The Influence of Test Preparation Programs on IELTS Test Performance among Bangladeshi Students' Studying in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Test preparation programs namely coaching, mock tests, and repetitive test-taking aid students in achieving language skills and comprehending the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test procedure. This paper attempted to find out the influence of test preparation programs on candidates' IELTS test performance. A quantitative method was used, and an online questionnaire survey was conducted to obtain the data. The population of the study was the Bangladeshi students at Universiti Putra Malaysia. Probability sampling, specifically simple random sampling techniques were used to draw the sample. Data were collected from a total of 100 students, and SPSS was employed to analyze the data. The finding showed that mock test ($r = 0.450$), coaching ($r = 0.496$), and repetitive test-taking ($r = 0.369$) have a positive and moderate correlation with IELTS test performance. In contrast, the mock test, coaching, and repetitive test-taking have 23.4%, 35.3%, and 21.3% influence on IELTS test performance, respectively. This study has implications for candidates' teaching and learning opportunities for competitive English language test programs. Furthermore, it will deliver a diverse viewpoint on the preparation programs and show their effectiveness for future reference. This study can be used as a guideline for future research to improve test preparation programs for better test performance.

INTRODUCTION

Test performance, test-taking skills, and test preparation courses are interrelated aspects that influence whether a test taker will perform to the best of his or her ability

in a test (Powers, 2017). As a practice, students attend preparatory programs to achieve standard grades for the test (Saif et al., 2021). Bangladeshi students who have intentions of studying abroad, such programs especially related to IELTS are excitingly popular. Performance in the test means candidates must perform a task or activity rather than only simply answering the questions (Sultana, 2019). Performance may include various capacities and the implementation of skills in a real test (Farooqui, 2020).

The results obtained through test preparation courses will help candidates in their admission into a reputable educational institution. Preparation programs claim that they can raise learners' scores in a test and reduce test-taking anxiety (Paul, 2012). In addition, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is deemed one of the most popular standard examinations in measuring a learner's English language proficiency. This test includes separate language skills testing and the learner's knowledge of speaking, listening, writing, and reading (Davis & Vehabovic, 2018), and the results are reported based on a nine-band scale. Due to its popularity as a high-stakes English language proficiency test, IELTS test-takers invest for upgraded performance. Consequently, they attain from test preparation programs, namely coaching, mock test and recently repetitive test taking also included in the test preparation course. Coaching in this context refers to intensive care and receiving private lessons and directions from an expert (Roza, 2019).

The administration mimics the questions and answers of the actual test. Language Assessment experts will mark these mock test papers to help students (Knoch et al., 2020). Repetitive test-taking requires learners to face the real test situation to gain experience to do better and secure good scores (Green & Van Moere, 2020). Most students go through test preparation courses in Bangladesh to prepare themselves for the IELTS test (Kar, 2013).

The test preparation program is believed to guarantee students' success in attaining good results (Powers, 2017). For these reasons, students from Bangladesh tend to choose the IELTS test despite the fact that the standard of English language teaching in Bangladesh is still not up to par (Hamid, 2011). Moreover, English teachers often assess their students' performance without a standard (Ghorbani et al., 2008b; Sato, 2019), encouraging more students to opt for test preparation courses for language skills development.

According to statistics on higher education in Malaysia, more than 28000 Bangladesh students were studying in different universities across the country in 2017, accounting for one out of every four international students studying in Malaysia (Afterschool.my, 2018). Public universities in Malaysia treat English language proficiency with absolute importance, especially in the admission process, where candidates' four language skills are measured before approving admission (Samad et al., 2008). The current study uses the concept of language management theory where its main features are discussed

in relation to the IELTS test performance of Bangladeshi students. Thus, the aims of this study are to find out the influence of Mock test, Coaching and Repetitive test taking on candidates' performance on their IELTS exam performance.

Background of the Study

Recent studies from various parts of the world suggest that more students have engaged in test preparation courses, and Bangladeshi is no different (Sultana, 2019). Test preparation courses, especially for IELTS tests, are becoming very common (Kabir, 2018). Learners attended these courses without hesitation or thinking about how far they could benefit from them in the long run (Sultana, 2018). Furthermore, the scores obtained from students' examinations are considered crucial in demonstrating their capacity as a learner as well as a platform to determine their future (Zakaria et al., 2013). Traditional evaluations provide one-off and indirect experiments with little input for students, as well as test assignments that are decontextualized. This indicates that traditional teaching is not sufficient for learners' needs, encouraging test preparation programs (Singh & Samad, 2013).

