

**SCHOOLING AND LEARNING
CHALLENGE FOR CHILDREN OF A
VILLAGE AMIDST URBAN CLUSTER:
A CASE STUDY**

by

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PREFACE

The small district of Kaushambi, which is located on the borders of Delhi and Ghaziabad, famous for its sky touching Grayish Buildings and two malls is also the home to a small number of villagers who have formed their own world amidst the increasing urbanization.

This is an indicative study of teaching and learning in an urban village. This report is unique in a way that the village taken is situated such that it lies right on the border of the capital of India and is clustered amidst the highly urbanized and developed area of Kaushambi.

Many such clusters exist, especially in and around Delhi. This report elaborates only on one such village, namely Bhowapur. However, similar studies for such villages which are located very close to the urbanized townships would shed further light on the socio-economic conditions and the teaching and learning that takes place in such schools located here.

This report is an attempt to give an insight into the aforesaid topic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This survey would not have been possible without the help of Mr. Shailendra Sharma, Head, Pratham, Delhi, who guided me with immense patience as to how to go about this project.

Next I would like to thank the Principal of Prathamik Vidyalaya Bhowapur- Mr. Devender Singh who permitted me to conduct this survey in his school. I am also thankful to all the teachers of this school- Mrs Ritu Singh, Mrs Subha Shukla, Mrs Sujata Sharma, Mrs Manju Rawat and Mrs Seema Chaturvdi.

I express my gratitude to Tiwariji, the caretaker of my residential complex who had made all arrangements with the school and facilitated this survey.

Finally, a very special thanks to my mother Mrs Shalini Mehrotra who accompanied me to the school daily during the course of the survey. Without her help I would not have been able to interact with the children as their dialect made it hard to understand what they were saying.

My heartfelt gratitude to everyone associated with this report.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The survey was conducted in a small Government village school-“Prathamik Vidyalaya Bhowapur”, which is located in Bhowapur village in Kaushambi district of Ghaziabad, U.P.

This school is attended by children of lower class migrants mainly from the states of U.P. and Bihar. These people are mostly employed as industrial labourers or as rickshaw pullers or as security guards. Many women from this village are employed as maids in the nearby Skyscrapers which houses the upper middle class Government Officials and people working with many Public Sectors Units .

The village of Bhowapur is clustered amidst the well developed urban areas of Kaushambi. As a result, the increasing modernization of these Urban areas has also seeped into Bhowapur. It will not be wrong to say that the village of Bhowapur is very different from the typical Indian countryside.

But there is a major difference in the level and quality of education attained by the children of Bhowapur and those living in these posh colonies. This report aims to elaborate on the Education level of the children of Bhowapur as well as on the socio-economic condition of the people of Bhowapur.

METHODOLOGY

Bhowapur School accommodates approximately 400 students.

CLASS	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	NUMBER OF STUDENTS PRESENT	NUMBER OF STUDENTS SAMPLED
1 st	120	86	8
2 nd	120	81	8
3 rd	80	62	6
4 th	60	45	4
5 th	52	43	4

The survey was conducted on the 9th and 10th of October, 2013. Simple Statistical process of Systematic Sampling was carried out in order to conduct the survey. A sample size equal to 10% of the number of students present in class that day was considered. Thus, the numbers of students sampled are as given in table 1.

SCHOOL FUNCTIONING

Like most other schools in the world, primary schools in India work on certain key assumptions. It is assumed that children are enrolled in school at the age of five or six, depending on the official norms of the state. The school is organized in terms of classes which go from Std 1 to Std 4 or 5. It is assumed that most children and most teachers come to school regularly. Children are grouped broadly into age-grade specific classes and teachers are assigned to teach each class. There are timetables, textbooks and supplementary teaching learning materials. And all of this activity takes place within a physical space with certain infrastructural characteristics, such as a boundary wall, classrooms, toilets, and drinking water. These are the assumptions on which the school system is built.

How far are these assumptions true for the primary school in Bhowapur village? In any school, the actual business of teaching and learning takes place in the classroom. But clearly, classrooms do not operate independently; their dynamics are influenced, at least in part, by decisions taken in the broader context of a school. Thus, school infrastructure and functioning directly influences, enables or constraints what is possible in a classroom.

How often Students are present?

On an average only about 70% of students attend school. When there is a festival approaching like Chatth, Diwali or Eid, the people head back to their native villages for a rather longer duration. Thus, the count further decreases (to around 60%).

How often Teachers are present?

The Principal and the Teachers are often present (approximately 75% of the times). However, this fact does not guarantee us the number of hours that they spend teaching the students. But, one can notice a distinct difference between the teachers of Government Schools (like Prathamik Vidyalaya Bhowapur) and Public Schools. Firstly, the teachers in a Government School set-up lack responsibility vis-à-vis the teachers in a

Public School set-up who are answerable to the school management. Secondly, the teachers in a Public School are usually better paid than in a Government School. Thus, the teachers in a Public School have an incentive over the Government School ones in the form of better pay and also students who come from well-to do households.

Facilities at School

One look at the school tell us that it is a rather small one. Consisting of 6 small rooms: 5 being used as classrooms (classes 1st to 5th) where each standard is allotted one room and a separate room for the Headmaster, Mr. Devender Singh, which is also used as a store for books and other stationary.

Other facilities include a small activity room which lies unused with a lock on its door, a hand pump, a common toilet for girls, boys and teachers and a kitchen where the mid day meal is prepared. The morning assemblies are held in the front courtyard of the school which is also the students' play area.

CHILDREN'S LEARNING: EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY

Available evidence indicates that learning outcomes in government primary schools in India are far from satisfactory. Both governmental evaluations and assessments carried out by other institutions, such as the Annual Status of Education Report and Education Initiatives, provide ample evidence that children's learning is well below grade level. However most of these assessments are based on cross-sectional data (one time or repeated cross sections) that measure the learning levels of children at a particular point in time.

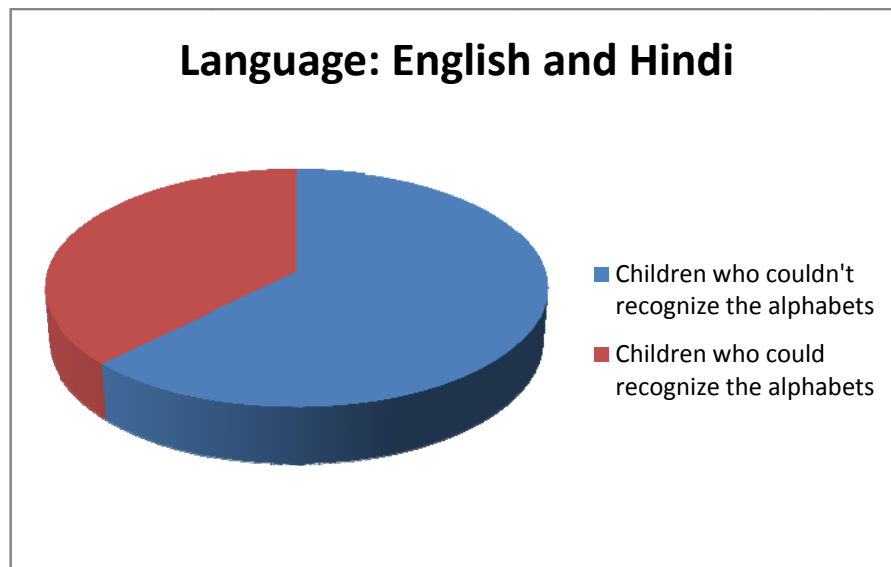
One of the main reasons for sending children to school is so that they learn. With each year spent in primary school, children's ability to read, understand, write, and do arithmetic should rise. By tracking children through one school year, it is possible to see how much "value" in terms of learning is added.

