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Comparison of Study Habits and Academic Performance of Pakistani British and White British Students

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The present study was conducted to compare Pakistani British and White British students on study habits and their academic performance. The sample comprised of 200 science students of 10th class recruited from four multiethnic schools of England, UK. Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (Brown & Holtzman, 1955) was used to assess students' study habits and their last year academic grades were used to assess academic performance. Statistical analysis revealed that although White British students had significantly better study habits than the Pakistani British but no significant difference was found in their academic performance. Country of origin and schools had significant interactive effect on study habits of students but did not have an interactive effect on academic performance of the students. The study has important implication for the educationists.

Keywords: Pakistani British students, White British students, study habits, academic performance

Great Britain is a multicultural nation and has one of the best educational systems in the world. Over the decades education had developed widely in UK, and is provided and available to every child very near to his doorstep (Walford, 1990). Even more importance is given to its educational system in the 21st century. Thus, in the last two decades there has been vast growth in the numbers of students, faculty members and educational facilities (Peters & Reed, 2001). Inequality of opportunity among economic classes and ethnic groups, a factor preventing social mobility, has been widely recognized as a national concern, and many steps have been taken towards its correction (Ball, 1993). Today, one of the key features of her education system is to provide best education to every child irrespective of his/her color, origin and religion (Ofsted, 2001).

However, since decades, the fact that some students with apparently high scholastic aptitude do very poorly in high school while others with only mediocre ability do very well has presented a challenge to many educators. It has been observed that hard working students with high IQs sometimes don't perform as well as their classmates with lower IQs (Harvey, 2001). There seems to be no clear and simple answer to this complex but very important question. However, it has long been recognized that in the process of learning, the study habits of the students play an important role in their academic performance (S. V. Kiester & Kiester, 1992).

Learning is defined as a knowledge or skill acquired through study or by being taught. Learning is reflected in the way a child responds to environmental, social, emotional and physical stimuli and understands new information (Collins Concise Dictionary & Thesaurus of English Language, 2002). The keys to better learning and better academic performance in schools are good teachers, good study environment, course of study, parents' cooperation, high quality books and, the most important, the study habits (Robinson, 2000).

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Many students fail not because they lack ability, but because they do not have adequate study skills (Menzel, 1982). Study habit is the tendency of a student to learn in a systematic and efficient way, when opportunity is given. It is also defined as the devotion of time and attention to acquire information or knowledge especially from books or in other words it's the pursuit of academic knowledge by a detailed investigation of a subject or situation (Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus of English Language, 2003). Good students are not born but are made by constant and deliberate practice of good study habits, for which there is no substitute (Ames & Archer, 1988). Thus, in order to improve academic performance of students, it seems essential to improve their study habits without which desired outcomes cannot be achieved. Development of good study habits in children depends upon the combined efforts of parents and teachers (Kizlik, 2001).

Academic performance is a complex student behavior and underlies several abilities, e.g., memory, previous knowledge or aptitude as well as psychological factors such as motivation, interests, temperaments or emotions, to name a few (Deary, Whiteman, Starr, Whalley, & Fox, 2004). Educational psychologists and researchers have argued that there are many determinants of academic performance (Chamorro-Permuzic & Furnham, 2003). Danskin and Burnett (1952) found that students getting higher marks had more effective study habits as compared to students who had ineffective study habits and thus lagged behind in studies. Similarly, L. D. Crow and Crow (1963) found academically poor achievers to have less effective study habits as compared to academically high achievers. In the same context, Sorenson (1964) found that pupils who got more scholarships had better study habits than the pupils who did not achieve scholarships. For academic achievement, being smart is more important than being intelligent and hardworking and involves being practical, having common sense and using better organization and application of good study habits (Clark, 1996). In addition to study habits, researchers have demonstrated the importance of parental involvement in their childrens' academic performance (Hannon & Jackson, 1987; Heller & Fantuzzo, 1993; Widlake & Macleod, 1985).

Researches carried out in different parts of the world have highlighted the importance of study habits and parental involvement in childrens' educational affairs for improving their academic

performance (Coleman, Collinge, & Tabin, 1993; Ramsay, Harold, & Hawk, 1990; Toomey, 1993). Robinson (2000) found that certain bad study habits result in poor academic performance whereas certain good study habits result in high academic performance. Creemers and Reynold (2000), on the basis of data of National Assessment of Educational Progress, demonstrated a positive relationship between good study habits and academic performance of 8th and 9th Grade students. Similarly, Gilbert and Rollick (1996) suggested good study habits to significantly enhance academic performance of the pupils.