Teachers' knowledge influenced the exam preparation courses. Generally, students want more feedback from teachers, who also encourage student to take these programs (Ghorbani et al., 2008a). There have been many contrary opinions about the test preparation course for IELTS, and yet, not many researches have been carried out in this sector to clarify that the test preparation course can help learners to do better in the real IELTS test (Kar, 2013). Tests like IELTS are frequently thought of as anxiety-provoking and can create pressure on students as learners do not know exactly how the tests are carried out (Hu & Trenkic, 2019). In Bangladesh, for countless students, a test preparation program is the ultimate solution to their all troubles. Many courses favor test items over profundity, and students may be left with only a speedy summary of terms, topics, and theories without sufficient time and proper design materials. Therefore, it is necessary to find out the actual influence of test preparation courses on Bangladeshi's students' performance in their IELTS test. The problems and controversies of the test preparation course for the IELTS test will remain if it is not dealt with and could result in learners not being familiar with the preparation courses for IELTS and the actual test itself. Unfortunately, no such elaborate study has been conducted in Bangladesh for the investigation of such issues. Therefore, it created a gap in knowledge that all concepts and issues regarding coaching, repetitive test-taking, and mock tests found in previous research are the same in the Bangladeshi context or different from the Bangladeshi context or vice versa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

IELTS

IELTS is jointly owned by the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia, and Cambridge Assessment English (IELTS, 2021) and is considered a high stakes test

that has been administered in over 135 countries, and the scores are accepted by over 7,000 educational institutions. This test is designed to evaluate students' English language skills critically. This test is famous for immigration, study and work accreditation and is particularly known in almost all educational sectors (Arcuino, 2013).

Test Performance

Test performance entails performing well in the examination, recognizing the test items, associating the items with the correct response, and managing the entire procedure. In an attempt to investigate the relationship between test performance and language proficiency, researchers discovered that the low performance was not a general pattern, but rather one that revealed a loose verbal–nonverbal contradiction in which bilingual persons' performance was noticeably lower than test means that were similar in the previous kind but closer to or at the mean on tests categorized in the latter (Sotelo-Dynega et al., 2013). However, there may not seem to be any scientific data to suggest that such ratings alone are fundamentally accurate estimates of true abilities or that they better predict academic success than those that involve linguistically difficult activities (Lohman et al., 2008). Moreover, the absence of scientific evidence for categorizing bilingual people's results as a straightforward dichotomy shows that the association between language competence and test scores is more complex than previously assumed.

Research on the Preparation Course for IELTS

It has been suggested that Bangladesh needs to revise its policies and emphasize more on tertiary level English language proficiency in developing good communicative skills among its workforce (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). However, the efficacy of the test preparedness course has not been discussed at length, considering its prevalence in test preparation and its accuracy in assessing test-takers' English language skills. Power's (1993) meta-analysis of coaching impact on SAT scores found only questionable proof of arguments made by coaching companies and publishers of test content.

Instruction in test preparation connotes test-centric teaching, which includes an unfair and restrictive collection of activities that limit students' reading learning opportunities (Davis & Vehabovic, 2018). Because of this, test value and test anxiety has varying degrees of impact on students' confidence and test performance (Chou, 2019). Brown (1998) studied the influence of test tag findings of the course in preparing IELTS students and found that the IELTS training course is more effective than the EAP in preparing students for the original test. Read and Hayes (2003) conducted a study on IELTS classes in two Auckland language schools where courses A offered intensive teacher training for students, while Courses B paid attention to language skills. Nevertheless, Read and Hayes' analysis did not indicate any correlation between the different IELTS preparatory styles/formats and IELTS examiners' actual results.

The connection between intensive research in English for academic purposes and the IELTS ranking was also explored by Elder and O'Loughlin (2003). A total of 112 non-English students participated in the study, which utilized comprehensive English courses provided by one of Australia's four independent language centers and New Zealand's four independent language centers. Their findings show that it is easier to move from one stage to the last of the IELTS scale for both the overall score and the individual sub-skills. Regarding the impact of instructional variables, Elder and O'Loughlin's study found that the quality of instruction was a key predictor of the success of a group of variables. The above studies have been conducted in Australia or New Zealand, where the IELTS university examination is mandatory for immigrants from Asian countries, including Japan, China, and Korea. Thus, the previous studies found that preparation courses are significant for test performance and may need more investigation.

