

# A Study on the Parental Awareness on the Heavy Weight School Bag of Primary School Children in Guwahati City

Dipjyoti Das and Dulumoni Goswami

**Abstract---** Children's in many countries including India have to carry a huge load on their back to fulfill the present demand of academic carrier which has so many ill effect on the child's physical and mental health. The present study wants to throw lights on the parental awareness on the heavy weight schoolbag and also to find if there is any relationship between the educational level of the parents and their awareness towards the school bag load. The study was conducted under descriptive survey method where 100 samples of parents were collected through convenient sampling. Data were analyzed through simple percentage, Chi square and Contingency coefficient to see the relationship.

**Keywords---** School Bag, Parents, Heavy Weight, Children, Education, Awareness.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The load carrying phenomena has been considered as global phenomena in all over the world. People are faced with the various forms of load carrying and its consequences in their daily life. One of the most serious issues related to the children is heavy weight school bag which is now concern of the educationists of the world. Children's in many countries including India have to carry a huge load on their back to fulfill the present demand of academic carrier. In one side they have to carry the huge amount of bag and on the other side they have to engage themselves with the huge syllabus. An extra pressure of good marks is imposed on them, where they have lost their time to feel the golden period of childhood. We can say that today's children have lost their playfulness characteristics in running after the academic achievement. The heavy schoolbag weight is regarded as one of the main factors of spoiling the golden period of childhood.

From a review of related literature, it was found that the awareness among the students and parents is little less in India. They are not following the guidelines and instructions from healthcare institutions as well as the various committees formed for the schoolbag weight limit. Most of the time, they ignore the effect of load carriage. Many of us are not willing to accept the load as burden.

So the present study wants to throw lights on the parental awareness on the heavy weight schoolbag. It can be a strategy to control schoolbag weight could be the involvement of guardians to monitor the contents of their child's backpack. Because according to some studies parental awareness is associated with schoolbag weight. But some parents never check their child's bag load. Here are some points that is related to this awareness, such as educational levels of the parents, their financial background, the area where they are living etc. A qualified person has a good sense to make his child comfortable in schooling process. Fathers significantly have more knowledge about the load

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as well as the schoolbag carriage method. But low qualified persons don't have so much knowledge about the schoolbag weight problem.

## **II. INITIATIVE IN INDIA TO REDUCE THE HEAVY WEIGHT SCHOOL BAG**

One of the survey conducted by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India in 2016 revealed that 68 percent of pre-teen age children might suffer from mild back pain, which can develop into chronic back pain and later into a hunchback. The study which covered 2500 children and 1000 parents in major cities, found that more than 88 percent of children from 7 to 13 years of age carry more than 45 percent of their body weight on their back.

Several committees have been formed in our country in respect of the issue of academic burden on children and the unsatisfactory result of the education system such as, in 1977 Ishwarbhai Patel Review Committee, National Education Policy, 1986 etc. In India the issue of crushing burden of heavy weight school bag on small children was first raised in the Rajya Sabha by the then Member of Rajya Sabha and eminent writer Sri R K Narayana during 1986-92. Sri Narayana demanded that government should totally dissolve the school bag for small children by enacting a law. The National Policy on Education Review Committee 1990 considered 'the load of the school bag' a serious problem and make several recommendations to reduce this load by adopting an integrated approach, emphasizing on supplementary reading materials and library work to reduce dependence on textbooks, stressing the scientific method of acquiring knowledge itself.

The Ministry of Human Resource and Development, Government of India, set up a National Advisory Committee in the year 1993 under the chairmanship of Prof. Yaspal to "advise on the ways and means to reduce the load on school students at all levels particularly the young students, while improving quality of learning including capability for lifelong self-learning and skill formulation." This committee submitted its report 'Learning without burden' in 1993. The Yaspal Committee regarded 'weight of the schoolbag' as one dimension of the problem and to carry very heavy bags everyday to school as a 'torture'. The children packed with heavy load not less than 6-8 kg of books, notebook and other materials of modern education system in addition to lunch box and water bottle.

In India the Children's School Bag (Limitation on weight) Bill 2006 states that the weight of a school bag must not exceed more than 10 percent of the child's body weight. It also directs respective state governments to ensure that schools provide lockers for students. Remarkable steps have been taken by some state governments of India to ensure that children are less burdened. According to the recent MHRD direction students should not ask to bring additional books, extra materials and the weight of the school bag should not exceed 1.5 kg for class I-II children, 2-3 kg for class III-V children, 4 kg for class VI-VII children, 4.5 kg for class VIII- IX children and 5 kg for class X children. It has also been directed that home work shall not be assigned to the students of class I & II children.