Let us consider small sample of students from classes 1st to 5th studying in Prathamik Vidyalaya Bhowapur.

Standard 1st

Language:

Among all students of class 1 tested; about 62.5% of the students found it difficult to recognize different alphabets of Hindi and English languages. However, children are expected to be able to read simple words in standard 1.



Maths :

The students were only able to recognize single digit numbers i.e. numbers from 1-10. None of the sampled students was able to recognize numbers beyond that. However, children in standard 1 are expected to be able to solve numerical one digit addition problems.

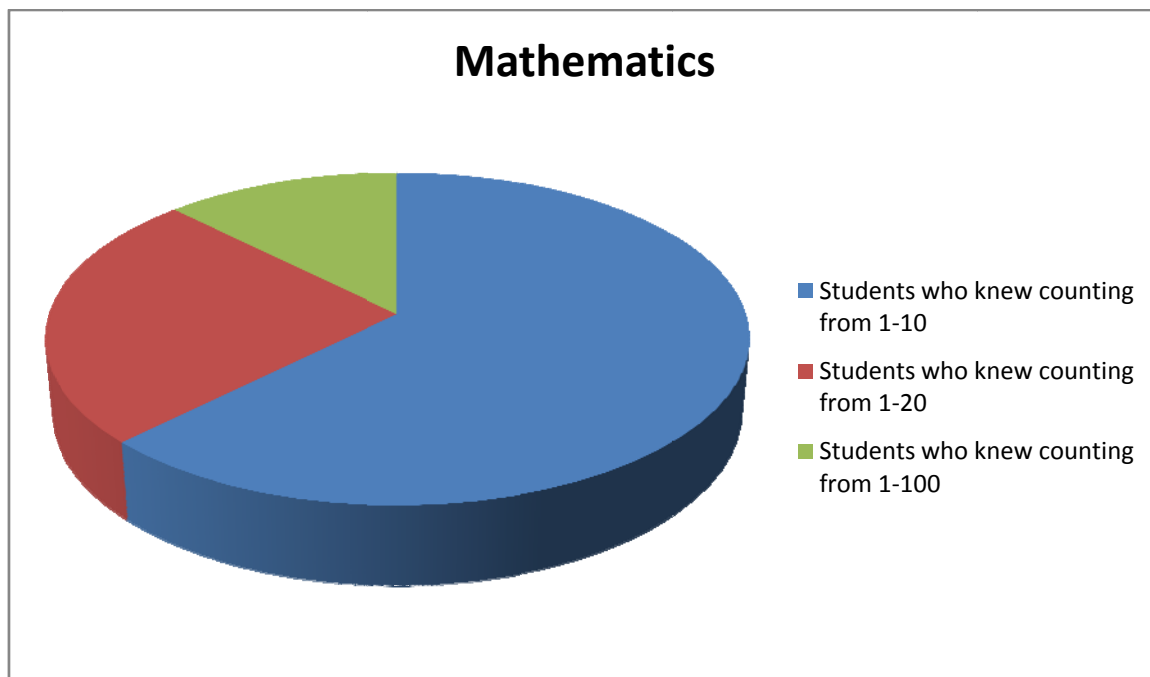
Standard 2nd

Language:

Among standard 2 students sampled, all students could only spell out the English alphabets although they were expected to be able to form and read words. Only among 1 in every 8 students was able to form words in Hindi language. The others were only adept at recognizing the alphabets (akshar).

Maths:

About 62.5% students could recognize single digit numbers only. About 25% students knew counting from 1-20 while 12.5 % students recognized numbers from 1-100. However, all students failed to perform basic arithmetic addition.



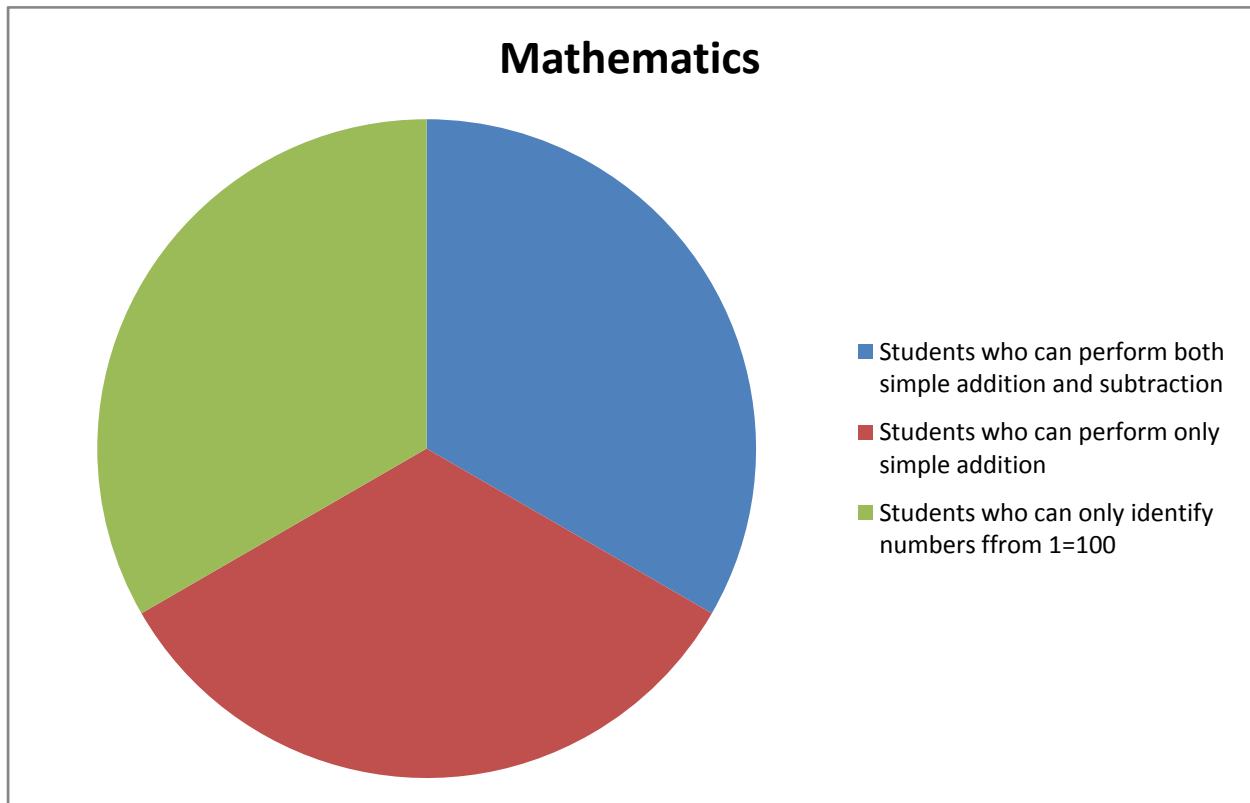
Standard 3rd

Language:

Around 16.67% of standard 3 students can form English words while the others can only identify the alphabets. While 33.33% of students were able to read fluently a standard 1 level text in Hindi language. The others were only able to read standard 1 level words or sometimes even sentences.

Maths:

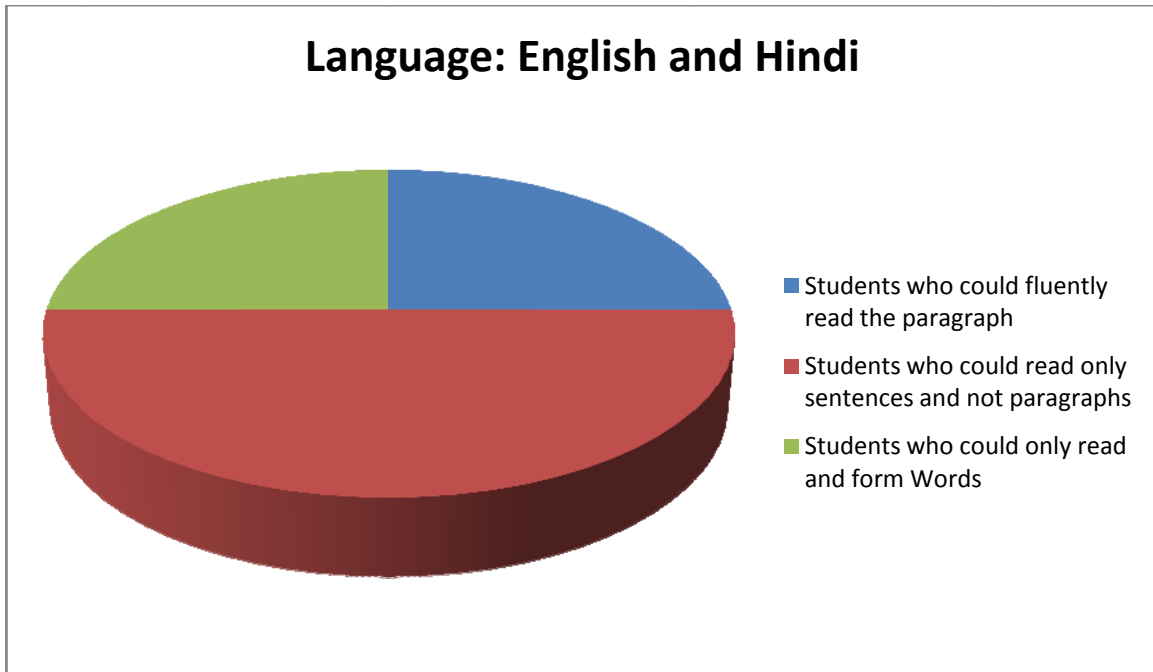
Around 33.33% of the students could perform basic arithmetic operations of addition and subtraction and also knew tables up to 3. Also, 33.33% students could only perform single digit addition. Again, 33.33% of students could at the most identify numbers from 1-100 and had no idea about simple one digit additions.



Standard 4th

Language:

25% of the students were able to fluently and comfortably read the text given. While 50% of the students could make sentences easily but faced difficulty forming and reading paragraphs. However, 25% of the students were such who could only write A standard 1 level word comfortably.



Maths:

All students were easily able to perform simple addition, subtraction and also understood and applied tables till 6. The students however faced difficulty in Division. There was however one such enthusiastic student, who was also the class topper, and could easily solve problems of “Algebra”.

Standard 5th

Language:

About 25% of the students in the class were able to write words comfortably and were unable to formulate and read sentences. The rest of the class was however adept at reading and understanding paragraphs in English language. Everybody could fluently read paragraphs and texts in Hindi languages.

Maths:

The Mathematical ability of the students of class 5th and 4th was not very different wherein all children could perform simple Additions, Subtractions and also multiplication using tables till 6, while no one could perform Division.

IMPLICATIONS OF THESE FINDINGS

1. The children surveyed are first generation school goers¹. Less than half of all households have any print material available, so children do not have materials to read at home.
2. Children are learning in the course of a year, but, children's learning levels are far behind what textbooks expect. At each grade level, children's starting point is well below that of their textbooks.
3. Attendance is the most important factor in children's learning.
4. Child-friendly practices, such as students asking questions, using local examples to explain lessons, small group work, have a significant impact on children's learning.
5. Teacher characteristics such as qualification/degree, length of training, and number of years of experience make little difference to children's learning.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS OF HOUSEHOLD

The students randomly sampled for this study come from a variety of backgrounds; the common denominator is that they all attend government primary schools. This topic begins with the Questionnaire that was used to fulfill the purpose.²

The village of Bhowapur nestled amidst the high rise buildings of Kaushambi has a very different economic scenario; different from that of a typical Indian rural village and also from that of a highly developed neighbourhood.

Most of the people living in this village are employed in low-wage paying jobs like working as security guards, drivers, shopkeepers, sweepers, mechanic etc. the women of the village work either at the nearby industrial workhouses or as maids or remain as housewives. As every poor household in the country, the parents here too persuade their children to contribute in the family income. However, all those children who work along with their parents did not attend school or are school drop-outs. None of the

¹ First-generation students can come from families with low incomes or from middle- or higher-income families without a college-going tradition.