Test Preparation Influences on Test Performance

In language assessment, studies on test preparation centered mainly on the impact of washback, particularly examining learning and teaching (Xie & Andrews, 2013; Xie, 2013). However, several studies have investigated the extent to which test preparation improves test scores. Xie and Andrews (2013) also found a higher degree, though limited in influence, of the training of 807 Chinese students in College Test Band 4 (CET4).

They defined the types of test preparation that contributed to scores: test management, memorization, and drill practice learning, which most likely also enhanced the test-takers' knowledge. The influence of test-coaching on test scores was reported by Farnsworth (2013) for oral competence assessments. Farnsworth noted that coaching is another word for an intensive test preparation program where students practice similar question formats. ESL students took two separate oral tests (Basic English Skills Plus and Versant English Test) for pre-testing and randomized coaching sessions related to each of the two assessments listed in the Farnsworth report. Both examinations were taken as post-tests. Both participants improved their grades during the post-test, regardless of the test they had qualified for; however, the benefit was greater when contrasted with coaching. To analyze the relationship between test preparation and TOEFL iBT outcomes, Liu (2014) performed large-scale regression analyses with 14,593 Chinese test participants performing online survey questionnaires.

According to the findings, TOEFL iBT scores were also predicted by the school attendance of the test participants; however, the author stressed that its contribution to the test score was too small to endorse the impact of school attendance coaching (an increase of 1.86 points out of 120). The vocabulary and the simulation training substantially predicted the coaching program's total scores and subsection scores, particularly the simulation courses for reading and hearing. It helped to improve the reading

and listening test scores total points by more than 1 in 30. Likewise, substantial predictors of total test scores and subsection scores were formed among test-specific strategies, vocabulary memorization, and practice research. In general, the relationship between the implementation of the technique and the test results was unique to the field under study. For example, listening techniques, like reading sketch strategies, were more likely to contribute to listening ratings. As mentioned before, the test developers tried to make the tests resistant to these coaching influences (Spaan, 2007). Test planning has seen a significant uptick in high-stakes testing situations. Under these situations, the key goal of test planning exercises is to improve student grades (Gebril & Eid, 2017).

However, the actual influences of the preparation of the exam may need to be further investigated. From Xie and Andrew's (2013) findings, it is hard to see how much real language acquisition has occured alongside test planning. Although official English instruction was suspended outside the test preparation, there was no real monitoring group in the study, which would have shown the magnitude of expected improvements over the 10-week duration without preparation for the test. In addition, Farnsworth's study is limited in its scale and thus needs replication (15 or 19 participants in both oral test groups). Since the study concentrated on detailed questionnaires online, Liu's (2014) research is also not straightforward. Such aggregated data are likely to blur many details on an individual basis. Based on the findings, it would be appropriate and timely to investigate if the same findings apply to IELTS test runners, another high-stakes academic language test for ESL students (Tulloh & Wood, 1998). The only helpful thing test-centric instructional methods may provide students is increased knowledge of how tests are written. Test-writers employ vocabulary and forms that some pupils are not familiar with.

Hence, teaching students how to feel at ease with the language of the exam which enables them to show their understanding rather than attempt to decipher the author's code, might prove valuable and beneficial (Davis & Vehabovic, 2018; Winke & Lim, 2017).

Mock Tests

A study conducted in Iran has shown that mock tests can positively influence the training of IELTS candidates in the context of EFL. Erfani (2012) discovered that the ability to complete exams such as IELTS and TOEFL encouraged both language teachers and learners to use them as training tests in the classroom. Test-based language classes, however, have not always been preferred. The use of tests in language classes and the practice of testing techniques were indicators of a negative washback influence, as argued by Watanabe (2004). Moreover, the results of this research have shown that the practice of technique testing is more effective than teaching the content of courses in terms of high stakes tests, such as IELTS. However, a more comprehensive study is needed to determine the magnitude of the washback influence in these circumstances. The

washback influence may be due to Iranian EFL learners not having enough practice in strategies to take the test, as mentioned by Mohammadi (2016), where it was concluded that candidates' time is wasted on the exam.

