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An Analysis of Students' Academic Performance at the University Level

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Abstract

This study aimed to take a good look at how university students are performing academically. It was a descriptive study, and it involved a survey across two universities: Mirpur University of Sciences and Technology (MUST) and the University of Kotli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (UoKAJK). The total number of students involved was 2,920 in all, with 1,660 from MUST and 1,260 from UoKAJK. To get a manageable sample, the researchers used a technique called stratified random sampling. This meant they ended up with 600 students total—341 from MUST and 259 from UoKAJK. They developed their own questionnaire for this research. For analysing the data, they went with frequency, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The results showed that university students did demonstrate some level of academic performance. However, it seems they only partially agreed with how well they were doing academically. Based on all this, the study suggests a few things. For one, students might want to work on their daily planning and really hone in on their time management skills, learning techniques, and study strategies to improve their performance. The university teachers may encourage students to set some weekly goals, keep track of their daily tasks, and maybe spread out their study time across different subjects. That may really help them stay organized and on top of things.

Key Words

Academic Performance, Planning, Time Management, Communication, Learning Skills, Study Skills, Self-efficacy, Cognitive Strategies

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Introduction

University education is considered the last stage of a student's formal learning. Hence, it is considered the backbone of a professional career. So, the students are vigilant towards showing good performance in their academics. In addition to fostering lifelong learning, this academic environment helps student to become more competitive, brave,

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and capable of accelerating their learning. Therefore, the foundation of any society that produces future leaders is student education. As a result, a student's life is made up of both actual and imagined thoughts and dreams.

Measures of academic performance describe how effectively a particular student, teacher, or even an educational institution performed over a specified period with respect to defined expectations. Academic performance is evidenced by acquiring the appropriate papers, such as a primary school leaving certificate, a bachelor's certificate, etc. Academic performance can be determined with the use of tests and evaluations, but there is no exact agreement on the best methods to use or the most important events or skills in the knowledge of processes. In addition, there are unconvincing findings about individual factors that positively predict academic performance; things like exam worry, atmosphere and feelings that need to be measured when evolving models of academic success (Garton et al., 2000).

It encompasses a range of cognitive skills and knowledge acquisition, reflecting the effectiveness of a student's learning process. Factors influencing academic performance include individual student characteristics such as motivation, study habits, and prior knowledge, as well as external factors like teaching quality, curriculum design, and socio-economic status. Effective academic performance is not solely about high grades but also about a full awareness of the subject topic, critical thinking, and the ability to apply knowledge practically. Them need to succeed in their future academic and professional pursuits.

There has always been concern at the level of higher education institutions about the educational performance and completion rates of their students. It is well known that the factors which determine the academic achievement of university-level students are being studied with increasing frequency in the field of higher education. Several new studies have been undertaken for the purpose of determining factors that affect the academic performance of students in universities. According to Marantika (2022), various factors, including learning styles, gender, and race, can affect students' achievements. Pike and Kuh (2005) discovered that the commitment of first-generation university students was notably influenced by their family income, full-time attendance, financial aid, and completion of advanced coursework in high school. To evaluate how well learning styles and other factors related to university entrance predict academic success and persistence, Garton et al. (2000) conducted a study involving first-year university students. The predictors included learning style, overall GPA, class rank, and average ACT score.

While there is little debate about the critical importance of such accomplishments in student life and later success, academic performance was traditionally believed to be the most essential result of formal educational experiences (Kell et al., 2013). Researchers and policymakers are increasingly focusing on social and emotional aspects, as well as their interconnections, particularly in relation to student wellbeing and psychological development (Moore, 2019). The recent inclusion of social and emotional factors to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) assessments is indicative of this movement (OECD, 2019). According to Chernyshenko, Kankaraš, and Drasgow, these indicators include emotional management (such as optimism, stress resistance, etc.), task performance (such as persistence, self-control and motivation, as well as compound skills such as self-efficacy and metacognition. In line with this topic, this issue features six high-quality empirical studies that explore some of the complexities surrounding these aspects. Some of these studies look at how these characteristics affect academic achievement, while others do not, and all of them have merit in and of themselves (Chernyshenko et al., 2018).