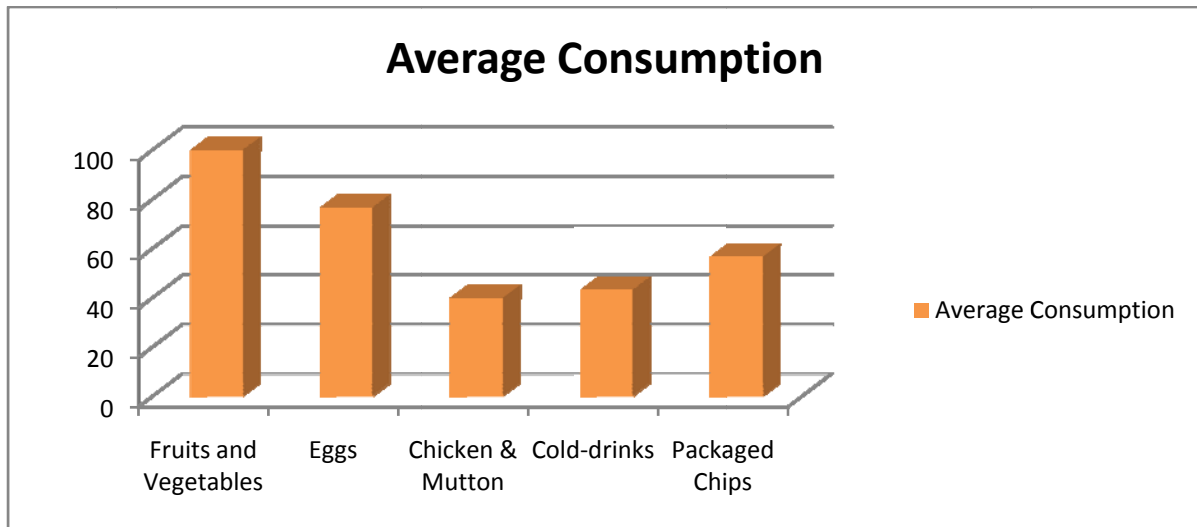
² The Questionnaire has been inserted in the annexure.

students at the Bhowapur School worked but some of the older siblings of a few students did contribute to their meager family incomes.

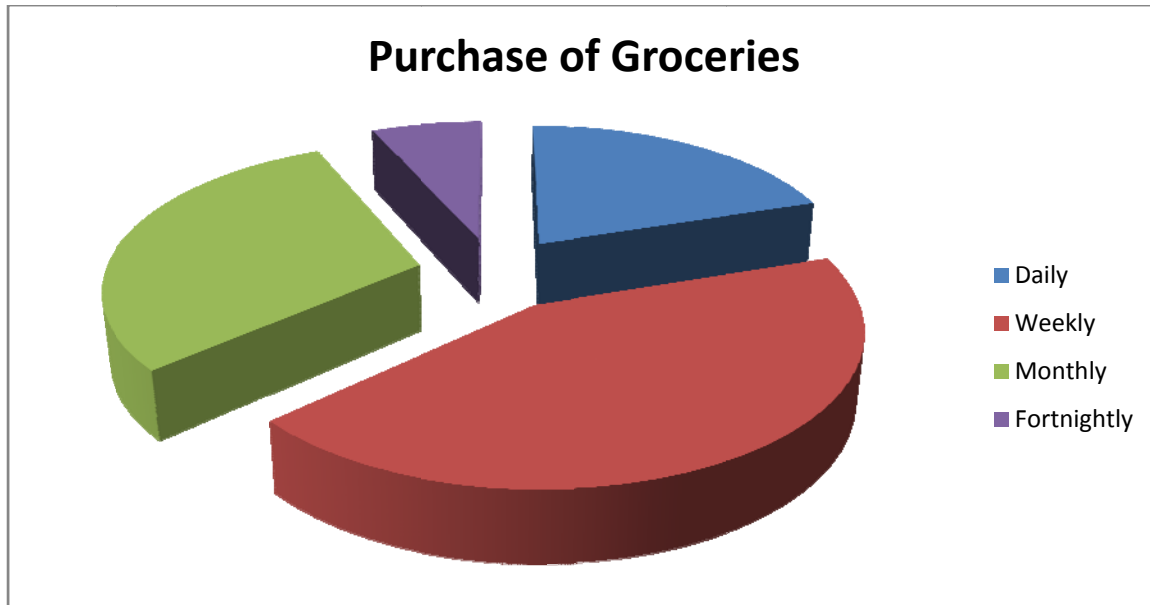
Basic Diet of the people of Bhowapur

The staple diet of families in Bhowapur includes Dal, Vegetables (mostly potatoes and green leafy vegetables), Chapattis and Rice. Festivals and Special occasions like birthdays etc usually see an increase in the consumption of Paneer (cottage cheese), chicken, Mutton, eggs and sweets. The students at the school either came without breakfast or came with a simple meal of chapatti and milk/tea. The mid-day meals sufficed for their lunch while they have dinner with their families at night.

Let us look at the average consumption of certain food items by the people of Bhowapur.

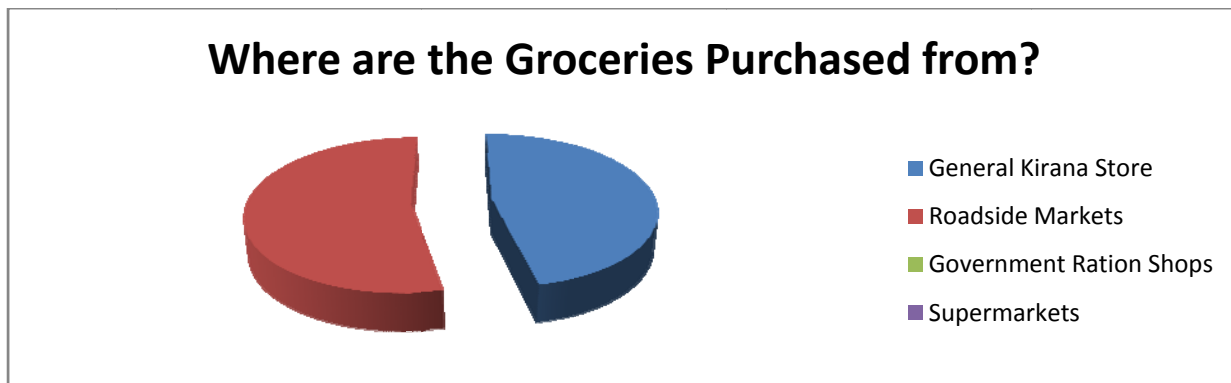


Since most of the people earn their incomes weekly or monthly, they purchase their groceries likewise.



From the above pie-chart, it can be inferred that 20% household in Bhowapur purchase their groceries daily while 43.33% households purchase their groceries weekly. While 30% households buy groceries monthly, 6.67% purchase their rations fortnightly.

The survey also revealed that 46.67% houses purchased their rations from the General Kirana Shops located locally in the village itself and 53.33% households bought their groceries from the Roadside Markets predominantly the “Shukr Bazaar”. Although Big Bazaar is located very Close to this village, none of the households purchase their rations from their because of the high prices of goods in supermarkets. The absence of a Government Ration Shop denies the villagers the chance to buy goods at subsidized rates.

