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Psychosocial Factors in Learning: Role of Study Habits and Learning Environment on Academic Progress.

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Abstract

The objectives of the present paper are two folded in nature. It reviews the relationship between academic achievement with respect to psychosocial variables such as study habits and learning environment. The paper also substantiates the impact of study habits and learning environment upon achievement of the learners at secondary level through an experimental study conducted among secondary level learners from Kollam district in Kerala, India. The scores for data analysis was obtained by utilizing study habits inventory and learning environment scale developed and standardized by the author. The terminal achievement scores of the students have also been considered to analyse the academic progress of the learners. A sample of 40 students was selected for the study. The relationship between learning environment and study habits reveals that there is a strong significant relationship between learning environment and study habits among low, average and high achievers in English at secondary level among students in the secondary schools of Kerala.

Introduction

Psychosocial factors in education can be considered as those psychological and social factors that contribute to the construction of knowledge and understanding. These factors may improve or hinder the learning process. Its impact upon the learner can either positive or negative. All stakeholders in the field of education - parents, teachers, students, policy makers, managers and government - are very conscious of the final outcomes of education. But very few are concerned with the factors responsible for effective learning. In every learning situation, there are a large number of variables responsible for fruitful learning. The major among them are study habits and learning environment. Habit is considered as second nature of human beings. Study habits are "mainly external factors that facilitate the study process such as sound study routines that include how often a student engage in studying sessions, review the material, self-evaluate, rehears explaining the material, and studying in a conducive environment" (Credé, 2008). Learning environment, being a social variable, is mostly dependent on the nature of people and learning resources in and around the learner's learning circumstance. Anderson (1973) defined 'learning environment' as "the interpersonal relationship among pupils, relation between pupils and their teachers, relationships between pupils and both the subject studied and the method of learning and finally, pupils' perception of the structural characteristics of the class". Learning environment plays a significant role in the academic performance of the learners.

Purpose of the Study and Statement of the Problem

Every learning situation is intended to realize certain predetermined goals. The realization of these predetermined goals is ultimately assessed by the learning outcomes. The observable and measurable learning outcome is otherwise called achievement. "Achievement is the end product of all educational endeavours". (Balasubramanium, 1992). Ireoegbu (1992) considers that it the level of performance in school subjects by an individual. Azikiwe (1998) found that good study skills help students to attain mastery in content areas and excellent performance in tests. Nneji (2002) added that study habits are

learning tendencies that enable students work independently. A learner spends a large amount of time in the classroom. Classroom is the place where the children acquire various skills and abilities. One of the reasons for poor academic achievement of students is the lack of suitable atmosphere for learning in school. Keith, Keith, Troutman, Bickley, Trivette, and Singh, (1993) found that type of home environment can influence students' academic achievement in school. Mc Croskey (1984) observed that students sense a feeling of comfort, high self-esteem, low anxiety and a desire to take moderate but intelligent risks when they interact with their classmates. Marzano and Marzano (2003) argue that "an effective teacher-student relationship may be the keystone that allows the other aspects to work well". He notes that "the core of effective teacher-student relationships is a healthy balance between dominance and cooperation". A study conducted by Stanley and Nellaiyapen (2015) among high school students at Pudhucherry on the relationship between learning environment and study habits reveal that there is significant relationship between learning environment and study habits among low, average and high achievers in English at high school level. Here the investigator aims at examining the role of the major psychosocial factors such as study habits and learning environment in the academic progress of learners. The study is titled as

"Psychosocial Factors in Learning: Role of Study Habits and Learning Environment on Academic Progress."

