11	-1.197	.237
	Attention seeking	2.47 ± 0.90	2.42 ± 1.28	.179	.859
	Tangible rewards	2.65 ± 0.93	2.61 ± 1.12	.126	.900

Table 4: Comparison of SRAS-R sub scale scores as per the family type of the children (t- test)

Scale	Variables	Group (N 52)		t (df= 50)	P
		Nuclear Family (n=32)	Joint Family (n=20)		
School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised Parent Version	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	2.12±1.35	1.68±1.18	1.207	.233
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	1.72±0.91	1.54±0.85	.702	.486
Parent Version	Attention seeking	2.45±1.21	2.26±0.98	.598	.552
	Tangible rewards	2.47±1.16	2.73±1.27	-.757	.453
School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised Children Version	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	2.32 ± 1.13	1.64 ± 1.04	2.148	.037*
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	1.96 ± 0.86	1.62 ± 0.98	1.309	.197
Children Version	Attention seeking	2.62 ± 1.16	2.18 ± 0.80	1.465	.149
	Tangible rewards	2.60 ± 0.96	2.68 ± 1.07	-.299	.766

*sig <0.05

Table 5: Comparison of SRAS-R sub scale score as per types of transportation used to reach school

Scale	Variables	Group (N 52)		t (df= 50)	p
		Self (n=25)	School Bus (n=27)		
School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised Parent Version	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	1.70±1.24	2.18±1.32	-1.343	.185
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	1.46±0.84	1.83±0.90	-1.494	.141
Parent Version	Attention seeking	2.20±1.02	2.54±1.20	-1.093	.280
	Tangible rewards	2.53±1.05	2.62±1.35	.260	.796
School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised Children Version	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	2.03 ± 1.09	2.08 ± 1.18	-.150	.882
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	1.76 ± 0.86	1.89 ± 0.97	-.501	.619
Children Version	Attention seeking	2.41 ± 0.98	2.49 ± 1.12	-.245	.808
	Tangible rewards	2.66 ± 0.93	2.60 ± 1.06	.207	.837

DISCUSSION

In the present study, the mean age of the selected primary school students was found to be 8.73±1.51. Consistent evidences have demonstrated that school absenteeism is mostly prevalent among the primary school students.^[2-8] Significant difference was noted between boys (n=31) and girls (n=21) in the ‘tangible reward domain’ of the parental version of SRAS-R. Here boys had significantly higher score than

girls (Table-2). Parents felt that boys prefer to bunk school for fulfilment of some interests which are tangible. Similar kinds of findings were also noted in past studies^[8,16-18]. Distance from the school has not been found to have any impact on school refusal behaviour. Most of the students are coming from the close proximity of the school (n=32; within 5 KM). All those selected schools are located in well- commutable places in the city of Ranchi; more attention

Table 6: Comparison of SRAS-R sub scale score as per the monthly income of their families (Oneway ANOVA & Bonferroni Post Hoc Test)

Scale	Variable	N=52 Group	Mean ± SD	F (df=2)	P
					Post hoc test (Bonferroni)
The School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised- Parent Version	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	Rs.5001-10,000 (n=13)	2.09 ± 1.31	1.212	.306 [A=B=C]
		Rs.10,001-20,000 (n=26)	1.68 ± 1.33		
		>Rs.20,000 (n=13)	2.34 ± 1.17		
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	Rs.5001-10,000 (n=13)	1.70 ± 1.06	.366	.695 [A=B=C]
		Rs.10,001-20,000 (n=26)	1.55 ± 0.88		
		>Rs.20,000 (n=13)	1.80 ± 0.72		
	Attention seeking	Rs.5001-10,000 (n=13)	2.69 ± 1.14	1.609	.210 [A=B=C]
		Rs.10,001-20,000 (n=26)	2.10 ± 1.17		
		>Rs.20,000 (n=13)	2.62 ± 0.93		
	Tangible rewards	Rs.5001-10,000 (n=13)	2.96 ± 1.29	1.464	.241 [A=B=C]
		Rs.10,001-20,000 (n=26)	2.30 ± 1.16		
		>Rs.20,000 (n=13)	2.74 ± 1.15		
The School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised- Children Version	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	Rs.5001-10,000 (n=13)	2.15 ± 1.20	3.082	.055 [A=B=C]
		Rs.10,001-20,000 (n=26)	1.72 ± 1.14		
		>Rs.20,000 (n=13)	2.63 ± 0.81		
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	Rs.5001-10,000 (n=13)	2.13 ± 1.06	1.710	.192 [A=B=C]
		Rs.10,001-20,000 (n=26)	1.60 ± 0.88		
		>Rs.20,000 (n=13)	1.97 ± 0.76		
	Attention seeking	Rs.5001-10,000 (n=13)	2.52 ± 1.02	.242	.786 [A=B=C]
		Rs.10,001-20,000 (n=26)	2.35 ± 1.06		
		>Rs.20,000 (n=13)	2.58 ± 1.11		
	Tangible rewards	Rs.5001-10,000 (n=13)	3.02 ± 1.09	4.494	.016* A>B*,B=C,A=C
		Rs.10,001-20,000 (n=26)	2.24 ± 0.73		
		>Rs.20,000 (n=13)	3.02 ± 1.11		