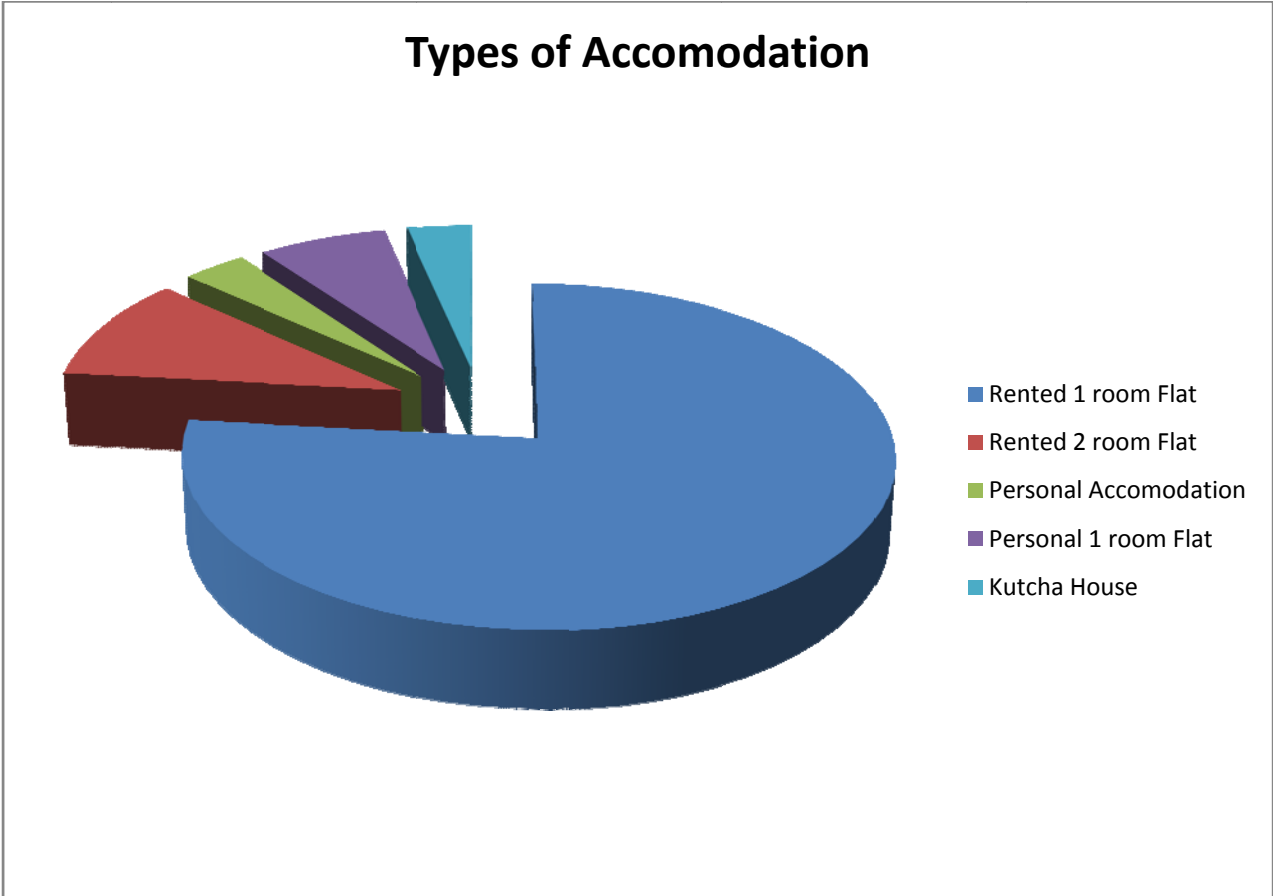


Type of Accommodation

About 76.67% of the people in Bhowapur reside in 'rented' single room house. A single room flat is not sufficient to house an average family size of 5, but due to monetary reasons most people cannot afford a bigger house. The most basic problem that the people of Bhowapur face is that of high rental costs which they cannot afford to pay.

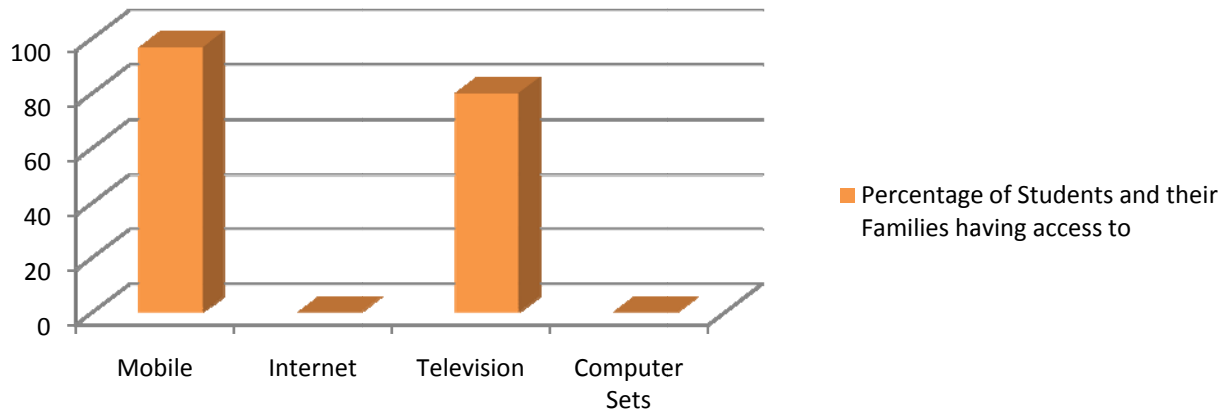
About 10% families live in 'rented' 2 rooms flat. Apart from this about 3.33% household 'own' a single room while about 6.66% people 'own' proper houses. Also, about 3.33% families live in Kutcha houses.

Let us look at the statistical reference for this.



With changing times, the people of Bhowapur have had increasing access to the basic amenities of modern days.