## **III. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Bonti khan and Ashita Goyalof in their study (2015) on 'CGSHIFTER- A Method to shift Center of Gravity to Reduce School Bag stress on Children's body (2015 revealed that carrying a heavy school bag for long periods of time could result in repetitive stress injuries to growing body. The impact of stress on children body due to position

of center of gravity of schoolbag is decreased by CGSHIFTER method which changes its CG location. Avantica Rai and Shalini Agarwal (2014) conducted a study on 'Assessing The Effect of Postural Discomfort on school going children Due to Heavy Backpacks'(2014) which indicated that the prevalence of postural complaints among school children was considerably high.

It was shown that children were most likely to complaint from postural problems. Karim Salehzadeh of Azarbaijan Shahid Madani university and Roghaiye Poursafar Bonab of Islamic Azad university, Iran (2015) found that there are a significant relationship between weight of backpack and kyphosis disorder in primary school girls 24.4% students carried bags weighing more than 10% of their body weight. Hadeel Fadhil Farhood of Babylon University, Al Hilla, Iraq (2013) found that there was significant difference between the genders in respect of pain associated with heavy school bag weight.

It is seen that a number of studies have been conducted on the issue of heavy weight school bag, however in India hardly any research study have been conducted on this critical issue. Moreover it is necessary to know the awareness of parents regarding the heavy weight school bag. The authors have attempted to study on the issue of the school bag and also to understand the parental awareness on the heavy weight school bag of their children. It is also attempted to understand if the awareness depends on the level of education of the parents.

#### ***Objectives of the Study***

The present study was conducted under the following objectives -

1. To study the awareness level of parents on the school bag weight of their children
2. To find out if there is any relationship between the educational level of the parents and their awareness towards the school bag load.

#### ***Null Hypothesis***

- There is no significant relationship between the education level and awareness level of parents on heavy weight school bag.

### **IV. METHODS, POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

The present study has been conducted under the Descriptive survey method. As the present study is designed and conducted to obtain information about the current status of the heavy weight school bag, therefore descriptive survey method is considered most appropriate. As this method is fact finding and help to formulate certain principles and give solution to the problem. The population of the study consists of all the parents of primary school children of Guwahati city area.

#### ***Sampling Procedure***

The sample for the present study has been selected on the basis of convenient sampling. It was decided to select sample from 4 levels of education i.e. HSLC passed, HSSLC passed, Graduate and Post Graduate parents on the basis of convenience of the researchers. Thus the researchers selected 23 HSLC passed, 31 HSSLC passed 24

Graduates and 22 Post Graduate parents as sample for the study.

### ***Tools of Data collection***

The required primary data for the study was collected through observation schedule to know the weight of the school bag and body weight of the children and a self structured questionnaire was used for parents to collect data relating to the awareness of the parents. The Questionnaire for the parents consisting of 11 questions related to the awareness, have positive and negative responses. Apart from the 11 items on awareness, the questionnaire also include few items like, reasons for heavy weight of school bag and the steps they have taken to reduce the weight. Score for positive answer is 2 and for negative it is 1. Thus the maximum score to be obtained by a respondent is 22 and minimum 11. On the basis of the score obtained by the respondents, their level of awareness was calculated as follows-

Scores from 11 – 14 = Low level Scores from 15- 18 = Moderate level Scores from 19- 22 = High level

## **V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The first objective of the study was to study the awareness level of parents towards the school bag weight of their children. For this objective the researchers used a self structured questionnaire for collecting the relevant data. The questionnaire was given to the parents and they were requested to provide their answers accordingly. After analyzing their responses through percentage, their awareness on the heavy weight schoolbag was studied by the researcher. Their responses are presented in table 1.

Here the responses of the parents were divided into three levels such as Low level, Moderate level and High level.

Table 1: Awareness Level of Parents

<i>Level</i>	<i>numbers</i>	<i>%</i>
High level	51	51%
Medium level	33	33%
Low level	16	16%

Analysis of the Table 1 shows that out of 100 sample of parents 51% have high awareness 33% have medium awareness while the 16% of the respondents have shown low level of awareness. It indicates that majority of the parents are aware of the heavy weight school bag of their children. They said that the heavy schoolbags are really harmful for their child's body health and mind. Because if a child carries a bag which is unbearable to his body then automatically he will get tired. They will feel pain in their back, legs and neck. They will have to band their poster to balance the weight. This creates posture change to their bodies. So most of the parents measure their child's bag weight. We find that some of the parents don't not measure their child's bag weight because of their ignorance and lack knowledge about the effect heavy loaded schoolbags. But their number is very less.

As per the findings of the study, 40 percent of the parents responded that they try to reduce the weight by checking their child's bag because sometimes they carry some other items such as play items toys etc; they carry some additional books and copies which are not that day's routine. But without the school initiative it is not possible on their part to reduce the weight of the school bag. These types of items make the bags heavy. However only 5% of

the parents have informed that they talk to the teachers as well as the authority about the weight and its effect. 55% of the total parents are known about the circular regarding the weight limit as per age and class of the students. In the table 1, 33% of the total parents have medium awareness and only 16% parents have low awareness towards the effect of loaded schoolbags. There are so many reasons behind this poor awareness level such as living area, their educational background, their profession etc. The researchers also wanted to know this relationship between education level and parental awareness level. Table 2 shows the relationship between their educational level and awareness level towards the loaded bag.

