

Study Attitude And Academic Achievement At Secondary Level In Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The author compared study attitudes of low and high achievers by using a self-developed study attitude scale (SAS) consisting of 36 items. Academic performance was measured through marks obtained by the students in the 9th grade examination conducted by the external body. The analysis revealed that the study attitude of secondary school students was related with their academic achievement. A t-test for independent samples showed that there was a significant difference between the study attitude of male, female, rural and urban students.

Keywords: study attitude, academic achievement, study attitude scale

INTRODUCTION

The study attitude is one of the main factors that affect academic performance of learners. Academic achievement is a function of study attitude of the students (Hussain, 2006). Numerous studies have reported a positive correlation between attitudes toward subject and achievement (Haladyna & Shaughnessy, 1983; Ma & Xu, 2004; Madeline, 1985; Maree, 1997; Rehman, 2002; Simonson & Maushak, 1996). Student attitude towards study is a complex construct. Attitude is a fairly stable emotional tendency to respond consistently to some specific object, situation, person, or category of people. It has three components: cognitive core, affective values and behavioural action tendencies. The cognitive aspect of attitude consists of beliefs and ideas that a person has about the attitude object. The affective component includes the feelings of like and dislike toward any object, and the behavioural aspect consists of intentions to respond in a particular way toward the object.

The making of perceptual and cognitive organisation, with reference to formation of attitudes, depends upon the individual's social environment. The process of social interaction, which starts from the family, brings about certain developments, including formation of attitudes (Uroog, 2000). Cultural differences among societies will be reflected in differences in attitudes among the individuals in those societies. In Pakistan, there is difference in rural and urban cultures, so the attitudes of rural and urban students are different. In rural areas, the people are comparatively simple and have positive attitudes toward life, so they are more hard-working. The social roles of males and females are quite distinct in Pakistan. The girls are trained to confine themselves in the house and to serve the family whereas boys remain outside the house most of the time and indulge themselves in different activities. In early adolescence, the peers can positively and negatively affect one's attitude (Duke and Meckel, 1980). Peer relationship is an essential component of a child's development (Akthar, 2001).

Study attitude serves as an index of how we think and feel about studying. Crow and Crow (1999) commented that the learning experience formulates study attitude. If the learning experience is not pleasant, then the resulting study attitude is not favourable. Successful learners adopt positive study attitudes (Bokhari, 1996). Hamachek (1998) states that academic achievement and attitude of older siblings are passed on to the younger brothers and sisters which becomes a good predictor of the younger siblings' performance. There are number of factors that play a vital role in the development and determination of study attitude.

Maree (1997) describes study attitude as a driving force behind study habits and it is a reason for pupils' underachievement in studying. Ma & Xu (2004) explored that the secondary-level students must have a positive

attitude toward math in order to succeed in a math course. Lin, et al. (2001) recommended that future researchers are encouraged to determine the interactions between students' performance and attitude. Madeline(1985) explored a correlation between mathematic achievement and attitude toward mathematics and Sirohi (2004) learned that 98.7% of the underachievers tend to possess an unfavorable attitude toward their teacher and 100% have poor study habits.

Akbar (2001) writes that a work cannot be completed without the expenditure of effort. The more difficult the task, the more energy is required to do a good job. Learning is no exception to this generalisation. Complete mastery of a subject or a skill may require much detailed attention. Fortunately, however, the drudgery aspect of school work can be removed as interest is introduced into the activity

An already awakened interest in a subject keeps a student thinking in that area until he masters the subject. Successful achievement increases a student's interest, which may continue throughout life. Pupil interest in mathematics, science, foreign language, or any other subject may be based upon real talent in the field. Some students develop interest in a subject area as a result of the influence of the teacher, a classmate, or a member of the family. However, if such students have average ability or above, they usually can develop a strong interest in their subject and exert a degree of effort in its mastery which will lead to successful achievement (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980).

Students' performance in school is a topic of great concern to teachers, parents, and researchers. Achievement outcomes have been regarded as a function of two characteristics - skill and will - and must be considered separately because possessing the will alone may not ensure success if the skill is lacking (McCombs and Marzano, 1990). Shah (2002) found that the institutions were partially successful in developing positive attitudes of students.

A great deal of research literature provides evidence that attitude is an important motivator of behaviour and positively affects the achievement of students (Hussain, 2006). Study attitude can be divided into teacher approval and educational acceptance (Ansari, 1983; Ansari and Chowdhri, 1990; Hurlburt, Kroeker, and Gade, 1991; Hurlburt, Gade ,and McLaughlin, 1990). Keeping in view prior researches, study attitude was broken down into two areas: 1) attitude toward teacher and 2) attitude toward study.

Significance of the Study

The academic performance of students is a matter of great concern for parents, teachers, and students. In Pakistan, there is much room for the improvement of academic performance of students. The present study was designed to investigate the relationship between study attitude and academic performance of the students in public sector institutions in Pakistan at the secondary level.

Objectives of the Study

1. to explore the relationship between study attitudes and achievement
2. Is there any significant difference between study attitudes of rural and urban students?
3. Is there any significant difference between study attitudes of female and male students?

Hypothesis of the Study

1. There is no correlation between study attitude scores and achievement scores at the secondary level.
2. There is no correlation between educational acceptance and achievement.
3. There is no correlation between teacher approval and achievement.
4. There is no significant difference between study attitudes of rural and urban students.
5. There is no significant difference between study attitudes of female and male students.