Objectives of the Study

1. To review the role of study habits and learning environment upon the academic achievement of learners.
2. To find out the relation between study habits and academic achievement among secondary level learners of Kerala.
3. To find out the relation between learning environment and academic achievement among secondary level learners of Kerala.
4. To compare the correlation between study habits and academic achievement among *high, average and low achievers* at secondary level of Kerala.
5. To compare the correlation between learning environment and academic achievement among *high, average and low achievers* at secondary level of Kerala.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is a significant correlation between study habits and academic achievement of secondary level learners of Kerala.
2. There is a significant correlation between learning environment and academic achievement of secondary level learners of Kerala.
3. There is a significant correlation between study habits and academic achievement on subsamples such as *high, average and low achievers* at secondary level learners of Kerala.
4. There is a significant correlation between learning environment and academic achievement on subsamples such as high, *average and low achievers* at secondary level learners of Kerala.

Review of Related Literature

a) Studies related to study habits

There are various factors which affect the achievement of the learners. Researches show that one of the intervening variables in the achievement of the learners is the impact of study habits. The studies of Marti and Mc Clenney (2008); Khurshid, Tanveer and Qasmi (2012); and Chaudhary (2013) proved that there is a positive correlation between study habits and academic achievement. Crow and Crow (1992) state that effective study habits include proper planning, keeping a definite time table and have skills in note taking. The studies of Apps (1982), Reed (1996), Rooney and Lipume (1992) conclude that good study habits

reduce test anxiety, enhance student's ability, performance and confidence. But on the contrary, Lawrence (2014), in his study shows that there is no significant relationship between study habits and academic achievement of higher secondary school students.

Sorenson (1991) stated that an individual need to concentrate much in his studies in order to understand the content area. But Chaudhary and Lily (1991) found out that there is no significant difference in the study habits of students belong to government and private schools whereas the studies conducted by Naggappa and Venkataiah (1995); Kevin (2007) show that the students belong to private schools have better study habits than that of the students belong to government schools. It is also noted that despite having good intelligence and personality, the absence of proper study habits negatively influence academic achievement. Chand (2013) found that there exists no significant difference between government and private school students on certain areas like reading and note taking, concentration, habit and interest, school environment etc.

Suneetha and Mayuri (2001) found that there is significant difference between boys and girls in drilling, interaction, sets and language dimensions of the study habit inventory. Aluede and Onolemhemhen (2001); Sirohi's (2004); Ogbodo (2010) concluded that the effect of study habit counselling revealed that guidance program produce better results and improve the achievement of the students. Fielden (2004) points out that good study habits help the learners develop their skills such as selecting, analyzing, synthesizing and critiquing.

Crow and Crow (2007) are of the opinion that study requires a purpose and the learning outcome is dependent on the degree to which he/she succeeds in achieving that purpose. Sawar, Bashir, Khan and Kahn (2009); Nuthana and Yenagi (2009); Verma (2016) examined the reasons for poor academic performance as intellectual ability, poor study habits, lack of achievement motivation, lack of proper vocational goal and poor family background. Bajwa, Gujjar, Shaheen, and Ramzan (2012) conducted a study among students from Formal and Non-Formal systems of education in Pakistan. The result reveals that students of formal system are significantly better on time management, exam preparation and note taking. Students of non- formal system are significantly better on class attendance and participation, general studying strategies, general setting and motivation, on text book reading etc.

In a study conducted among day scholars and hostellers of Santal students, Doss (2012) identifies that the day scholars have better study habits than the hostellers. Illahi and Khandai (2015) find that female college students show better academic achievement than that of male college students and urban college students show comparatively high academic achievement than students who come from rural area.

b) Studies related to learning environment

Classroom Environment

Appropriate classroom situations help the learners gain the knowledge about the world they belong, and what is their role in that world. The factors affecting classroom environment are its infrastructure, the rules and regulations imposed and the class timing. Learning environment such as the classroom environment should be friendly enough to reduce stressful school environments (Bista, 2011). According to Grubaugh and Houston (1990), the seating arrangement in the classroom seems to make students lose focus, creates problems, discourages interaction between students etc. It is identified (Moos, 1980; Keyser and Barling, 1981; Wright and Cowen, 1982) that classroom environment has great influence on the cognitive and affective side of the learner's personality. Zahn, Kagan and Wickman (1986); Arlin, (1976); Horowitz, (1979) assert that classroom climate such as class size, open environment etc., act as a set of affective responses, generalized attitudes and perceptions. Humphrey (1984) found that pupil's self-control is maximum, where they are able to identify with highly structured features in classroom.

