

Original Article

Study Habits and Associated Demographic Determinants among Students of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract

Introduction: Improving the learners' academic performance is the basis of their achievement and progress. Study habits are skills that increase motivation for study and learning in learners and bring about increased efficiency and effectiveness, thereby promoting learning. This study aimed to determine the status of study habits among students of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences.

Methods: This descriptive, cross-sectional study was carried out among 300 students of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences. Samples were selected using probability proportional to size method in each faculty. Data were collected by Palsane and Sharma Study Habits Inventory. The collected data were analyzed by SPSS.21 software using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (chi-square, ANOVA and Pearson correlation coefficient); $P < 0.05$ was considered significant.

Results: Study habits of 6.6%, 82.2% and 11.2% of students were found to be unfavorable, relatively favorable and favorable, respectively. Students with favorable study habits had a significantly higher GPA ($P < 0.05$). Further, the students not living in dormitory had more favorable study habits ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Our finding indicated only 11.2% of the students had favorable study habits. These results can be warning to educational policy makers in university; and should be the focus of special attention.

Keywords: Learning, Education, Educational achievement, Study skills, Students

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Introduction

Improving the students' academic performance is one of the most important objectives of universities, which is the basis of achievement and progress in any domain (1). The learning quality is affected by internal factors like psychological characteristics, motivations, emotions, goals and tendencies and external factors such as educational facilities, study habits and surrounding

stimuli (2). While facing different learning assignments, learners make use of specific strategies and methods that are currently being considered one of the significant subjects in educational planning (3).

Study habits are methods used for encoding, saving, maintaining, restating and using information logically,

effectively and sufficiently (4, 5). In addition, study habits are defined as any psychological (preferences or interests), emotional (controlling anxiety and avoiding procrastination) or practical (not-taking, highlighting and reviewing) activities that facilitate the storage, retrieval and use of knowledge or information (6).

Appropriate study habits lead to increased study motivation and learning in students, promote the efficiency of studying and improve the learning. Further, many students have the required talent and ability for success, but their achievement is less than the expected level due to lack of required study skills (7).

Not using correct study methods results in the loss of time and energy in learners and is one of the most important factors associated with academic failure and backwardness, making the students anxious and confused (8). Deficiency in study skills can negatively affect all advantages of a favorable educational environment and even intellectual capabilities and psychological-physical health of people (9).

Study method should be selected based on a combination of different techniques and methods, and students' familiarity with correct study habits is essential and makes them competent in analyzing the problems (3).

Considering the importance of appropriate study habits in the recent decade, teaching study skills to the newly admitted students has been recognized as a necessary issue in many major universities around the world such as York, Berkeley and Northumbria (10). In Iran too, teaching study skills in line with the reform plan in medical education has been implemented at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences (3).

Given the limitations of studies related to study habits at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences as well as the significance of this issue in academic achievement, the current study was conducted to evaluate the status of study habits and the role of some demographic determinants among students of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences.

Methods

This descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted among 300 students of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences. For sampling, first different faculties were considered as categories, and then the samples were chosen by Probability Proportional to Size sampling method in each category. The study respondents were explained the research objectives and procedures and confidentiality of data. All of them participated in the

study willingly. Studying in the academic year 2015-2016 at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences was considered the inclusion criterion, and unwillingness to cooperate with the research team and incomplete completion of questionnaires were regarded as exclusion criteria. After eliminating the incomplete questionnaires, 258 questionnaires were analyzed, with a response rate of 86%.

The data collection instrument consisted of two sections, and data were gathered by self-report method.

The first section of the questionnaire included demographic information, including age (in years), gender, marital status (single, married), faculty (medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, public health and nutrition, nursing and midwifery, paramedicine), academic level (undergraduate, Ph.D.), semester, residence in dormitory, employment status (only student, student and employed), parents' education (under diploma, diploma and university education) and Grade Point Average GPA (self-reported total GPA).