In their study, Yang and Badger (2015) also concluded that IELTS training courses that assess students provide them with a sense of protection, as most students want to learn how to do well in the assessment and get high scores. In test preparation courses, the authors, therefore, promote the use of mock evaluations. Lumley and Stoneman (2000) concluded that the tests were central to the preparation of IELTS courses and had a more positive influence than focusing on the linguistic features of the language in those courses. This study's findings align with Lumley and Stoneman's (2000) study concluded that real examination practice had a greater influence than the IELTS training courses. Naseri et al. (2014) noted that practicing speed reading strategies with IELTS candidates will enhance their understanding of reading in the test. As stated by Chung and Nation (2006), speed reading techniques include skimming and scanning techniques. Bell (2001) also mentioned that such techniques are better developed in a test situation, increasing the test-taker reading comprehension and scores. The above discussion indicates that a mock test has a constructive influence on test performance.

Coaching

Specialized exam preparation services are also known as test coaching for students who need to pass high-level examinations. Using several different mechanisms, they can improve test scores (Kabir, 2018). Any of these do not make the legitimacy of ratings a challenge. For example, by removing irrelevant variables, practices that familiarize students with the test format will decrease anxiety and thus increase validity. By helping to build the underlying skills of the exam, other operations can increase scores (Koh et al., 2018). However, some test preparation practices can compromise the validity of the scores. These activities improve the score by limiting the program to focus exclusively on the subject and the type of questions that can be measured (Powers, 2017). Activities of this kind can improve scores without correspondingly enhancing the underlying ability, sacrificing the validity (strength of inference from tested to untested behavior) of score extrapolation.

Other operations can boost the scores by helping to build underlying abilities that assessments offer (Arendasy et al., 2016). These activities raise the scores by restricting the curriculum to only concentrating on the contents and types of test questions. Activities such as this can improve scores without improving the underlying skills, thereby compromising the validity of scoring extrapolation. In Green's (2007) report, the related consequences of curriculum reduction strategies were observed based on the IELTS writing scores obtained from 476 international students in the UK.

Although no characteristic distinctions have been made between the different types of programs (Davis & Vehabovic, 2018),

the IELTS class behaviors were the only course parameter that was uniquely positive. Based on what was observed in Green's (2007) study, these are precisely the types of practices that have been adopted by the booming English test prep industry (Matoush & Fu, 2012). Test centers concentrate on routine practice using parallel tests to prepare applicants for a 'probability game' (Ma & Cheng, 2015).

The reliability of IELTS results is further strengthened by a study conducted on 45 Chinese students. The candidates' progress with various other activities is indexed online, including checking in Oxford Dictionary, vocabulary assignment, and written sentences. Besides, their performance on these tests was very similar to the community of 44 subjects in the controlled group, both before and after the exercise. At that time, they had no interest in any training. After the IELTS evaluation, competence measurement for the test-prep group exceeded the control group. The results obtained showed that IELTS can increase approximately half the band scoring with this adjustment, as other English proficiency tests introduce a 4-week coaching program without this change. The research showed that certain test preparation activities may undermine the validity of the extrapolation of scores and that previous concerns about the ability of the test preparation courses to achieve the required return may not have been taken into account (Green, 2007). The more intensive accomplishment of the test coaching industry depends on their effective planning

and teaching. In a nutshell, coaching can provide the learners the facilities to improve their test performance.

Repetitive Test-Taking

Listening is an important skill in effective communication. In Bangladesh, most of the students belong to Bangla medium education, which causes problems among students to understand English medium instruction (Abedin et al., 2009). For this reason, to achieve good scores in the IELTS test, students take repetitive tests to prepare for the IELTS. The required language score for an unconditional first-time university offer is not attained by most international students (Li, 2013). Therefore, the majority of the candidates would usually have to repeat the test at least once (Sultana, 2018). IELTS advertises on its website that test repeaters are unlikely to raise their test scores further if they do not strengthen their English language skills (Green, 2007).

The IELTS results can be confirmed and accessed within 90 days. However, in 2006, the legislation was repealed, forcing applicants to take a test and repeat until adequate changes were made in their skills to be worth a higher rating. For this reason, students need to repeat the IELTS test, and there have been reports indicating that some students had to repeat the test 14 times in eight months, with three attempts in one month to develop the language skills and scores (Hamid, 2016).

While the major changes in language testing alone are not likely to occur, at least some evidence is that small improvement are

likely to exist. For example, Zhang (2008) found evidence of minor but consistent score improvements (effect sizes varying from 0.12 to 0.17 SD for test components and 0.17 SD for the test as a whole) by examining the outcomes of about 12,000 candidates who repeated the TOEFL within one month. However, it is doubtful that the improvements would have resulted from improves proficiency, considering the limited time the test was replicated (Sato, 2019).