*sig <0.05; A = Rs. 5001-10,000; B = Rs. 10,001 – 20,000; C = >Rs. 20,000

seeking and escaping from aversive situation than compared to the students having post graduate students. Graduate understanding is medium, neither high nor low. They don't have in depth knowledge as compared to post graduate or more. So, there might be chances of getting attention and escaping the situation which they cannot handle because of the average understanding. There is abundant evidence that children from better educated parents more often go to school and tend to drop out less. Monthly income has been found to have significant

impact on school refusal. It could be attributed that being in lower economic status probably made them to avoid school. However, this study has some significant limitations in the forms of 'absence of stratified sampling method', 'exclusion of teacher rating measures in assessing school refusal behaviour', 'assessment of psychological problems, personality and intelligence of selected children' [3,7,12,15]

Limitations: The study has some glaring limitations which can be addressed in future endeavours, i.e., absence of stratified random

Table 7: Comparison of SRAS-R sub scale score as per parental education level (One Way ANOVA & Bonferroni Post Hoc Test)

Scale	Variable	Group N=52	Mean ± SD	F (df=2)	P Bonferroni Post hoc test
The School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised-Parent	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	Intermediate (n=19)	1.81 ± 1.17	1.496	.234 [A=B=C]
		Graduate (n=22)	2.27 ± 1.28		
		≥PG (n=11)	1.48 ± 1.49		
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	Intermediate (n=19)	1.66 ± 0.87	.652	.525 [A=B=C]
		Graduate (n=22)	1.76 ± 0.93		
		≥PG (n=11)	1.38 ± 0.81		
	Attention seeking	Intermediate (n=19)	2.25 ± 1.11	3.328	.044* [A=B],B>C* [A=C]
		Graduate (n=22)	2.76 ± 1.08		
		≥PG (n=11)	1.74 ± 0.99		
Tangible rewards	Intermediate (n=19)	2.63 ± 1.21	0.39	.962 [A=B=C]	
	Graduate (n=22)	2.52 ± 0.98			
	≥PG (n=11)	2.59 ± 1.69			
The School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised-Children	Avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity	Intermediate (n=19)	1.95 ± 1.04	2.892	.065 [A=B=C]
		Graduate (n=22)	2.41 ± 1.08		
		≥PG (n=11)	1.44 ± 1.21		
	Escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations	Intermediate (n=19)	1.70 ± 0.88	4.437	.017* [A=B] B>C*, A=C
		Graduate (n=22)	2.18 ± 0.79		
		≥PG (n=11)	1.24 ± 0.95		
	Attention seeking	Intermediate (n=19)	2.49 ± 1.00	5.833	0.005** A=B, B>C* A=C
		Graduate (n=22)	2.81 ± 0.96		
		≥PG (n=11)	1.56 ± 0.88		
	Tangible rewards	Intermediate (n=19)	2.54 ± 0.81	.128	.880 [A=B=C]
		Graduate (n=22)	2.68 ± 0.87		
		≥PG (n=11)	2.71 ± 1.55		

*sig <0.05; **sig <0.01; A = Intermediate; B = Graduate; C = Post graduate or more

sampling, not considering control groups (only five similar types of schools were included; viz, English medium private schools), small sample size, not assessing important clinical possibilities, e.g., school phobia, specific phobia, anxiety and depressive disorders, etc and school related factors like teacher-students ratio, interaction and communication pattern between

teachers and students. Additionally, family related factors like parenting style, family structure and functions do deserve comprehensive assessment.

CONCLUSION

Though this study was carried out on less number of children but some intriguing findings

were noted which suggested that school refusal could be influenced by socio-demographic factors like gender of the children, family type, monthly income of the families and parental education.

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