This study looks into analysing the academic performance of students at Mirpur University of Sciences and Technology, as well as at the University of Kotli. The research also takes a closer look at various areas of the academic performance of the students. It is a concerning trend, and definitely something worth discussing further.

Statement of Problem

Improving students' academic performance is the key area of concern for all academicians across the world. At the university level, the students feel a lot of stress as they have to complete the tasks assigned by their teachers within a very short period of time. Hence, there was a dire need to check their performance level. So, this study was focused on analysing the academic performance of students at the university level.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to analyse the academic performance of university students.

Review of the Related Literature

Students Achievement

Student achievement refers to the extent to which a student learns academic material within a given timeframe. It is typically assessed through regular progress checks, comprehension, and various tests (Zhang et al., 2023).

Student Performance

Performance involves the execution of tasks, achieving goals, or representing something through actions. In a case method course, a student's success can be evaluated through class participation, individual written assignments, group projects, and presentations (Ghalem et al., 2016).

Link Between Student Achievement and Student Performance

Achievement signifies the attainment of goals through effort and successful execution, while performance is about carrying out plans or activities to accomplish tasks or fulfil responsibilities. Student performance is gauged by the results of tests or exams administered by a teacher over a short period, whereas student achievement reflects the results of standardised tests taken over a longer duration across one or more subjects, serving as a strong indicator of a student's future career trajectory (Zhang et al., 2023).

Academic Performance

When we talk about academic performance—whether it is a student, a teacher, or an entire school—it really boils down to how well educational goals are being met. Things like high school diplomas and college degrees are the usual markers of success. Most people think about exams or tests as the go-to way to assess academic prowess. While there is not always a clear agreement on what makes for a solid evaluation process, these elements still matter. Some studies have shown mixed results when it comes to what really predicts academic success. Factors like test anxiety, the learning environment, motivation, and even emotions can all play a role. These are definitely worth considering as we refine our understanding of what academic success looks like. Schools nowadays actually get funding based on how well their students perform. So, schools that rack up higher academic scores tend to receive more money compared to those that do not perform as well (Baron, 2019).

When we say "academic performance," we are really talking about the results that show how effectively someone has hit specific goals within educational settings, whether that's in high school, college, or university. Some educational systems even tend to focus on universal objectives that apply to various subjects, like critical thinking or specific knowledge in areas like math, reading, physics, or history. That is why it is essential to view academic performance as a pretty intricate idea that spans multiple areas of learning. And speaking of academic success, it can actually be measured through a variety of lenses. You have got your standard metrics like grades and test scores, as well as cumulative measures like degrees and certificates. Plus, there are broader metrics that capture knowledge gained through formal education. Each of these criteria reflects different aspects of a person's

intellectual abilities, so they're all linked in some way. Ultimately, academic achievement—whether it is gauged through GPA or standardised tests like the SAT—is crucial. It often determines whether a student can continue their education, especially when it comes to getting into universities.

Academic performance plays a huge role in determining whether someone gets into higher education. And depending on the degrees you achieve, it can really shape your career choices after you graduate. It is not just about personal success, either. Academic performance is vital for a nation's overall wealth and prosperity. That is actually one reason why there has been such a push for international research on academic success. There is a solid link between a society's academic performance and its economic growth—just look at the PISA studies from the OECD (OECD, 2019). The insights from these studies really help us understand various indicators of academic success, which then play a role in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of educational systems around the world.

It makes sense that researchers are diving deep into academic performance, especially in psychology and education. It is so crucial for individuals and society as a whole. Take research reports, for instance. They often delve into how educational psychologists explain, assess, and even try to enhance academic achievement (Atkinson et al., 2022). While there is pretty much no arguing about the importance of academic achievements in student life and later success, it used to be thought that academic performance was the be-all and end-all of formal education. But that's changing. Researchers and policymakers are starting to look more closely at social and emotional factors and how they connect to student well-being and psychological growth (Moore, 2019).

A recent move by the OECD to include social and emotional factors in its assessments shows just how much this focus is shifting (OECD, 2019). According to Chernyshenko et al., these factors include things like emotional management—stuff like stress resilience and optimism—as well as task performance traits like persistence, self-control, motivation, and even skills like self-efficacy and metacognition. In line with this evolving perspective, this issue features six solid empirical studies that dig into these complexities. Some of them examine how these traits influence academic success, while others take a different angle. Regardless, each study brings valuable insights to the table (Chernyshenko et al., 2018).

