

Being special

A city-based study to find out factors that affect students' academic performance revealed startling results. AT takes a look at the implications of the findings

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Times News Network

If your child is having a hard time understanding fractions or just concentrating on one activity, don't write him off as a failure just yet. For, a recent survey conducted on schools of Ahmedabad revealed that there are various factors apart from IQ that affect children's academic performance. The study conducted at Mount Carmel School, saw 150 students taking part.

Commenting that the percentage of children with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and depression was alarmingly high, special educator **Nutan Kasliwal** says, "Identifying such problems is extremely important for schools to give students the right kind of academic environment and medical help. Even intelligent students need to be given a platform where their growth can be maximised."

However, child psychiatrist **Param Shukla**, one of the survey experts, puts the findings in different perspective.

"The elevated results could be a result of the survey being about academic difficulties; so, parents attending were likely to be those facing problems with their child. However, it's also true that many parents probably did not participate due to the stigma associated with going to a psychiatrist," he says.

Digging deeper into the possible reasons for such high levels of depression and ADHD in school-going students, Shukla elaborates, "A

lot has to do with pressure — high expectations of parents and competition amongst students. Parents should choose a school that provides the correct learning atmosphere according to their child's abilities rather than according to social and financial status."

THE SURVEY

- 150 students from the age group of five to 18 participated in the survey from different schools
- Students underwent IQ, vision, hearing, ADHD, depression and learning difficulty-related tests



KID ZONE

It's important to know early on if your child is 'special'

Moreover, he advises parents to have their children take an IQ test soon after the age of six so that they can recognise problems, if any, at an early stage and adjust expectations accordingly.

And, if parents need to change, so do schools. As educator **Manjula Shroff** observes, parents and teachers need to put greater emphasis on psychological interven-

THE FINDINGS

Learning disability	10%
Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder	58%
Depression	39%
Hearing problems	10%
Vision problems	35%
Superiorly intelligent	12%

tion. "They need to be sensitised to the various reasons for students' under-performance. Instead of putting pressure or telling them to work harder, they need to try and get to the root cause of under-performance," she says.

Ask teacher trainer **Harish Iyer**, whether any changes are necessary in classroom teaching methods, and he says, "Teachers need to be aware that a class may contain students with various learning barriers and accordingly make their teaching methods more inclusive." And, perhaps, we need more such surveys as well?

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Sound blast

A research by Harvard University scholars reiterates that loud music pumped directly into the ears, causes permanent deafness. But is GenY buying the logic yet?

Times News Network

Pumping loud music into your ears from your portable MP3 player or iPod is a great way to pass time, right? Professors at Harvard Medical School beg to differ. "The problem with the iPod generation is that they play their MP3 players at high decibels for extended periods of time. This can lead to permanent ear damage," **Dr Roland D Eavey**, an associate professor at HMS says in his report.

But GenY refuses to unplug! "My portable jukebox is my lifeline. When you spend three hours a day travelling in a bus, listening to music remains the

JING BANG

Blare fare

- Jet engine 140 dBs
- Music concert 120+ dBs
- Motorcycle 95-120 dBs
- Busy street 80 dBs
- iPods at max vol 120 dBs

Source: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

only escape route," says student **Aalap Trivedi**.

No wonder doctors are worried. "If you listen to heavy metal or hard rock on your iPod, while the earphones are plugged, it's time you visited

the shrink. It's not healthy psychologically or physically," says **Dr Sachin Patel**, an ENT surgeon.

Again, youngsters say this is just the 'scared older generation' talking. "Quite a few friends of mine have these sets, and none of them are deaf, so why the hullabaloo?" asks **Sanjay Pammi**, an engineering student.

For the record, any sound over 85 decibels (dBs) exceeds what experts consider the 'safe' range. If exposed to louder noise over a long period of time, there's a good chance of perma-

nent ear damage.

So what's the way out, for a generation addicted to the sound of music? "People feel that cranking up the volume is the only way to get clarity of sound. You need proper earphones to get good sound," says **Sachin Jain**, marketing executive at an electronics showroom.

Perhaps it's worth buying an expensive earphone set then. For the sets are replaceable but the ears are not.

— JATAN DAVE