According to Troyna (1981), the issue of 'under-achievement' of ethnic minority pupils and especially Asian children has dominated debates in Britain since decades. The notion of 'under-achievement' refers to significant differences in the average achievements of different groups. For example, one could assume that if students are grouped according to a given factor that should not influence their achievement in a certain test, then, on average, each group should experience similar degree of success. Each group will include some members performing very well and some performing rather badly but if talent is randomly distributed across the groups, each group should achieve similar averages. Troyna (1981) emphasized that this comparative model should be applied while comparing the average results of Asian students with their British peers. Where there is a significant shortfall, the minority group has sometimes been described as 'under-achieving'. The term has been interpreted as signifying widespread failure among pupils, as if all ethnic students are somehow destined to fail. The educational standards are reported to decline gradually and it has been attributed to faulty egalitarian policies and progressive teaching methods (Simon & Chitty, 1996). In spite of the best and continuous efforts by the government of UK to maintain and uplift the standard of education, the academic performances of high school students have fallen down since the past few years. Even the overall percentage of A Grades of the best reputed schools of England has declined over the years (White Paper, 2001). The current educational reforms appear to be added on the assumption of widespread parental dissatisfaction with their childrens' schools and with the academic standards and results of the schools particularly among Asian families (Hughes, Wikely, & Nash, 1994).

According to 'Swan Report' on under-achievement of the ethnic groups, it is argued that because teachers perceive ethnic pupils 'under achievement' to be a national problem beyond their control, they might lower the expectations of certain pupils, creating a negative stereotype that effectively closes down further opportunities (Parekh, 2000). It is important to understand that 'progress' and 'achievement' are two different terms and differences in progress are not the same as differences in achievement. Progress refers to the degree of improvement in scores over a certain period, while achievement usually refers to a single measure of attainment (such as GCSE performance). Therefore, it is possible for a group to make greater progress than the second group, and yet still attain lower average achievements (Summary Document, 2001). Some educational commentators feel that under-achievement of minority groups inadvertently shifts responsibility away from the educational system and to the students and their families. People speak, for example, of 'ethnic student's under-achievement' not the under-achievement of the education system in providing for ethnic students. For this reason, many writers now prefer to speak about the inequalities in opportunities of achievements for the ethnic group as a likely area of injustice rather than an unavoidable variation in performance (Drew, 1995; Gillborn, 1997; Tower & Hamlets, 1994; Wright, 1987 as cited in Creemers & Reynold, 2000).

Researchers have argued that deterioration in British educational standards has arisen partly because there is a serious lap of disciplined study habits in schools (Flew, 1987; Sexton, 1987 cited in Hughes et al., 1994). Over the past decades, large number of studies have been carried out to find differences in study habits and academic performance of White British students and Asian students and students of other ethnic origin. They have found ethnic minority pupils to have lower academic scores as compared to the local students. Even the British media, while emphasizing the need for serious efforts by the government to raise the academic standards in the schools of England, also projects that the academic performance of the minority Asian pupils has significantly declined over the past few years and is far below as compared to indigenous White pupils (Downess & Bennet, 1997). It has been reported that White British students are academically far ahead than the Asian students and students of other ethnic origin (Student Performance Analysis, 2001). In another important report submitted to the government of UK, it has been submitted that although there are encouraging signs that some of the ethnic minority pupils are benefiting from recent action to raise academic standards, most of the ethnic minority children are still not achieving as well as they could (Schools Achieving Success, 2001).

Although there is substantial amount of research available on factors of academic performance in children, but research in Pakistan is scarce. There are small scale studies carried out in Pakistan examining factors associated with academic performance and these have found intelligence level, home and school environment and parental involvement to contribute in developing good study habits which in turn result in better academic performance (Bokhari 1966; Jehan, Dar, & Haq, 1967; Saleem, 1965; Shamim, 1966 as cited in Latif, 1967). Other researchers have also pointed towards a positive relationship between study habits and academic performance (Fatima, 1967; Siddique, 1989). Studies in Pakistan have revealed the relationship of academic performance with intelligence and emotional intelligence (Shujja, 2008; Khalid & Ahmad, 2009).

To sum up, the above mentioned studies lead one to conclude that although these studies are conducted on students of different age groups, social classes, having different courses of studies, in different parts of the world but they reveal that parental involvement, home environment, classroom atmosphere, teaching skills of teacher and study habits play a crucial role in the academic performance of pupils of all age levels and that the academic scores of Asian/minority students are far less as compared to the native white students.

Rationale

The issue of under-achievement of Asian students and pupils of minority groups has been a burning issue in UK since decades. News regarding unsatisfactory academic performance of Asian students as compared to White British students has resulted in a lot of tension and worry among the Pakistani immigrant families settled in UK. These Pakistani parents in UK have been working very hard to provide the best possible educational opportunities and facilities to their children and to improve their academic

performance. They want to know the reasons and causes for the unsatisfactory academic performance of their children, so that they can take appropriate measures to improve their academic performance (Parekh, 2000). Pakistanis are an important minority group in Britain and in recent years the number of Pakistani children has rapidly increased in high schools of England, but little is actually known about their level of academic achievement. As per knowledge of the researchers, so far no comparative study has been conducted specifically to compare study habits and academic performance of minority Pakistani students and indigenous White students of high schools of England. The present study was planned to investigate differences in study habits and academic performance of Pakistani British students as compared to the White British students.