Percentage of Students and their Families having access to



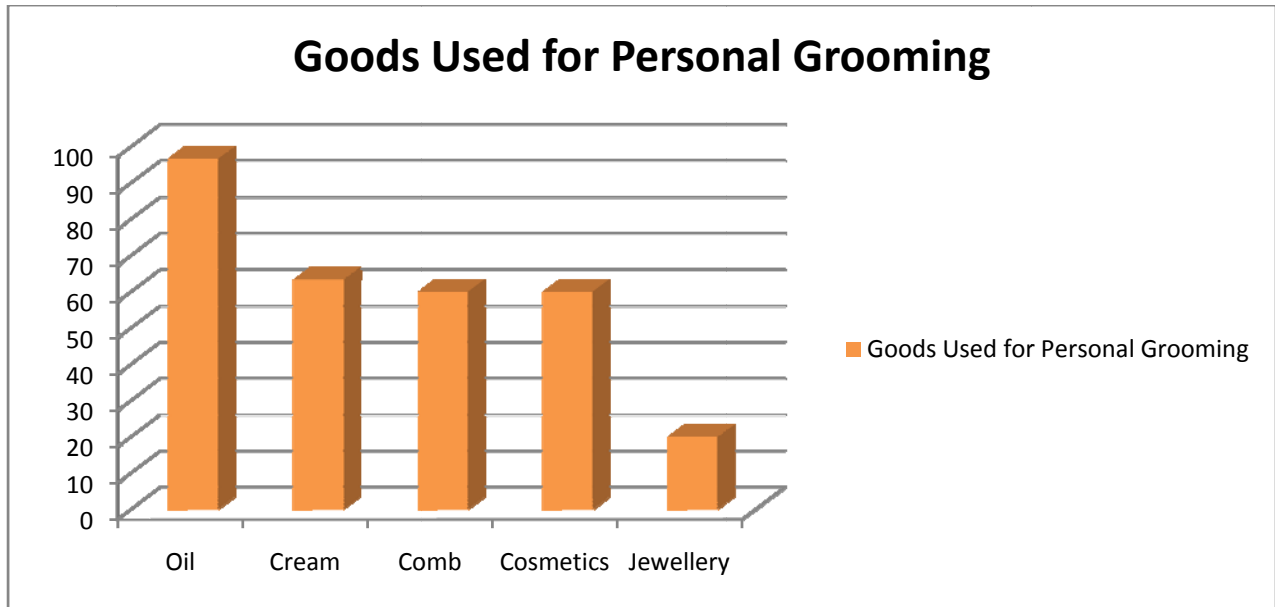
About 96.67% people in Bhowapur own Mobile phones and 80% houses have Television Sets installed. Although Computer Sets and Internet has not yet made way into the village, it will not be long when this too is made available.

Surprisingly, some of the households also have access to Fridge (13.3% houses), Dish TV (16.67% houses) and Coolers (6.67% households). Some families who are close acquaintances of the Local MLA also have access to Washing Machines, DVD player etc.!

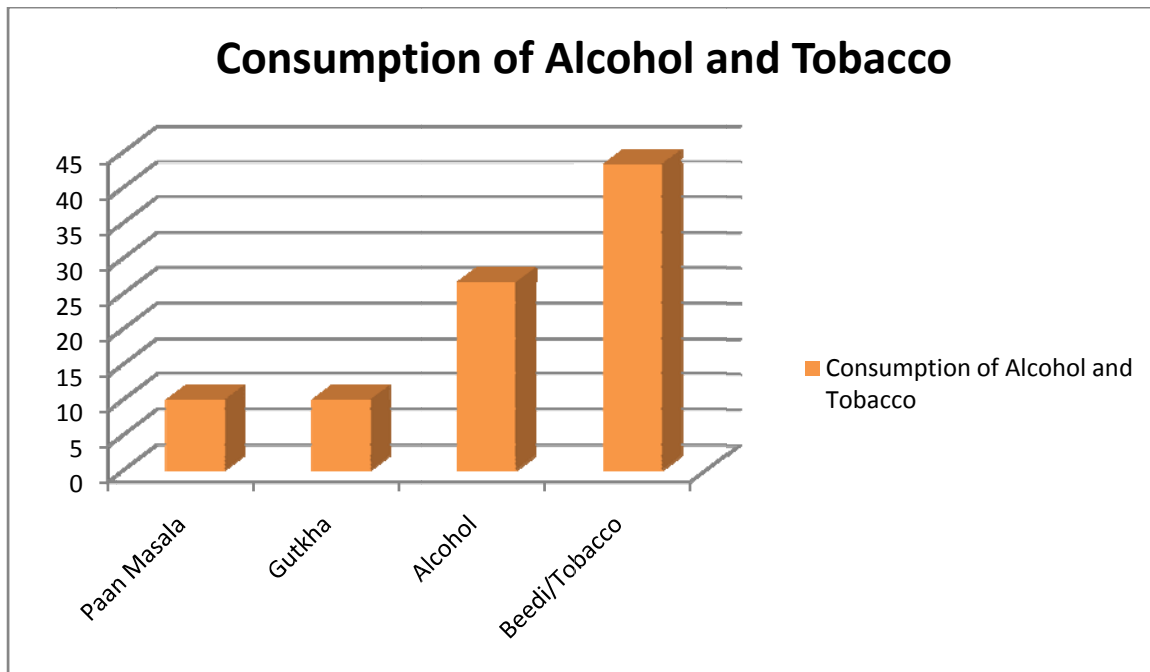
Personal Grooming

The working environment of the people in Bhowapur enables them to be in close proximity of the well to-do urbanized people of Kaushambi. As already mentioned before, this modernization with changing times has made its way into the lifestyle of the simple village folk. One can often observe the village women wearing heavy saris decked with gold jewellery and make up heading to their usual workplace at someone's house.

The survey also reveals this fact. 90% of the households in the village have access to oil for personal grooming. About 60% of the village ladies apply makeup and about 20% wear gold ornaments on a regular basis.



Another question that is prodded in the questionnaire is about the consumption of Alcohol and Tobacco by the village folk. The following result gives us the necessary information.