There are some interesting studies out there, like the ones by Colmar et al. (2019), along with Martinez et al. (2019), that dive into academic achievement. Colmar et al. found that something they called "academic buoyancy"—which is basically how well kids bounce back from school struggles—did not consistently predict whether they would succeed academically. But when they looked at self-concept as a kind of middleman, they discovered that buoyancy had a pretty significant impact on both reading and math scores for kids in Australia.

Then there is Martinez et al. (2019) research focusing on university students from Spain and Portugal, which really highlighted the role of psychological resources—think things like self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. Students who really get involved in their studies are more likely to harness these resources, which in turn boosts their chances of doing well academically (Colmar et al., 2019 had similar findings).

Now, moving on to the work by Eakman et al. (2019), they took a deep dive into the emotional and social experiences of returning veterans and military personnel, particularly how these experiences affect their academic performance. Their thorough analysis showed that supportive learning environments, which foster autonomy and self-efficacy, are linked to better academic outcomes. Plus, what's really interesting is that these factors held strong, no matter how severe the depression or post-traumatic stress disorder was (Eakman et al., 2019).

Kim et al.'s (2019) study shines a light on performance goals. They looked into how self-determined motivation evolved over time among South Korean high school students. They found that when students had strong autonomous motivations early on, it positively impacted their mastery-oriented goals the next year, which then

correlated with even more motivation down the line. This research also zoomed in on psychological needs—like competence, autonomy, and relatedness—and how they play into achievement goals for Chinese university students. They found that mastery-approach goals were key mediators between autonomy support and self-determined motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Closson and Bond did some interesting research with Canadian university students, focusing on procrastination and academic performance, as well as how different social networking sites—think Facebook, Twitter, Instagram—play into all of this. They found something pretty eye-opening: some of these social media platforms actually made students procrastinate more and had a tough time adjusting to university life. On the flip side, simpler social networking sites didn't seem to have as much of a negative effect (Closson & Bond, 2019).

When it comes to academic performance and graduation rates, well, that has been a hot topic for colleges and universities. There has been a surge of interest in figuring out what really impacts how well students do academically. A bunch of recent studies have dug into this. For example, Garton et al. (2000) took a closer look at freshmen college students to see how things like learning styles and various admission factors could predict how well students perform and whether they stick around. They looked at ACT scores, high school class rank, core GPAs, and learning styles. Turns out, core GPA and ACT scores were the best indicators of first-year college success.

Then there is the study conducted by McKenzie and Schweitzer (2001), who conducted a study to find out what psychosocial, cognitive, and demographic factors predict academic performance among first-year students in Australia. Their findings highlighted that previous academic performance was the most significant predictor of how students would do at university. Other factors, like how well students integrated into university life, their self-efficacy, and even their job responsibilities, also played a role.

And let us not forget Hijazi and Naqvi (2006). They focused on what affects college students' performance, particularly looking at those in intermediate examinations. They concluded that a range of factors, including students' attitudes toward class attendance, how much time they dedicated to studying, their parents' income levels, and their mothers' age and education, were key influences on students' performance in private colleges.

Research Methodology

This study really focused on describing things, and the researchers decided to use a cross-sectional survey to collect their data. And you know what? They had a pretty large group to work with—2,920 students in total! That included 1,660 from MUST and 1,260 from UoKAJK. To choose their sample, they went with a stratified random sampling technique. Basically, they just wanted to make sure they got a little bit from each group. In the end, they narrowed it down to 600 students, with 341 from MUST and 259 from UoKAJK. To really get into the nitty-gritty of the students' academic performance, the researchers developed their own questionnaire. They also gathered the data themselves, which is pretty hands-on. When it came to analysing all that information, they mixed it up with various tests like frequency counts, percentages, and means. It was a solid way to get a good grasp of what they were examining.

Results

This section of the study concludes many of the important dimensions to measure the academic performance of university students.