However, repetitions may have resulted from increased knowledge of the test format (Koh et al., 2018). Although it is unlikely that major changes in language tests alone can be due to repeated tests, there is at least some proof that small improvements may be made. Overview of the latest review by Hu & Trenkić (2019) observed that extensive IELTS preliminary programs, immediately tested after the intervention, would increase IELTS scores by about 0.5 bands with the corresponding increase in alternative skill measures. This report recruited Chinese students at the UK University to investigate how the IELTS practice of test preparation impacts students' skills when arriving and how the IELTS ranking predicts academic performance. Three investigation questions have been answered in the report, which shows that IELTS preliminary programs increase the scores. Previous researchers consistently found a positive link between repetitive test-taking and test performance.

Students generated their research schedules and time frames, which necessitated purchasing test planning guides, question banks, and commercial courses on

their own time and expense, which helped them improve test performance (Schwartz et al., 2018). Academic success gaps may be attributed to a variety of external causes, including academic readiness measures. In addition, when readiness (e.g., SAT or high-school grade-point average) is considered, student characteristics may forecast accomplishment in certain disciplines and preparation for an exam (Salehi et al., 2019). Previous research has shown that a goal-oriented strategy is correlated with lower test anxiety. Students who were goal-oriented in their research and planned their learning were less stressed (Yusefzadeh et al., 2019).

It is only normal that the world's most widely used English exam is critical for students who often participate in test-prep courses or pursue tutoring to obtain their desired results (Minakova, 2020). All types of coaching, mock tests, and repetitive test-taking are common for learners' study careers. However, no definite research shows these three variables together to compare with each item and determine the effective application of these variables. These issues are never addressed properly in Bangladesh, which motivates this study.

From the literature review, it can be said that all the studies mentioned are based on only the authors' context. So far, no prominent research has been conducted on Bangladeshi students, which created a research gap in the Bangladeshi context. Moreover, whether these types of programs are beneficial or have no impact on students' learning is unclear or received less attention. Therefore, it

is essential to study the influence of the test preparation program on Bangladeshi students' IELTS test performance. The findings from the current study are hoped to address the pertinent issues and add to the body of knowledge regarding IELTS test preparation.

Based on the study, it is evident that coaching, repetitive test-taking, and mock tests help learners improve their test performance. These preparatory programs are the instrument to develop learners' language skills. It is, therefore, hypothesized that

H1: There is a positive influence of mock tests on candidates' test performance on the IELTS exam

H2: Coaching has a positive influence on candidates' test performance on the IELTS exam

H3: There is a positive influence of repetitive test-taking on candidates' test performance on the IELTS exam

Theoretical Details of the Study

Language Management Theory. Language management theory (LMT) explains that the initial stage in language planning addresses the problems concerning the context. Then, the activities must be carried out to solve all the problems and suggest completing the planning process (Neustupný, 1994). According to the theory, if hindrances persist, then language implementation is not possible. Therefore, learners' test performance will not be satisfactory if prior preparation is not taken on aspects such as practicing speed reading (Chung & Nation

2006), good language proficiency (Abedin et al., 2009), and different mechanisms of the test (Kabir, 2018). The first step of simple management occurs when an individual notes something in her or his own or the interlocutor's utterance. Then, the speaker evaluates the phenomenon (Nekvapil, 2015), and if the phenomenon is evaluated negatively, it is referred to as inadequacy in LMT. If the phenomenon is evaluated positively, it is referred to as gratification in LMT (Kimura, 2014).

It will progress to the next step, known as adjustment design, in which the speaker, for example, begins to consider rephrasing her/his utterance. Even at this stage, the procedure will stop or move on to a new step in which the speaker applies or implements the proposed change design in the context of the current discussion (Marriott & Nekvapil, 2012); management will become cyclic (Lanstyák, 2014).