Table 2: Educational Level of Parents and Awareness Level

<i>Educational level</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>total</i>
H.S.L.C.	12	52.17%	6	26.08%	5	21.7%	23
H.S.S.L.C.	15	48.4%	10	32.3%	6	19.4%	31
Graduate	7	29.2%	12	50%	5	20.8%	24
Post. Graduate	17	77.3%	5	22.7%	0	0	22

Here the parents were subdivided into four educational levels such as H.S.L.C, H.S.S.L.C, Graduate and Post Graduate. In every section there was high awareness but post graduate parents shown highest awareness towards the problem which is 77.3 % of the total sample of Post Graduate, while only 22.7% of the post graduate parents have shown medium level of awareness and no any post graduate parents have shown low level. Among the Graduate parents 29.2% have high level of awareness and 20.8% have medium level of awareness. Among the In H.S.S.L.C. passed parents the high awareness is 52.17%, 26.08% is in medium and 21.7% is in low level. Among the H.S.S.L.C. passed parents the high awareness is 48.4%, 32.3% in medium level and 19.4% in low level.

To prove out Null hypothesis of no relationship between the education level of parents and their awareness level on the heavy weight school bag chi square test was applied. The result of the chi square test is presented in the following table-

Table 3: Chi Square Test on Education level and Awareness Level of Parents

Level of Education/ level of awareness	High Level	Medium level	Low level	Total	df	Chi square	Significance
HSLC	12	6	5	23	6	13.128	Sig at 5%
HSSLC	15	10	6	31			
Graduate	7	12	5	24			
Post Graduate	17	5	0	22			
Total	51	33	16	100			

From the above analysis it is found that that the Chi- square calculated value is 13.128 which is found significant at 5% level of significance for a df of 6. The Chi-square table value at 5% level for df 6 is 12.592 which is slightly lower than the calculated Chi-square value. As such we may reject our Null hypothesis of no relationship at 5% level of significance. It indicates there is statistically significant difference between the education level of parents and their awareness level on heavy weight school bag. However only Chi square value doesn't indicate the actual association between two variables i.e. level of education and level of awareness. As such the researcher wants to calculate the relationship between the two variables under the study. It is Contingency coefficient which helps us to decide if the variable-2 i.e. awareness level is contingent on variable - 1 i.e. education level. However it is rough measure and doesn't quantify the dependence exactly. It will let us know whether association exists between the two

variables. The Contingency coefficient is calculated from the Chi square value as follows:

$$C = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{N + \chi^2}}$$

$$C = 0.34$$

The Contingency coefficient calculated from Chi square value found 0.34. As such we may conclude that there is close positive relationship between the level of education and awareness level of the parents as indicated by the C value. Educational level and awareness level is although related to each other but it is not much considerable as seen from the Chi square test of significance. Of course from the raw data we see that the high awareness level is seen in Post Graduate parents. They have the knowledge about the ill effect of carrying heavy weights by the children including their carriage method and the staff they always carry in their bags. Besides many studies say that educated parents can bring a healthy development to the child rather than the uneducated ones.

## VI. MAJOR FINDINGS

From the quantitative and qualitative analysis and discussion of the data the researchers have attained some major results as given below:

1. It is found that the majority of the parent's e.i. 51% of the total sample have high level of awareness on the bad effect of heavy weight school bag of their children. However most of the parents don't take any measures to reduce the weight. Only 5% of the parents have informed that they talk to the teachers as well as the authority about the weight and its effect. 55% of the total parents are known about the circular regarding the weight limit as per age and class of the students.
2. The educational qualification of the parents works as a great factor on the creating awareness among the parents. As a result of data shown in earlier pages, there seemed some differences upon their viewpoints regarding schoolbag weight. The lower educated parents have ignored this problem as they have not so much knowledge about the harmful effect of heavy weight bags.
3. The lower educated section has hesitation in clearly discussing the problem with the authority as well as with the teachers. They have the inferiority complex to talk with them. They feel shy to say anything in front of the teachers and principals. But a well educated person has the confidence to say anything about the problem actually they have to face.
4. There is positive correlation between the level of education and the level of awareness of the parents on heavy weight school bag of their children.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The study arrived at the conclusion that majority of the parents have the high level awareness towards the heavy loaded bags of their children although few of them low level of awareness. There is very close relation between the educational level of the parents and their awareness level towards the burning problem of heavy loaded school bag. In comparison to the parents of urban area, the parents of rural area have the less knowledge as well as the

awareness towards the problem of heavy schoolbag weight. It is necessary that the weight of the school bag must be reduced and it should be according to the guidelines of the MHRD. This is the responsibility of teachers, administrators and parents to take initiative for reducing the heavy weight school bag. The school authorities may take some practical strategies in this regard.

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