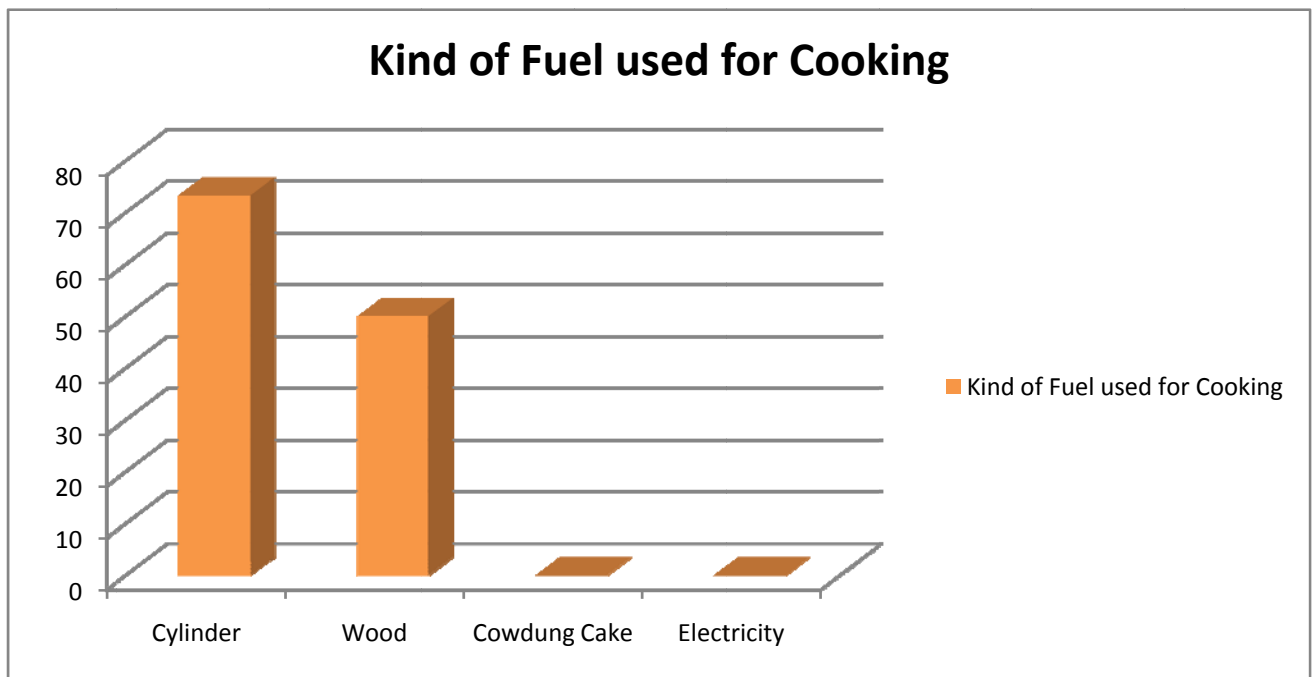


About 43.33% of the people consume tobacco while 26.67% people consume alcohol. With the growing consciousness of the ill effects of alcohol and tobacco, while

answering the question during the survey some people proudly said that they consumed neither alcohol and tobacco.

Fuel and Water

Another important factor that accounts for the economic condition is the type of fuel used for cooking. The survey revealed that about 73.33% of the houses used gas cylinders for cooking food (although they mentioned that purchasing these cylinders proves to be heavy on their pockets as these cylinders are sold in “black” by the government agencies). About 50% houses use wood as fuel. However hardly any household uses cowdung cakes or electricity as fuel for cooking.



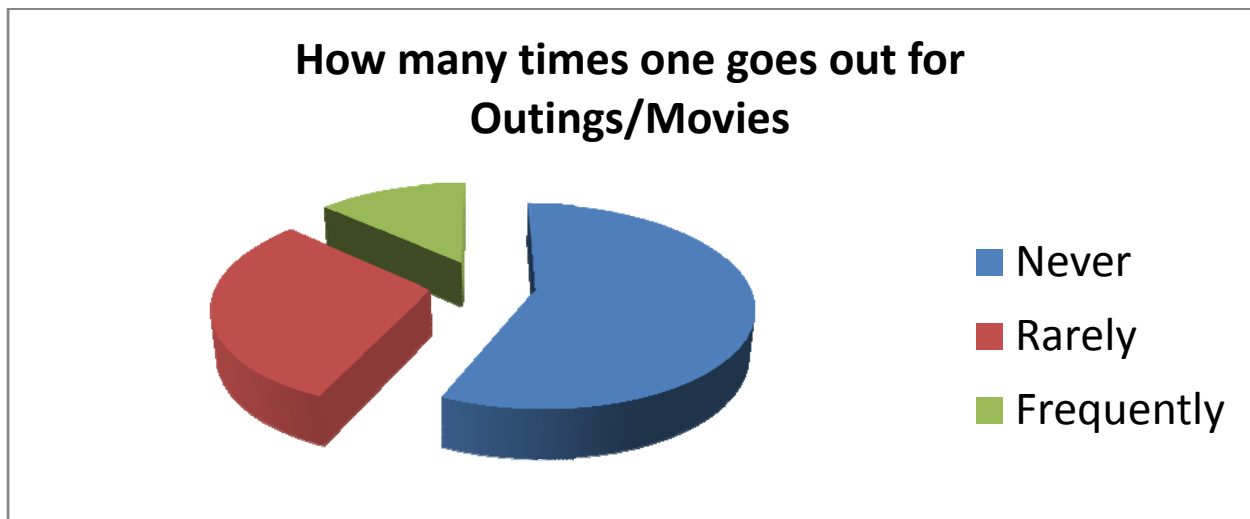
Another thing worth taking note of is that the households of Bhowapur do not have the accessibility to clean filtered water. All that they can use and consume is the normal tap water which is hardly potable.

Other Socio-Economic Indicators

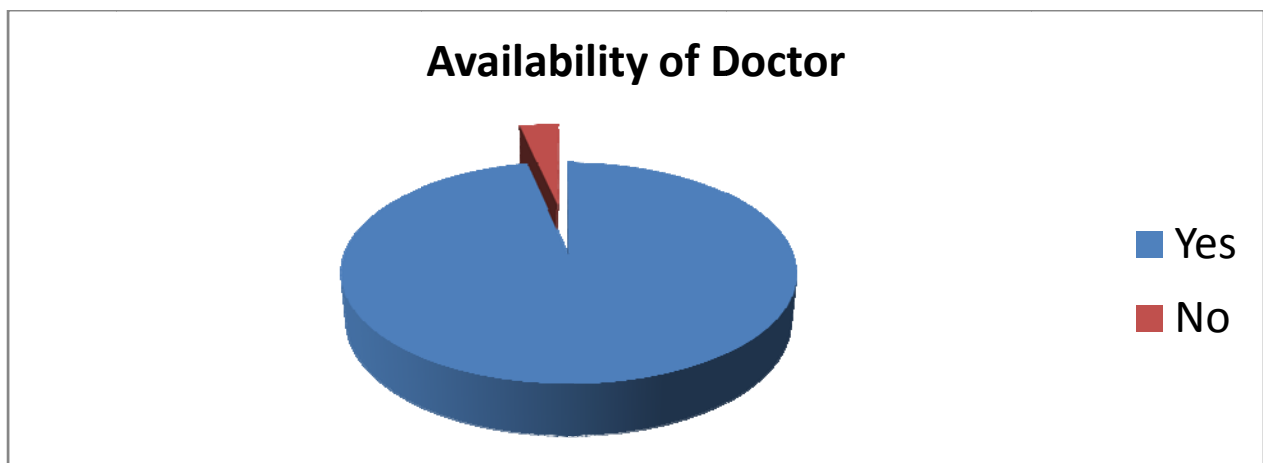
We discuss two main indicators that help us say about the economic conditions of the villagers of Bhowapur. First we consider the Pocket Money that children get. The survey establishes that none of the children actually get pocket money for their personal expenditures. The parents of the children however revealed that their kids usually stole

some money either from them or turned into petty thieves for fulfilling those wants which their parents couldn't provide.

Secondly, number of times a family goes out for movies/outings also tells the economic scenario of a household. It was observed that 56.66% of the households never went for outings. About 30% of the household went for outings (mainly to their village and nearby historical monuments) rarely i.e. about once in 4 months. Around 13.33% of the households were such which frequently stepped out of homes for outings. The following chart gives the same idea.