Using the Language management theory (LTM), coaching trainers, mock tests, and repetitive test-takers will first take notes on candidates' IELTS-related problems. Then they will evaluate the entire problem in order to overcome these problems. A planning or adjustment process will be followed by trainers implementing the plan to resolve IELTS exam-related issues. In the last stage, learners will give feedback on their test performance for further evaluation to check their performance.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research method was used to conduct this study. Data were collected

via an online survey questionnaire. The research employed the probability sampling method, in which a simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) was selected for this study because UPM is one of the leading research universities that offer undergraduate and postgraduate courses focusing on agriculture and other related fields, including English language teaching and learning. The total population of participants for this study was 140 students who are either studying for their Bachelor, Masters or Ph.D. in UPM, and previously they attended IELTS test preparation programs. As the population is 140, the expected sample size for the study will be a minimum of 100, according to Kish (1995), while the confidence level is 95% and the margin of error is 5%. Therefore, based on their homogeneity test results and their performance on IELTS, 100 Bangladeshi learners were selected as the sample size for this study. The usage questionnaire for the dependent variable named "test performance" was adopted from Zhengdong (2009). The independent variables titled "coaching," "mock test," and "repetitive test-taking" were adapted from Farnsworth (2013), Khodabakhshzadeh & Zardkanloo (2017), and Hu & Trenkic (2019), respectively. The relationship among the selected variables was investigated by Zhengdong (2009) through the survey questionnaire, and the question was regarding the influence of test preparation programs on the learners' test performance. The items in this study are based on the 5-Likert scale, ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. Descriptive and inferential statistics are employed to analyze the data, and scores obtained are tabulated using SPSS version 26.

DATA ANALYSIS

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile consists of respondents' age, gender, and level of study. Most of the respondents (48%) were between the ages of 20–30 years old, 29% were between 31–40 years old, and 23% were between 41–50 years old. Regarding gender, 37% of respondents were male, while 63% of respondents were female. Most of the respondents (73%) studied for their bachelor's degree, 16% studied for their master's degree, while the remaining respondents (11%) were Ph.D. or Doctor of Philosophy students.

Correlational Analysis

Correlation is a method to investigate the relationship between two variables linearly. Pearson correlation was adopted to examine the association between two variables. Thus, the change in one variable eventually will lead to a change in another variable. The Pearson coefficient (r) stated the direction, magnitude, and significance of the correlation. A perfect positive relationship occurs if the r value is +1.0, and a perfect negative relationship if r is -1. The result, as shown in Table 1, illustrates that there was a moderate positive correlation between

Table 1
Pearson correlations coefficient between variables

	(Y1)	(Y2)	(Y3)	(Y4)
Performance (Y1)	1	0.450**	0.496**	0.369**
Mock test (Y2)	0.450**	1	0.411**	0.335**
Coaching (Y3)	0.496**	0.411**	1	0.221**
Repetitive test taking (Y4)	0.369**	0.335**	0.221**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

performance and repetitive test-taking (r = 0.369), performance and coaching (r = 0.496), and performance and mock test (r = 0.450). If the mock test, coaching, and repetitive test-taking were increased, the IELTS performance would increase moderately. Additionally, if the mock test, coaching, and repetitive test-taking decreased, the IELTS performance would also decrease moderately because of the moderate relationship among the variables.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analyzes whether a mock test, coaching, and repetitive test-taking explain the IELTS test performance. Researchers have conducted multiple regression analysis because (1) the relationship between independent variables (mock test, coaching, and repetitive test-taking) and dependent variable (IELTS examination performance) are linear, (2) there is no multicollinearity in data, As the VIF is below ten and the tolerance is higher than 0.1, as shown in Table 4, (3) the values of the residuals are independents and normally distributed and (4) the variance of residuals are constant.

The values presented in Table 2 of the regression coefficient (r²) is 0.359

(0.359x100= 35.9%), which indicates the degree of variance in the performance is explained by the repetitive test-taking, coaching, and mock test. It also means that repetitive test-taking, coaching, and mock test explains 35.9% of the variance in performance.

Table 2
Model summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.599[a]	0.359	0.349	0.36143

a. Predictors: (Constant), Repetitive test-taking, Coaching, Mock test

With F = 38.787 at 99 degrees of freedom, the test is very significant. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between predictors and dependent variables in the model (Table 3).

Pallant (2005) details out that the greater value of beta and less value of significance level (p<.05) of independent variables will show the contribution to the dependent variable. For example, the standardized coefficient (Beta) value is 0.234, 0.353, and 0.213 for a mock test, coaching, and repetitive test-taking, respectively, while p is 0.000, as shown in Table 4. Therefore, the mock test (23.4%), coaching (35.3%),

and repetitive test-taking (21.3%) have a significant influence on performance. If the mock test, coaching, and repetitive test taking have been increased one unit, the IELTS test performance will increase 23.4%, 35.3%, and 21.3%, respectively.