The second section of the questionnaire consisted of Palsane and Sharma Study Habits Inventory (PSSHI). It included 45 items in eight domains, including time management (5 items), e.g. "I study in a specific time of the day."; physical conditions (6 items), e.g. "I get disappointed by the noise around me."; learning motivation (6 items), e.g. "if I do not understand something, I get help from others."; reading ability (8 items), e.g. "before reading the intended chapter, I read its main points."; note-taking (3 items), e.g. "I take note while reading the text."; memory (4 items), e.g. "I read some materials without sufficient understanding."; holding exams (10 items), e.g. "before responding the test questions, I read all the questions once." and health of study (3 items), e.g. "if the result of test is not good, I feel disappointed."

Based on the questionnaire instructions for responding, score 2 was given to the response "always or most often", score 1 to "sometimes" and score 0 to "seldom or never". However, the scoring weight was reversed for a number of questions, and a higher score indicated better study habits generally. The reliability of the questionnaire had been reported to be 0.88 in previous studies (3, 11, 12). Also, the reliability index in the present study was calculated to be 0.76.

The obtained data were fed into SPSS-21 software and analyzed by descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the correlation of different domains of study habits questionnaire. The association of study

habits with gender, residence in dormitory, father's education, mother's education and academic level was analyzed by chi-square. Moreover, ANOVA test was run to compare the mean age and GPA according to study habits.

Results

The students were 18-35 years of age, with a mean of 21.94 ± 2.64 . Of them, 138 (53.5%) students were female and 230 (89.1%) were single. Also, the majority of students (52.1%) were undergraduate and 147 (57%)

students lived in dormitory. About 23.6 % (n=61) of participants had fathers with university education. Further, most of them 54.7 (n=141) reported their mothers had an education under diploma. In addition, 6.6% (n=17), 82.2% (n=212) and 11.2% (n=29) of students were found to be unfavorable, relatively favorable and favorable, respectively.

The mean, standard deviation and correlation between various domains of the study habits questionnaire were computed. The students' GPA was significantly correlated with reading ability, note-taking and learning motivation (Table 1).

Table 1. Analysis of mean, standard deviation and correlation between different domains of study habits inventory

	Mean (SD)	Score range	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Time management	3.59 (1.90)	0-10								
2. Physical conditions of study	7.79 (2.57)	0-12	0.195**							
3. Reading ability	7.50 (2.54)	0-16	0.299**	0.261**						
4. Note-taking	2.65 (1.84)	0-6	0.337**	0.117	0.397**					
5. Learning motivation	6.83 (2.45)	0-12	0.285**	0.186**	0.311**	0.357**				
6. Memory	4.04 (1.47)	0-8	0.234**	0.009	0.215**	0.244**	0.156*			
7. Holding exams	9.31 (2.39)	0-20	0.298**	0.171**	0.256**	0.265**	0.324**	0.101		
8. Study health	2.63 (1.39)	0-6	0.149*	0.044	0.187**	0.223**	0.072	0.188**	0.118	
9. GPA	16.11 (1.56)	0-20	0.084	0.014	0.151*	0.256**	0.242**	0.021	0.016	0.006
Total score of study habits	45.39 (10.69)	0-90	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed).

The findings indicate that for the sample, total score of study habits was significantly related to GPA ($r = 0.216$), but not significant related with age ($r = -0.031$). The mean age and GPA according to study habits of students was

calculated. As indicated, students with favorable study habits had a significantly higher GPA (Table 2). The findings showed residence in dormitory was significantly associated with study habits, and students not living in the dormitory had better study habits (Table 3).

Table 2. Comparison of mean age and GPA according to study habits among students

	Status of study habits	Mean	Standard deviation	F	P value
Age	Unfavorable	22.24	1.87	0.135	0.873
	Relatively favorable	21.93	2.67		
	Favorable	21.82	2.89		
GPA	Unfavorable	15.56	1.32	3.669	0.027
	Relatively favorable	16.05	1.57		
	Favorable	16.85	1.41		

Table 3. Association of demographic variables with study habits in the study group