Table 1

Academic Performance: Planning

Statements	Respondents (N)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I spend each day planning.	600	3.78	1.040
I make a list of things I have to do each day.	600	1.98	.842
I set goals to achieve for the whole semester	600	2.56	1.003
Generally, I think I can usually accomplish all my goals for a given week.	600	2.97	1.305
Average of Planning	600	2.82	1.05

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of Planning as an indicator of Academic Performance of students at the university level. The Planning indicator consisted of four statements. The first statement, "I spend each day in planning", M=3.78, shows that the respondent agreed with the statement. Similarly, the second statement, "I make the list of things I have to do each day", means 1.98, which shows the respondents disagreed with this statement. The third statement, "I set goals to achieve the whole semester", had a Mean = 2.56. The result of this statement describes that the respondent partially agreed with the statement. Respectively, the mean of the fourth statement, i.e. Mean 2.97, shows the respondent partially agreed with said statement. Overall, the mean of 2.82 showed partial agreement of the respondents on the Planning indicator of Academic Performance.

Table 2

Academic Performance: Time Management

Statements	Respondents (N)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I prepare a "to-do" list daily	600	4.06	.825
I keep my important dates (e.g. exam dates, research papers due dates) on a single calendar.	600	2.89	1.154
I am able to make minor decisions quickly	600	1.55	.932
I devote sufficient time to each of my subjects.	600	3.47	1.235
Average of Time Management	600	2.99	1.04

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of Time Management in students at the university level. The Time Management consisted of four statements a. The first statement, "I prepare "to do" list daily", M=4.06, it shows that respondent agreed with the statement. Similarly, the second statement, "I keep my important dates (e.g. exam dates, research papers due dates) on a single calendar", Mean=2.89, shows that the respondents partially agreed with this statement. The third statement, "I am able to make minor decisions quickly", Mean=1.55, describes that the respondent disagreed with the statement. Respectively, the mean of the fourth statement, Mean=3.47, shows the respondent partially agreed with said statement. Overall, the Mean= 2.99 showed partial agreement of the respondents on the Time Management indicator of Academic Performance.

Table 3

Academic Performance: Communication

Statements	Respondents (N)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel no hesitation during the conversation with my fellows	600	3.67	1.361
I feel confident when I talk to my teacher.	600	2.86	1.031
I feel good while presenting my classroom presentation	600	3.29	1.259
I can easily do a group discussion.	600	1.86	.979
Average of Communication	600	2.92	1.16

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of the Communication indicator of students at the university level. The Communication indicator consisted of four statements. The first statement, "I feel no hesitation during the conversation with my fellows", M=3.67, shows that the respondent agreed with the statement. Similarly, the second statement, "I feel confident while I talk to my teacher", Mean=2.86, shows that the respondents partially agreed with this statement. The third statement, "I feel good while presenting my classroom presentation", Mean = 3.29, describes the respondent partially agreed with the statement. Respectively, the fourth statement, "I can easily do group discussion", Mean=1.86, shows the respondent disagreed with said statement. Overall, the Mean=2.92 showed partial agreement of the respondents on the Communication indicator of Academic Performance.

Table 4

Academic Performance: Learning skills

Statements	Respondents (N)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have good learning power.	600	3.99	.949
I explore, search and then learn.	600	2.16	.991
I enjoy learning new things	600	1.96	.831
Average of Learning Skills	600	2.70	1.16

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation of Learning Skills in students at the university level. The Learning Skills indicator consisted of three statements. The first statement, "I have good learning power", M=3.99, shows that the respondent agreed with the statement. Similarly, the second statement, "I explore, search and then learn", means 2.16, which shows the respondents disagreed with this statement. The last statement, "I enjoy learning new things", Mean=1.96, describes the respondent who disagreed with the statement. Overall, the Mean= 2.70 showed partial agreement of the respondents on the Learning Skills indicator of Academic Performance.