Table 3
Result of ANOVA[a]

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	15.200	3	5.067	38.787	0.000[b]
Residual	27.171	96	0.131		
Total	42.372	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Repetitive test-taking, Coaching, Mock test

Table 4
Coefficients [a]

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.416	0.253		5.604	0.000		
Mock test	0.220	0.060	0.234	3.692	0.000	0.769	1.301
Coaching	0.274	0.048	0.353	5.765	0.000	0.823	1.214
Repetitive test-taking	0.177	0.049	0.213	3.593	0.000	0.879	1.137

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to find out whether mock tests, coaching, and repetitive IELTS exam-taking influence an IELTS candidate's overall performance. The findings reflect the importance of addressing test preparation programs' issues as thousands of test-takers pay considerably high fees for the preparation programs every year.

The study's first hypothesis was a positive influence of mock tests on candidates' test performance on the IELTS exam. This study's results show that mock test programs are vital to providing students with effective approaches to prepare for the actual exam and guidance on strategically managing their time in the actual test. Finally, the mock test enabled candidates to be competent in recognizing test items and answering them correctly. Thus, hypothesis H1 is accepted. This finding is also similar to the previous research conducted by Erfani (2012), Naseri et al. (2014) as well Mohammadi (2016).

The second hypothesis of this study was that coaching positively influences candidates' test performance on the IELTS

exam. The finding indicates that coaching has a significant relationship with the real exam scores and candidate performance. Test preparation coaching programs help students to perform well in real test. The result in this study shows that after attaining the test preparation coaching program, candidate's language skills are enhanced to produce better answers in real exams as well as help to understand the real test mechanism which further assists to scores better. It is able to enhance language skills and obtain better scores in the real exam. After coaching listening, speaking, writing, and reading, test-takers language skills in English were enhanced to produce better answers in real exams which altogether increase the IELTS scores and performance. Therefore, hypothesis H2 is accepted. This finding is also similar to the findings found in Brown (1998), Elder and O'Loughlin (2003), Xie and Andrews (2013), and Spaan's (2007) studies. Students' strong motivation to pass the IELTS combined with professional and dedicated instructors, a teaching emphasis on both improving English language learning and targeted programs, and students' positive mindset to pass the IELTS, could lead to a good program in these circumstances, with possible beneficial results for students' learning outcomes (e.g., increased English language proficiency) (Saif et al., 2021; Schwartz et al., 2018).

The third hypothesis regarding the positive influence of repetitive test-taking on candidates' tests is performed on the IELTS exam. The findings demonstrate that repetitive test-taking has a positive influence on candidates' test performance. The result indicates that repetitive tests taking increases the performance positively in the exam. Therefore, the third hypothesis is accepted. This research finding corresponded to the previous findings found in Li (2013) and Zhang's (2008) studies. Repetitive test-taking increased candidates' test scores and reduced their test anxiety. Repeat testing is an established technique for increasing memory and retention (Roediger III & Butler, 2011). When knowledge of the degree to which output is satisfactory is provided, the ability to carry out test tasks consistently is maximized, or experience and expertise are increased (Boyd et al., 2019). On the other hand, if teachers and students use repetitive tests to study, it may remove the limitation on what is covered and learned to improve the test performance (Green, 2019).

It can be concluded that, in general, all participants agreed that coaching, mock tests, and repetitive test-taking had positively increased their performance in the test, which is an indication of test preparation programs' significant influence on test performance. The findings show that mock tests have a moderate (23.4%) significant influence, coaching has a moderate (35.3%) significant influence, which is generally a good influencer, and repetitive test-taking has a low (21.3%) significant influence on test performance, indicating that more research should be done to find out issues related to repetitive test-taking. All three variables have positive impact but coaching

has much more influence on students' test performance. In other words, coaching should be emphasized more and carefully designed as a preparation tool for test-takers.

This study's findings can be applied in the test preparation programs industry to guide them to choose a correct program according to the candidates' needs. Students will concentrate on tasks that can contribute to their target if they divide their training/studying into levels. Using a range of study methods can help students improve their abilities. Discussions with tutors, peer use of the student resource of taking revision documents, reviewing examiners' papers, and practicing exam-type questions are only a few examples of test preparation aids (O'Sullivan et al., 2021).

Since this form of private, supplemental tutoring imitates the mainstream test method in that the tutoring offered is matched to the exam being prepared for, the metaphor of "shadow" is used. North America, Western Europe, Asia, and Africa, according to a report conducted by the Sutton Trust in the United Kingdom (Kirby, 2016), are the main markets for private tutoring/coaching, but for various purposes and with different economic scopes. This study, with its finding, also extended the previous researches.