Variable		Unfavorable	Relatively favorable	Favorable	P value
		Number (%)	Number (%)	Number (%)	
Gender	Female	7 (5.1%)	116 (84.1%)	15 (10.9%)	$\chi^2 = 1.201$ P value = 0.549
	Male	10 (5.1%)	96 (80%)	14 (11.7%)	
Residence in dormitory	Yes	15 (10.6%)	111 (78.9%)	15 (10.6%)	$\chi^2 = 8.287$ P value = 0.016
	No	2 (1.7%)	101 (86.3%)	14 (12%)	
Father's education	Under diploma	7 (6.4%)	86 (78.2%)	17 (15.5%)	$\chi^2 = 4.480$ P value = 0.345
	Diploma	6 (7%)	71 (82.6%)	9 (10.5%)	
	University education	4 (6.6%)	54 (88.5%)	3 (4.9%)	
Mother's education	Under diploma	10 (7.1%)	115 (81%)	17 (23%)	$\chi^2 = 3.918$ P value = 0.405
	Diploma	7 (9.5%)	60 (81.1%)	7 (9.5%)	
	University education	0 (0%)	34 (87.2%)	5 (12.8%)	
Academic level	Bachelor	13 (8.8%)	117 (79.6%)	17 (11.6%)	$\chi^2 = 2.790$ P value = 0.248
	M.D.	4 (4%)	93 (85.3%)	12 (11%)	

Discussion

Study habits were reported to be unfavorable in 82.2% of students, which is in line with the results of studies carried out in other regions of Iran (12-14). The results of these studies are indicative of unfavorable and relatively favorable status of study habits among students and are alarming for the educational planners. Our results showed a positively significant correlation between students' GPA and three domains of reading ability, note-taking and learning motivation. In this regard, researchers have reported that study skills like note-taking, increasing concentration, time management, enhancing reading ability and readiness for exam can be accomplished through training. They have concluded that improving study skills can lead to academic achievement and enhanced motivation among learners (15). Further, many studies have shown the major problems of students to be note-taking (3, 12). Based on the findings of the present study, it seems that concentration on promoting the learners' reading ability, note-taking and learning motivation in educational planning can yield beneficial results in promotion of academic achievement among students.

Moreover, the results revealed no significant correlation between the age and study habit; In addition no significant association between gender and study habits. Numerous studies have indicated that females have better study habits than males (2, 13). However, some studies have reported no relation between gender and study habits (7, 16). Thus, further studies are needed to investigate this issue.

In addition, the results of this study showed the mean score of unfavorable study habits among students living in the dormitory was significantly higher, which is in

contrast with the findings of the study by Nourian et al. conducted on students of Tehran Islamic Azad University (17) and those of Torabi et al. among students of Kerman University of Medical Sciences (14). Students living in the dormitory may have such problems as noisy environment; hence, it is necessary to analyze this issue in order to improve their academic achievement.

Furthermore, there was no significant relationship between parents' education and students' study habits in the present study. Torshizi et al. In their study reported in the domain of holding examinations, students whose fathers had a diploma had a higher GPA than those whose fathers had an education under diploma (3). It seems that the role of parents' education in study habits is not very prominent, and personal factors out of family are more influential.

Finally, the results indicated a significant association between students' GPA and study habits, so that students with more favorable study habits had a higher GPA. De La Fuente & Cardelle-Elawar showed students with better study habits obtained a higher score in academic performance (18). Torabi et al. also reported a significant relationship between students' total GPA and study habits (14). Appropriate study habits and skills seem to improve academic performance. Thus, appropriate study habits are suggested to be taught to students, and teachers are advised to use them so that students can take example from them. Moreover, planning for study habits is recommended to be carried out in medical education studies centers.

A limitation of this study was that some students did not fill out the questionnaires completely. Also, this study

was conducted on a group of students at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, thereby limiting the generalizability of findings. Similar studies are suggested to be carried out among university students in regular intervals to follow studying their habits after interventions in order to improve the existing study habits status. On the other hand, it seems that qualitative studies are effective to be carried out to find out about other concepts related to students' study habits based on new teaching methods.

Conclusion

Only 11.2% of students had favorable study habits. Also, students not living in dormitory had more favorable study habits. These findings necessitate more attention to be allocated to favorable study habits among students.

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