Hypotheses

1. There would be significant differences in study habits and academic performance of Pakistani British and White British students.
2. Country of origin and schools would have a significant interactive effect on study habits and academic performance of students.

Method

Sample

Sample comprised of 200 science students of 10th class including equal number of Pakistani British and White British students. Two groups had equal number of boys and girls and all students were studying the same course of curriculum. Stratified sampling technique was used to recruit participants from four schools. Their age ranged from 14-16 years (M = 14.57, SD = 0.58). On reviewing the 'Admission Forms' of the subjects it was noted that most of the students belonged to upper middle class and had educated parents.

Assessment measures

1. Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (SSHA; Brown & Holtzman, 1955). This is a standardized tool consisting of 75 statements and is an easily administered measure of study habits, motivation for studying and certain attitudes towards scholastic activities important in the classroom. The main purposes of this instrument are to identify students whose study habits and attitudes are different from those students who earn high grades, to aid in understanding students with academic difficulties, to provide a basis for helping such students to improve their study habits and attitudes so as to fully realize their best potentialities and to use it effectively as a screening and a diagnostic instrument, as well as a teaching aid and a research tool. Reliability and validity of SSHA has been estimated by various methods (Holtzman, Brown, & Farquhar, 1954).

2. Academic Reports. These were provided by the concerned teachers to the researchers who noted down students' grades.

Procedure

A formal letter for seeking permission to collect data was mailed to two main Departments of Education of England, City Council Education Service, Birmingham, and Borough of Lambeth, London. In response, the concerned officer of these departments made some queries on phone, which were answered and clarified. After a week, official permission was granted on phone to conduct the study in the high schools of Birmingham and London. Although there were large number of schools in these two main cities of England, but the inclusion criteria was to get data only from those multi-ethnic schools where large number of Asian, especially Pakistani British were studying along with White British students. After much effort, the researchers were able to find 25 such multi-ethnic schools and letters were then posted to their head teachers. Head teachers of 21 schools did not allow data collection from their schools. Only 4 schools gave permission to collect data during the stipulated period assigned for data collection. Although these schools were primarily selected on the basis of above mentioned inclusion criteria, but coincidentally all these four schools were ranked and listed among top level schools of England. As per instructions of the head teachers, abbreviations are being used for these four schools to maintain confidentiality.

On the day of appointment, the head teacher directed the researchers to the relevant classroom where they were introduced to the class teacher and students. The researcher explained the nature and purpose of the study and students were asked for their consent. SSHA was distributed among students and important instructions were given to them. To keep their confidentiality, which was the condition set by the school administration, they were asked not to write their names, instead they were directed to write 'PB" if they were Pakistani British and 'WB" if they were White British students. The participants completed SSHA in the presence of the researcher. Meanwhile, the head teacher provided the last year academic grade of each student. At the end teachers and students were thanked for their cooperation. Exactly the same procedure for data collection was adopted in all the schools.

Total 'raw score' of each student was calculated separately in accordance with the standard instructions given by Brown and Holtzman (1956). On the basis of the raw scores, percentile of each student was calculated. High scores on SSHA are characteristics of students who have good study habits, while low scores tend to be the characteristics of those who have poor study habits. The last year academic grade (academic performance) of every student was written down in front of his percentile in the respective data sheet. The same procedure was carried out for all the data sheets and 2 comparative scores were obtained for Pakistani immigrant and White British students.

Results

t-test analysis was carried out to compare study habits and academic performance of White British and Pakistan British students as shown in Table 1. Analysis revealed that White British students had significantly better study habits than Pakistani British students. However, two groups of students had no significant difference in academic performance. Therefore, the findings lent partial support to our hypothesis.

Table 1

Difference in Study Habits and Academic Performance of Pakistani British and White British Students (N=200)

Variables	Pakistani British students		White British students		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*
Study Habits	54.70	23.24	61.30	22.22	2.03*
Academic Performance	3.02	.95	3.26	.91	1.81

df =198. *$p < .05$.

Table 2

Main Effect and Interactive Effect of Country of Origin and School on Study Habits of Students (N=200)

Variables	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Country	2184.6	1	2184.6	4.73	.03
School	2214.25	3	738	1.60	n.s.
Country X School	4072.05	3	4690.68	10.17	.001
Error	88528.08	192	461.084		

Table 3

Main and Interactive Effect of Country of Origin and School on Academic Performance of Students (N=200)

Variables	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Country	2.88	1	2.88	3.51	n.s
School	11.80	3	3.933	4.79	.001
Country X School	3.88	3	1.293	1.57	n.s.
Error	157.54	192	.820		

Tables 2 and 3 show the interactive effect of country of origin and school on study habits and academic performance. There was a significant interactive effect of country of origin and school on study habits of students. Country of origin had a significant effect on study habits, but school alone had no effect on their study habits. No significant interactive effect of country of origin and school was found on academic performance of the students. Country of origin did not have a significant effect on academic performance, but school did have a significant effect.