As a researcher from the same field, the outcome of this study may suggest that students learn and practice in a stress-free setting where they may do things like taking tests and receive individual help with homework, including a step-by-step outline for readability. It is all done

with them being guided by professionals. Students will develop confidence heading into the test after taking a lesson. If an exam question has emerged that they are unprepared for, students might resort to what they have learned from their supplemental classes. They can use it to approach the term, unraveling it until they reach the ideal description. It indicates that the researcher found new information regarding test preparation programs. It will benefit both the researcher and other researchers, teachers, students, and general people to acquire knowledge to organize future programs.

This research will also be beneficial for researchers in other fields because it will uncover various aspects of test preparation programs that will enrich their knowledge and encourage them to explore new areas of interest for the elaboration of learning and development.

This research also extended the findings of previous research with its investigated topics. Most previous research was conducted on general issues or any one of the varieties of preparation programs. Nevertheless, this study specifically addressed three items: coaching, mock test, and repetitive test-taking, to examine the influence of these items on the candidates' test performance in the IELTS exam.

The results found by Zhengdong (2009) show that lower-scoring students are more likely to attend the IELTS test preparation course. Zhengdong (2009) investigated exam scores and students' university learning experiences. However, this study expanded on previous findings by focusing

on three specific items related to actual test performance. Conversely, the research by Farnsworth (2013), Khodabakhshzadeh & Zardkanloo (2017), and Hu & Trenkic (2019), show that these test preparation programs have a future influence on students' learning. Differences in study settings exist because test preparation is still up for debate.

Watanabe (2004) analyzed several factors relating to this topic, such as negative and positive influences. Nonetheless, this research tries to determine if there are any benefits students could harvest from these programs. The results indicate that these programs are useful in the Bangladeshi context and help students prepare for the challenge. Furthermore, it enriches previous literature with new information in different regions and nations and uncovers the opportunity to conduct further research for evidence to enhance educational standards.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are certain limitations in this report. For example, firstly, only one Malaysian university was chosen to collect data for this research. Therefore, the findings could not apply to the other foreign community of Malaysian universities. It is suggested that future studies involve several universities around Malaysia, thus increasing the sample size and amount of responses received. Second, the predictor constructs included in this analysis are not comprehensive; future studies should provide more specific predictors, such as test anxiety and students'

English language proficiency, to improve the research's predictive capacity. Finally, only Bangladeshi students studying in Malaysia were selected for this study. Students from other countries studying in Malaysia could be included in future research to create a more detailed paper.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that test preparation programs that include coaching, mock tests, and repetitive test-taking significantly influence candidates' test performance in a test. The findings from this study clearly shows that mock tests in IELTS test preparation programs have a positive influence on Bangladeshi students. Additionally, the findings also indicate that the coaching program for the IELTS test has a positive significant influence on Bangladeshi candidates' test performance on the IELTS test, which corroborates with findings from previous studies. Moreover, repetitive test-taking also has an affirmative influence on the candidates' IELTS test performance. Since English is essential as the medium of instruction in today's university education, appropriate language testing is crucial for assessing candidates' language abilities (Samad, 2019). Traditionally many institutions conduct language tests on a large scale. However, teachers are rarely involved in communicative-based instruction and do not teach communicative language test courses based on the proper structure. As a result, it is difficult for teachers to determine

the pathways to include the subject or compellingly present the test material, providing more learning opportunities.

The learner's attention may focus entirely on the study and mastery of the types of test subjects, thus neglecting the primary purpose of language learning. Furthermore, materials for preparing for the test, which contains different parts of the exams, are often meaninglessly taught, and the exam is based on scores. Thus, it is characterized not by the development of knowledge and analytical thought but by rote learning. Despite the discrepancies in making conclusions concerning the test preparation programs and their influence on test-takers performance, it is undeniable that these programs have a statistically significant influence on students' test scores (Singh et al., 2015).

Hence, in an ongoing effort to better understand the implemented test preparation practices and disseminate those practices that produce the best results, more focus should be given to content and test-taking strategies. From the findings obtained in this study, it is clear that integrating content review and subject-specific test preparation activities into the programs is expected to improve learners' test scores. The test preparation programs can provide test-takers with various benefits beyond the learning and testing environment. They can be considered a valuable studying technique that does not only help ease anxiety but also in brushing up on areas in preparation for language tests.

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