School Environment

School environment plays a major role in the academic achievement of the learners. The researches in this area substantiate this viewpoint. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) found that the achievement scores of Catholic school students are higher because of more homework, or smaller size of schools. Stevenson and Lee (1990) conducted studies on Japanese, Taiwanese, and American children and found that the reason for achievement difference is due to the group dynamics in the classroom, timely evaluation done on students by parents and teachers and a strong emphasis on achievement given to the students by parents and teachers.

The learning of specific knowledge and skills is a direct effect of classroom teaching (Good and Brophy, 1986). Neighbourhood of the child plays a vital role in the educational outcomes (Catsambis and Beveridge 2001; Johnson, 2011; Wrigley, 2006). It influences students' learning outcomes through school culture, teaching practices, student confidence and motivation, and school resources. Society can also influence learners through the presence of positive role models interacting with children (Black, 2008).

Home Environment

Academic achievement of the child is mainly dependent on home environment. Jameson (1997) highlights the significance of quiet time and place for homework and shows light on the negative impact of television and the positive impact of praise from parents. Houtenville and Conway (2008) identified the importance of parental effort on student achievement compared with school resources.

McNeal (1999) states that parental involvement in child's education influences their academic performance through three mechanisms: socialization and social control which affect the attitude, motivation and behavior of the children, and access to insider information effects upon both cognitive and behavioral outcomes of the children. Patall, Cooper and Robinson (2008) identify that parental involvement has a positive effect on learner's ability to engage in self-regulation by developing proper learning strategies like goal-setting, planning, time management, and attentiveness. Bakker, Denessen, and Brus-Laeven (2007) found that there is no relation between the educational level of the parents of primary school children and their involvement in child's education.

Conducive home environment with enough educational resources and positive reinforcement by parents is essential to the intellectual and social development of the children (Henderson and Berla 1994; Sammons, Sylva, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart 2008). Pomerantz, Moorman and Litwack (2007) suggest that parents should feel free to communicate their expectations and educational aspirations with their children. Parental involvement in learning may occur outside home too in the form of activities such as taking children to functions and places like museums, libraries, galleries, talks and performances (Hill and Tyson 2009). Parents' role in school environment contributes to students' academic achievement. Parents can participate in various activities at school, be part of the school council, can attend meetings with teachers etc. (Hill and Taylor 2004; Pomerantz, Moorman and Litwick 2007)

Parental involvement in school positively contributes to students' social and emotional adjustment (Henderson and Mapp 2002; Westmoreland, Rosenberg, Lopez and Weiss, 2009) especially in the early years of schooling when students are emotionally in need of additional support and to have a sense of belonging in the new learning environment (Henderson and Mapp 2002). It also results in improved attendance and behaviour modification. (Kendall, Straw, Jones, Springate and Grayson, 2008).

Teacher, Peer Group and Curriculum on Learner Achievement.

Teachers and peer group play a major role in the academic achievement of the students. Wentzel (1989) observed that in the developmental stage of children peer group influence is stronger as the modeling value of the family decreases. The peer group influences the value system of a child, his or her knowledge, and costumes, eating habits, etiquettes and learning. Socialization is essential in the case of disabled children. Baker's (1999) study among 'at risk students', a group of students with high possibility of poor

developmental or school outcomes, reveals that they were satisfied with school if they feel their relationship with their teacher as caring and supportive. Cazden (2001) states, "children's intellectual functioning, at school, as at home, is intimately related to the social relationships in which it becomes embedded. Familiarity facilitates responsiveness which plays an important part in learning". He claims that affective interpersonal relationship with student can be built by creating appropriate learning environment.