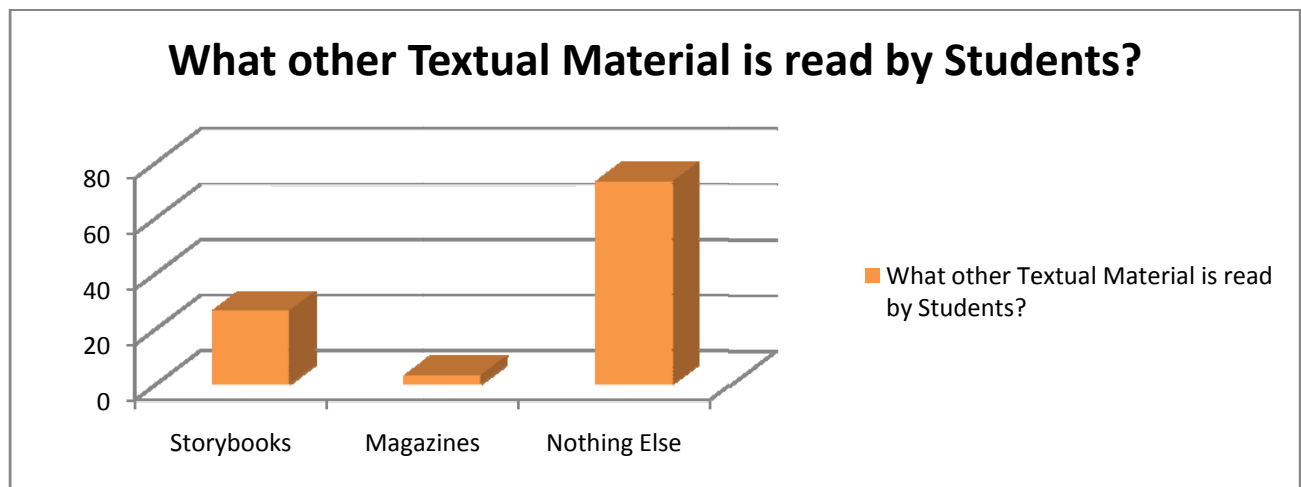
Availability of doctor is another factor that takes into account the social and health conditions of this village. On being surveyed, it was established that most of the households had an access to a Private Doctor however, the villagers did not go for regular health check-ups.



Academic Facilities

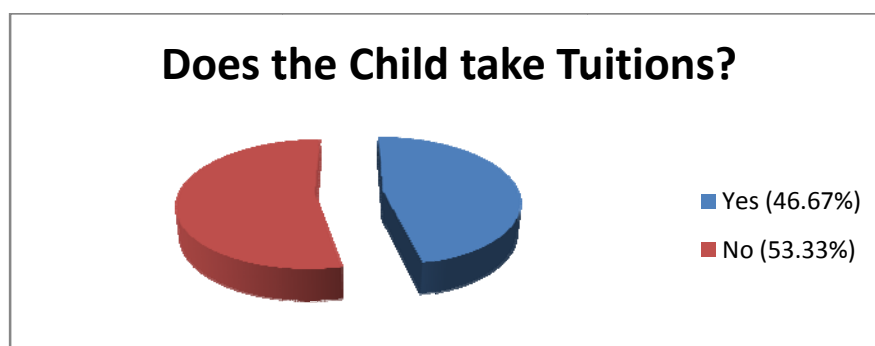
The academic facilities that are made available to a child depend on the economic capacity of his/her parents. However it was observed that most of the parents in this village kept aside some money to provide their children as good education possible. These parents were largely influenced by their counterparts in the upper class households who provided their children with the best of everything.

Although 73.33% of the students in the village did not read any other textual material apart from their course books, about 26.67% children had the access to storybooks which they enjoyed reading. Also about 3.33% of the children had access to low-priced magazines in Hindi language apart from storybooks.



Also through this survey it was observed that about 46.67% of the students took tuitions for the subjects taught at school.

It will not be wrong to say that the students who read material other than what was prescribed and those who took tuitions definitely performed a slight notch better than the other students. However, at the end the student's own hard work matters the most.



CONCLUSION

The present study has provided a close look at teaching and learning process occurring in Bhowapur village. It also takes into account the socio-economic life patterns of the village folk. The Survey clearly demonstrates the fact that urbanization has slowly been creeping in the village which shares its boundaries with the urbanized township of Kaushambi. It is essential that we reflect on the realities of the world in which schools operate, teachers teach and children learn. A deeper understanding of these realities is the only way to build a system that will guarantee meaningful education for all.

ANNEXURE

The Questionnaire

NAME :

AGE :

CLASS :

1. OCCUPATION OF FATHER :
2. OCCUPATION OF MOTHER :
3. WHETHER THE CHILD IS ALSO WORKING (if yes, where) :
4. BASIC DIET:
5. NUMBER OF TIMES GROCERIES PURCHASED
 - (a) Weekly
 - (b) Monthly
 - (c) Fortnightly
6. WHERE ARE THE GROCERIES PURCHASED FROM
 - (a) General Kirana Store
 - (b) Roadside Markets
 - (c) Government Ration Shops
 - (d) Supermarkets
7. DO YOU CONSUME THE FOLLOWING:
 - (a) Fruits and Vegetables
 - (b) Eggs
 - (c) Chicken/Mutton
 - (d) Cold-drinks
 - (e) Packaged Chips
8. GOODS USED FOR PERSONAL GROOMING
 - (a) Oil
 - (b) Cream
 - (c) Comb
 - (d) Cosmetics
 - (e) Jewellery
9. WHETHER THE CHILD GETS POCKET MONEY(if yes, monthly amount) :
10. HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU GO FOR MOVIES/OUTINGS :
11. WHETHER THERE IS ACCESS TO
 - (a) Mobile
 - (b) Internet
 - (c) Television
 - (d) Computer set
12. WHETHER THE FOLLOWING ARE CONSUMED (by child or parents)
 - (a) Pan Masala
 - (b) Gutkha

- (c) Alcohol
 - (d) Beedi/Tobacco
13. WHAT KIND OF WATER IS CONSUMED
- (a) Filtered water
 - (b) Normal tap water
14. WHAT DO YOU NORMALLY EAT FOR BREAKFAST :
15. WHETHER MILK IS AVAILABLE TO THE CHILDREN OF THE HOUSE :
16. WHAT KIND OF FUEL IS USED FOR COOKING FOOD
- (a) Cylinder
 - (b) Wood
 - (c) Cow dung cakes
 - (d) Electricity
17. DOES THE CHILD TAKE TUTORIALS APART FROM ATTENDING SCHOOL(if yes, what is the fee):
18. HOW MUCH IS THE SCHOOL FEE? :
19. WHAT OTHER TEXTUAL MATERIAL APART FROM THOSE PRESCRIBED IN THE CURRICULUM ,
ARE READ?
- (a) Newspaper
 - (b) Magazine
 - (c) Story book
 - (d) Nothing else
20. IS A DOCTOR AVAILABLE IN YOUR LOCALITY? (if yes, whether private or government)
21. DO YOU GET REGULAR MEDICAL CHECK-UPS DONE?