Discussion

This comparative study was conducted primarily to find differences in study habits and academic performance between Pakistani British and White British students. The main findings revealed that although White British students had significantly better study habits than their Pakistani counterparts, but no significant difference was found in the academic performance of the two groups. The second finding revealed that country of origin and schools had a significant interactive effect on study habits, but had no significant interactive effect on the academic performance of the students.

The main finding of the present study is consistent with the findings of some earlier western researches. For example, Chistenson (1992) concluded that ethnic minority students are now achieving more highly on average than before. In the same line Sargeant (1993), from his comparative study on Asian students and White students, concluded that at some places in certain examinations Asian students and students belonging to other ethnic groups perform even better than the local White students. Auernheimer (1998) points out that in admission tests of some grammar schools, Asian children occupy more seats than the local children. Amin, Drew, Gillborn, and Demock (1997) concluded that in the 1990's the Asian students were doing as well or better than the White students. Similarly, Downess and Bennet (1997) and Steinberg (2001) concluded that academic performance of Asian students of some schools parallels with the White local students.

However, some western researches have yielded different results which are in contrast with the present findings. For example, Loudan (1981) found that different pattern of settlement of children of minority and majority groups also resulted in different patterns of study habits that in turn effected their academic performance. Sargeant (1993) found differences in study habits and academic performance of the students from different ethnic groups. Local Education Authorities of Birmingham and London between 1992 and 1995 found differences in performance of local and students from different ethnic backgrounds (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and African Caribbean), with local and Indian children performing well in all key assessments. Marshall (1994) argued that the real picture regarding this issue is very complex to be understood fully. For instance, Afro-Caribbean pupils, on average, seem to perform less than the Asian pupils, who perform less than the English pupils. However, within the broad category of Asian students different average performance levels had been found between Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi students.

In view of above literature, it can be concluded that two different sets of findings exist regarding the differences in academic performance of Pakistani British and White British students. However, the present finding is clearly in contrast with what has generally been portrayed by the British media.

In the present finding White British students had better study habits than the Pakistani students, but the academic performance of Pakistani students paralleled with White British counterparts. Researchers of this study argue that perhaps Pakistani British students work more hard than the White British students and thus could have been the reason for their better academic performance. At the same time, one cannot flatly negate information of the British media. It should be kept in mind that when British media uses the term 'academic performance of Asian students', it does not necessarily refer only to Pakistani immigrant students, rather this is a general term used by the media which includes Indian, Sri Lankans and Bangladeshi students. There is a possibility that if national level studies are carried out and Pakistani, Sri Lankans, Indian, Bangladeshi and White British students are compared separately for academic performance, then one could find conclusive evidence. It may also be kept in mind that the present study included schools from Birmingham and London and these schools had students predominantly from higher social class with educated parents, so studies on children from working class and less educated parents could have revealed different findings. Thus, only nationally representative studies on Pakistani British children from all socioeconomic backgrounds can provide conclusive findings. Such studies are of tremendous importance for Pakistani parents

and especially for the education authorities of UK who are aiming to raise the overall standard of education in their country.

Limitation and Suggestions

Although, the present study seems to be a preliminary research with smaller sample recruited from multiethnic schools of England considered catering students from upper class, thereby findings cannot be generalized. It is quite possible that students from schools of different parts of UK especially in inner cities where students belong to middle and lower class may have yielded different results. In order to generalize our findings, there is a need of nationally representative study which should have children from all social backgrounds. It is also important that in addition to similar sort of quantitative research on larger scale, qualitative research is carried out for comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Implications

Despite above stated limitations of the present study, it is still of great value as it has for the first time made specific comparisons between Pakistani British and White British students from multiethnic elite schools located in two major cities of England. The researchers believe that this study will be of utmost importance in particular for Pakistani immigrant parents and it is hoped that the findings of this study will alleviate their worry and concerns by clarifying the general misconception which has been conveyed to them. Findings of the present study have implications for policy makers, reformers, educational psychologists, counselors, teachers, and especially parents in realizing the important role of study habits in academic performance of children. Thus, students can be assisted to develop better and effective study habits in order to improve their academic performance. It will help the teachers to modify their teaching styles and pattern of imparting knowledge to the students. It will also help parents to realize that they can also play an important role in their childs' academic progress and success by helping them in developing good and effective study habits, which can further improve their academic performance.

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