Mohrman, Tenkasi and Mohrman, (2003) assert "lasting change does not result from plans, blueprints, and events; rather change occurs through interaction of participants". Crosnoe, Johnson and Elder (2004) concluded that "students who had more positive views of their teachers did better and had fewer problems in school". "Strong teacher-student relationships may be one of the most important environmental factors in changing a child's educational path" (Baker, 2006). Hallinan (2008) writes "learning is a process that involves cognitive, social and psychological dimensions, and both processes should be considered if academic achievement is to be maximized". Darling-Hammond (2006) states, "teaching is in the service of students, which creates the expectation that teachers will be able to come to understand how students learn and what students need if they are to learn effectively – and that they will incorporate that into their teaching".

Downey (2008) writes "teachers need to know how their daily works in classrooms can be infused with interactions and instructional strategies that research has shown can make a positive difference in the lives of students who are at risk of academic failure". He also asserts that "the quality of the relationship between a student and the teacher will result in a greater degree of learning in the classroom". Ravitch (2010) writes that "the goal of education is not to produce higher test scores, but to educate children to become responsible people with well-developed minds and good character". O'Connor, Dearing and Collins (2011) highlight that "the importance of fostering elementary school teachers' awareness of the role of their relationship with students, and provides teachers with information as to how to support high quality relationships with their students".

Hamre, Pianta, Burchinal, Field, Crouch, Downer, Howes, La Paro, and Little. (2012) recommend that "talking with a teacher and conducting observations in the classroom will provide important and unique information for designing interventions" and "forming strong and supportive relationships with teachers allows students to feel safer and more secure in the school setting, feel more competent, make more positive connections with peers, and make greater academic gains". The study conducted by Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005) points out that the students' perceptions of teacher influence and cognitive outcomes are related to each other. The higher the influence of teacher, the higher the learning outcomes of students will be in the test. The study reports that the more the teachers were perceived by their students as cooperative, the higher the students' scores were in the cognitive tests. Baker and Linn, (2002) noted the importance of improved instruction and student learning to maximize benefits and minimize unintended consequences. Mackenzie and Bebell (1951) pointed out that school leaders and teachers need to work cooperatively to customize the curriculum at the school level. Tanner and Tanner (2007) consider curriculum improvement as critical for providing opportunities for learners in impoverished living conditions. A case study conducted by Kirkwood (2000) in Scotland examined a thinking curriculum and the idea of learning to learn in computing studies. The methodology adopted for teaching was problem-solving approach and the students were self-directed in their learning, collaborated with their peers, and learned from their teachers. It is found that students learned how to program, even at the elementary level, through this approach. It helped the students to develop higher order thinking skills like problem-solving, metacognition, and self-regulation.

The reviews reveal that study habits and learning environment play key role in determining the academic achievement of students.

Methodology

Experimental design was adopted to conduct the present study. The sample selected for the study covers 40 secondary school students from two randomly selected schools in Kollam district in Kerala. The research instruments used for the study are study habits inventory and learning environment scale developed and standardized by the author. The study habits inventory consists of 53 statements and the learning environment scale consists of 44 statements which are in the form of Likert scale with responses ranging from Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). The content validity and face validity were calculated. The split-half and test- retest reliability of the inventory is 0.709 and 0.811 respectively. The split-half and test- retest reliability of the scale is 0.735 and 0.802 respectively. The scale focused on six dimensions of learning environments such as home environment, social environment, school environment, classroom environment, role of teachers and peers, and curriculum transaction. The inventory focuses on seven areas such as time management, note making &note taking, attention & listening skills, reading comprehension & reading mechanics, writing mechanics, test preparation & performance, and anxiety management. The tools were administered among 8th standard students and their achievement scores in terminal examination were obtained. The students' responses and the achievement scores were used to find out the effect of study habits and learning environment upon their academic progress. The major statistical technique employed for the study is Pearson's coefficient of correlation.

Results

Correlation between study habits and learning environment on academic achievement of secondary level learners of Kerala.

The present study assumes that study habits and learning environment are positively correlated to academic achievement of learners at secondary level. The relation was examined by computing the coefficient of correlation between study habits and learning environment on academic achievement of learners at secondary levels of Kerala. Table 1.1 presents the statistical analysis.