METHOD

Population & Sample

All secondary school students of the Gujranwala district constituted the population of the study. One thousand two hundred and twenty seven 9th grade students participated in the study. Among them, 721 were girls and 506 were boys. Moreover, 680 were rural and 547 were urban. All the students were taken from government schools. Usually people in the average income group send their children to government schools. The researchers visited the sample schools personally and administered the scale to students. The selected students were called out and were requested to participate in the study. They were told that the information was being collected for research purposes and their responses would not be told to their parents and teachers. Since students were not used to such scales based upon rating, considerable time was spent to instruct them.

Instrument

A Likert-type scale consisting of 31 items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used as an instrument in this study to measure the study attitude. The items were further divided into educational acceptance and teacher approval. The scale was scored positively, which means that a higher score shows a more positive attitude. Similarly, a higher score on educational acceptance shows more acceptance of education and a higher score on teacher approval shows more approval of the teacher. Cronbach Alpha reliability of the instrument was .889.

Data Collection

The researcher personally visited the schools to collect the data after seeking permission of the heads of the respective institutions.

Data Analysis

The data were through Microsoft Excel and SPSS.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the relationship between study attitude and academic-performance. The correlation is significant and positive. This shows that the students with positive study attitude are likely to be high achievers than their counterparts with comparatively less positive attitude. Same results have been reported by Moghni and Riaz (1984) and Hamachak (1998)

Table 1: Correlation between Study Attitude Scores and Academic Achievement Scores

Variable	Academic Achievement	N	Sig. (2-tailed)
Study Attitude	.364	1227	.000
Self-Concept	.345	1227	.000
Delay avoidance	.263	1227	.000
Teacher Acceptance	.319	1227	.000
Attitude Toward Institution	.268	1227	.000

Table 2 shows that the difference of mean scores of girls and boys is significant. Hence, the study attitude of girls is better than the study attitude of boys. These results are against the results reported by Ansari (1983) who reported that there is no significant difference in study attitude between girls and boys. This may be a shift in actual trend because in 1983 the girls in Pakistan were not as prominent in studies as they were in 2007.

Table 2: Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Girls and Boys on Study Attitude

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Study Attitude	Girls	721	147.94	17.17	6.78	1225	.000
	Boys	506	140.84	19.22			
Self-Concept	Girls	721	34.84	4.09	4.152	1225	.000
	Boys	506	33.80	4.61			
Delay Avoidance	Girls	721	48.99	7.80	5.533	1225	.000
	Boys	506	46.41	8.41			
Teacher Acceptance	Girls	721	37.91	6.15	7.846	1225	.000
	Boys	506	35.04	6.56			
Attitude Towards Institution	Girls	721	26.20	3.54	2.822	1225	.005
	Boys	506	25.60	3.78			

Table 3 shows that the difference between mean scores of rural students and urban students is significant. Hence, the study attitude of rural students is better than the study attitude of urban students. These results are against the results reported by Ansari (1983)

Table 3: Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Rural and Urban Students on Study Attitude

Variable	Residence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Study Attitude	Rural	680	147.58	17.22	5.523	1225	.000
	Urban	547	141.82	19.25			
Self-Concept	Rural	680	34.85	3.99	3.974	1225	.000
	Urban	547	33.86	4.70			
Delay Avoidance	Rural	680	48.95	8.02	4.968	1225	.000
	Urban	547	46.65	8.14			
Teacher Acceptance	Rural	680	37.54	6.08	4.971	1225	.000
	Urban	547	35.71	6.81			
Attitude Towards Institution	Rural	680	26.24	3.38	3.050	1225	.002
	Urban	547	25.60	3.94			

DISCUSSION

The correlation between study attitude scores and academic performance scores is positively related. It means that if a student has a more positive attitude, he is likely to be a high achiever. Conversely, if a student has a less positive attitude, he is likely to be a low achiever. These results are in line with (Hussain, 2006; Haladyna & Shaughnessy, 1983; Ma & Xu, 2004; Madeline, 1985; Maree, 1997; Rehman, 2002; Simonson & Maushak, 1996). Teachers have a key role in the development of study attitudes. There is a significant correlation between 'Educational Acceptance' and 'Academic Performance' and 'Teacher approval' and 'Academic Performance'.

The difference in study attitude scores of female and male students indicates that females have a comparatively better study attitude than boys. These results are against the results reported by Ansari (1983) who found that there is no significant difference in the study attitudes of girls and boys. This may be a shift in trend because in 1983, the girls in Pakistan were not as prominent in studies as they are now.

The difference in study attitude scores of rural and urban students indicates that rural students have a comparatively better study attitude than urban students. Therefore, urban students' study attitude building programme should be designed and implemented. These results are against the results reported by Ansari (1983).

CONCLUSION

Attitudes and achievement go side by side with each other. If the attitude to study is positive, the achievement is greater, which means that the better the attitude, the better the marks and learning. If the attitude to study is negative, the marks and learning are low; so, the development of a positive attitude to study is essential. The rural students have better attitudes about studying than the urban students. The reasons for the positive attitude to study among rural students are yet to be explored. The achievements of rural and urban students are vital indicators of their attitudes. The attitude of female students to study at the secondary school level is more positive than for boys. The comparative study of marks obtained by girls and boys vividly displays that female students get better marks than boys, simply because of the positive study attitudes of the girls. Female students work with greater devotion and sense of commitment than boys. Devotion and sense of commitment are the indicators of positive attitude. Positive attitude to study can be developed, improved and polished. For this purpose, guidance and counselling can play a vital role. An interesting curriculum can be very effective in order to activate a positive attitude to study. Moreover, the friendly behaviour of teacher to students can go a long way in connection with the development of a positive attitude.

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