Table 5

Academic Performance: Study Skills

Statements	Respondents (N)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I prefer to study whenever I have free time.	600	2.72	1.228
I only study my favorite subjects	600	4.00	.988
I don't force myself to study all the time.	600	1.98	.809
I feel confident that I am prepared for exams.	600	3.85	1.196
I find that at times studying gives me a feeling of deep personal satisfaction.	600	1.81	.793
I only study seriously what´s given out in class or in the course outlines.	600	2.40	1.133
Average of Study Skills	600	2.79	1.02

Table 5 shows the mean and standard deviation of the Study Skills of students at the university level. The Study Skills indicator consisted of six statements. The first statement, "I prefer to study whenever I have free time", M=2.72, shows that the respondent partially agreed with the statement. Similarly, the second statement, "I only study my favourite subjects", Mean=4.00, shows that the respondents agreed with this statement. The third statement, "I don't force myself to study all the time", Mean=1.98, describes the respondent who disagreed with the statement. Respectively, the mean of the fourth statement, "I feel confident that I am prepared for exams", Mean 3.85, shows that the respondent agreed with this statement. The statement, "I find that at times studying gives me a feeling of deep personal satisfaction", M=1.81, shows that the respondents disagreed with said statement. The

statement, "I only study seriously what´s given out in class or in the course outlines", M=2.40, it describes that respondents disagreed with it. Overall, the Mean= 2.79 showed partial agreement of the respondents on the Study Skills indicator of Academic Performance.

Table 6

Academic Performance: Self-efficacy

Statements	Respondents (N)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Compared with the others in my class, I think I´m a good student	600	3.65	1.141
I expect to do well in this study system	600	2.52	1.203
My study skills are excellent as compared to others in this class	600	1.92	.872
I test myself on important topics until I understand them completely	600	3.17	1.448
Average of Self-Efficacy	600	2.81	1.17

Table 6 shows the mean and standard deviation of Self Efficacy of students at university level. The Self efficacy indicator consisted of four statements. The first statement, "Compared with the others in my class, I think I´m a good student", M=3.65, it shows that respondents agreed with the statement. Similarly, the second statement, "I expect to do well in this study system", Mean=2.52, it shows the respondents partially agreed with this statement. The third statement, "My study skills are excellent as compared to others in this class", Mean=1.92, describes the respondent disagreed with the statement. Respectively, the fourth statement, "I test myself on important topics until I understand them completely", mean= 3.17, it shows the respondent partially agreed with above statement. Overall, the Mean= 2.81 showed partial agreement of the respondents on the Self Efficacy indicator of Academic Performance.

Table 7

Academic Performance: Cognitive Strategies

Statements	Respondents (N)	Mean	Std. Deviation
When I prepare for an assessment, I try to put together information from other resources	600	2.59	1.245
When I study, I keep in mind the important ideas.	600	4.12	.734
When I prepare for exams, I try to remember as many facts as I can.	600	2.17	1.019
It is hard for me to decide what the main ideas are in what I read	600	1.76	.877
I relate material learned in one course to material in other	600	3.67	1.228
Average of Cognitive Strategies	600	2.86	1.02

Table 7 shows the mean and standard deviation of Cognitive Strategies of students at university level. The Cognitive Strategies indicator consisted of five statements. The first statement, "When I prepare for an assessment, I try to put together information from other resources", M=2.59, it shows that respondent partially agreed with the statement. Similarly, the second statement, "When I study, I keep in mind the important ideas", Mean=4.12, it shows the respondents agreed with this statement. The third statement, "When I prepare for exams, I try to remember as many facts as I can", Mean=2.17, describes the respondent disagreed with statement. Respectively, the fourth statement, "It is hard for me to decide what the main ideas are in what I read", mean=1.76, it shows the respondent disagreed with the statement. The statement, "I relate material learned in one course to material in other", M=3.67, it shows the respondents agreed with said statement. Overall, the Mean= 2.86 showed partial agreement of the respondents on the Cognitive Strategies indicator of Academic Performance.

Conclusions

The results of the study indicated that the university students exhibited academic performance. The study included seven dimensions of academic performance of university students i.e. Planning, Time Management, Communication, Learning Skills, Study Skills, Self-efficacy and Cognitive Strategies. The results concluded that the students partially agreed they exhibited all of them.

Recommendations

As the results of the study indicated only partial agreement of the respondents over performing well in academics, it is recommended that university students may focus on enhancing their daily planning, time management, learning skills, and study strategies to boost academic performance. University teachers may encourage students to set and review weekly goals, create daily task lists, and allocate study time across subjects which may help them stay organized. This approach may provide a structured path to success and help students manage academic responsibilities more effectively.

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