Table 1.1: Correlation between study habits and learning environment on academic achievement of learners at secondary level of Kerala.

Variables	Secondary school students (N = 40)				
	M	**σ**	***df***	**r**	**P**
Study habits	164.48	20.44	38	0.96	.01
Learning environment	165.43	21.33			

The coefficient of correlation computed (r = 0.96; P<0.01) was greater than the table value (Garrett, 1981). The finding shows that there is a positive correlation between study habits and learning environment on academic achievement of learners at secondary levels of Kerala and hence the hypotheses 1 and 2 are accepted.

The correlation between study habits and learning environment on academic achievement among high, average and low achievers of secondary level learners of Kerala.

The present study assumes that there is significant correlation between study habits and learning environment on academic achievement among subsamples such as high, average and low achievers of secondary learners of Kerala. The relation was examined by computing the coefficient of correlation. Table 1.2 presents the statistical analysis.

Table 1.2: Comparison of study habits and learning environment on academic achievement of high achievers, average achievers and low achievers in English among secondary schools of Kerala.

	High scores				Average scores				Low scores				
Variables	**N_1**	**M_1**	**σ_1**	**r_1**	**N_2**	**M_2**	**σ_2**	**r_1**	**N_3**	**M_3**	**σ_3**	**r_3**	***df***
Study habits	6	195.67	7.53	0.76	27	165.07	12.68	0.85	7	135.43	3.69	0.71	38
Learning environment	6	199.33	8.24		27	165.44	13.00		7	136.29	5.28		

The coefficient of correlation computed (r_1 = 0.76; r_2 = 0.85 r_3 =0.71 P<0.01) was greater than the table values (Garrett, 1981). The findings show that there is positive correlation between study habits and academic achievement and learning environment on academic achievement among subsamples such as high, average and low achievers at secondary level learners of Kerala. Hence, the hypotheses 3 and 4 are accepted.

Discussion of the Results and Conclusion of the Study

The review of related studies and the experimental part of the present study substantiate those psychosocial variables like study habits and learning environment have a significant role upon the academic progress of the learners. The findings show that there is significant correlation (r = 0.96; P <0.01) between study habits (M = 164.48; σ = 20.44) and learning environment (M = 165.43; σ = 21.33) on academic achievement of secondary level learners of Kerala. The study reveals that there is significant correlation (r_1 = 0.76; P <0.01) between study habits (M_1 = 195.67; σ_1 = 7.53) and learning environment (M_1= 199.33; σ_1= 8.24) on academic achievement of high achievers. It also proves that there is a significant correlation (r_2= 0.85; P <0.01) between study habits (M_2 = 165.07; σ_2 = 12.68) and learning environment (M_2 = 165.44; σ_2 = 13.00) on academic achievement of average achievers. The study highlights that the low achievement scores of secondary level learners are also dependent on study habits and learning environment. There is a significant correlation (r_3 = 0.71; P <0.01) between study habits (M_3 = 135.43; σ_3= 3.69) and learning environment (M_3= 136.29; σ_3= 5.28) on academic achievement of low scores.

The results reveal that the present study agrees with Verma (2016) where in her study it is found that study habits have a strong influence over the academic achievement and factors like method of study, family background, socio-economic status and environment etc. effect study habits. It also conforms to the statement of Fraser (1986). He considers classroom environment as a determinant factor in students' learning outcomes and it should not be ignored if anyone wishes to improve the effectiveness of schools. The reasons of low achievement of students can be related to the observations of Crandell and Smaldino (2000); and Stricherz, (2000) where they identified that poor school conditions like student-teacher ratio, school location, school population, classroom ventilation, poor lighting in classrooms etc contribute to student health problems, student behavior, and student achievement. The reasons for high achievement of the students might be influenced by peers' pattern of socialization, peer location, motivation of peers etc. (Temitope and Christy, 2015). Hence from the given study, it can be concluded that like motivation, attitude and aptitude, factors like study habits and learning environment plays a significant role on the academic progress of the learners.

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