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COUNSELLING
AND BEHAVIOURAL
STUDIES JOURNAL



ISSN 2315-7518, Vol. 6, No 1, July 2016

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ISSN: 2315-7518

Published by the

DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE & COUNSELLING,
Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

For

COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA
(Oyo State Chapter)

Printed by



HIS LINEAGE PUBLISHING HOUSE
09 Alli Street, Mokola Ibadan, Nigeria.
GSM: 0803 3596 818
E-mail: awemakin@gmail.com

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STUDY SKILLS, STUDENT ATTITUDE AND STUDY GROUP AS PREDICTORS OF STUDY HABITS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ITESIWAJU LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OYO STATE

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Abstract

The study examined study skills, student attitude and study group as predictors of study habits of secondary school students in Itesiwaju Local government Area, Oyo State. A descriptive research design was employed in the study. Three hundred senior secondary school 2 (SS 2) students were randomly selected from six schools out of ten public secondary schools in Itesiwaju Local government Area, Oyo State for data collection. Their age ranged between 10 and 24 years old with mean age of 17.4 and standard deviation of 1.68. Three research questions were answered. The data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analyses. The results showed that study skills was the most significant predictor of study habits followed by the student attitude. It was recommended that students should be assisted to build good study habits as early as they start school by incorporating study skills acquisition training and other student intervention strategies into school curriculum.

Key words: Study skills, Student attitude, Study group, Study habits

Introduction

It is obvious that appraisal of learning effectiveness in the Nigerian schools has always been limited to its outcomes which are denoted by test and examination scores. This undermines learning as including all processes of acquisition of subject matter, attitudes, perceptions, preferences, interests, social adjustment, skills and ideals. It then means that if learning (programmed learning, classroom/instructional learning, independent study, group involvement, etc) will be made

effective, it is of necessity for learners, teachers, school counsellors, parents, curriculum planners, policy makers and other stakeholders to place priority on enhancing factors and conditions that make learning effective rather than undue emphasis on learning outcomes alone.

This is why Crede and Kuncel (2008) revealed that effective studying/learning requires not only that the students possess knowledge of appropriate studying techniques and practices (study skills), but also sustained and deliberate effort (study motivation), self-regulation, ability to concentrate, self-monitoring (study habits), and a sense of responsibility for and value in one's own learning (study attitudes). This, however, justifies the assertion by Acido (2010) that a major task of education programmes is to come up with guidelines and tools to enable students to learn effectively to ensure that students are able to acquire skills for them to carry out their academic and problem solving tasks. Therefore, it is important to explore and take advantage of all the available resources, skills, attitudes, interests and habits to make learners independent and responsible for their learning.

One of the ways by which learners are assisted to take responsibility for their own learning, and therefore ensure high academic achievement is the development of good study habits. As defined by Crede and Kuncel (2008), study habits denotes the degree to which a student engages in regular acts of studying that are characterized by appropriate studying routines (e.g., reviews of material) that occur in a conducive environment for studying. It should be noted that study habits does not only bother on the frequency of studying (i.e., study routines) but also on the effectiveness of such studying hence, the need to consider other conceptualizations of study habits. Crede and Kuncel (2008), in their construct description, further defined study habits as: sound routines, including, but not limited to, frequency of studying sessions, review of material, self-testing, rehearsal of learned material and studying in a conducive environment. Mendezabal (2013) defined study habit as the pattern of behaviour adopted by students in the pursuit of their studies that serves as the vehicle of learning. Good (1973) also termed study habits as the student's way of study whether systematic, efficient or inefficient etc".

Invariably, the components of study habits as posited by Tennen and Hagar (2012) are reading, listening, note taking, test taking and time management. They concluded that a student who has poor

study habits may be deficient in any of the identified areas and that any deficiency will hamper a student's ability to master content or demonstrate mastery of the content in any class, resulting in a poor or failing grade. In the same vein, the National Association of School Psychologists (1998) revealed that many students at all grade levels experience frustration and failure in school not because they lack ability, but because they do not have adequate study skills. This suggests that good study habits are important for success in school. When students know how to study effectively, their feelings of confidence are enhanced, positive attitudes are developed and they are able to realize they can control how well they do in school and in life. Good study habits also form the groundwork for successful work habits as an adult. This underscores the need to develop and improve on students' study habits at any educational level, especially secondary school education.

In ensuring that students learn effectively especially in independent studies, there is a vital role that study skills play. According to some researchers, study skills include note taking, reading, summarizing, organizing, identifying important information, and meaningful learning and elaboration (Ormrod, 2008; Igbo, Bruning & McCrudden, 2005; Onwuegbuezie, Slate, & Schwartz, 2001). Crede and Kuncel (2008) referred to study skills as the student's knowledge of appropriate study strategies and methods and ability to manage time and other resources to meet the demands of academic tasks. Study skills or study strategies are approaches applied to learning by students and so, they are generally critical to success in school, and are considered as essential to acquiring good grades, useful for learning throughout one's life (Educational Resources Information Center, 2009). This is therefore implies that any student deficient in study skills will possess poor study habits which consequently affects his or her academic achievement. It is obvious that students find independent study probably difficult and challenging. This is because teachers come to class to simply present subject matter only to leave the students to do the rest on their own. This calls for study skills training interventions in schools and at various academic levels to develop students' study skills and habits as studies have found that the amount of studying (time spent studying) is largely unrelated to academic performance

(e.g., Mael, Morath & McLellan, 1997; Schuman, Walsh, Olson & Etheridge, 1985).

Since attitude basically implies positive or negative predisposition to certain person, object, thing or event, student attitude is important if they will learn effectively both in group and independent studies. According to Crede and Kuncel (2008), study attitudes refer to a student's positive attitude toward the specific act of studying and the student's acceptance and approval of the broader goals of education. The study of Benbow and Armand (1990), confirmed that a student's attitude as manifested in interest in thing that he/she needs to learn determines acquisition of certain skills and abilities. Other researchers who studied student attitude identified such factors as: an interest towards intentional learning; investing extra effort beyond what is required to learn an idea or skill; anticipating the future use of an idea or skill being learned; and directing interest towards learning something (Rusbult, 1992; Huitt, 2001). This proves that students' study attitude is a factor to employ when considering improving on students' study habits.

Attitudes are predispositions which have developed through a long and complex process (Abid, 2006). Attitude is a tendency to react favourably or unfavourably toward a designated class of stimuli (Anastasi, 1990). It is evident that attitudes cannot be directly observed, but can be inferred from overt behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal. Vaidya (1989) further explained attitude to be a condition of readiness for a certain activity. Attitudes may be simple or complex, stable or unstable, temporary or permanent and superficial or fundamental (and positive or negative). This implies that students need to develop stable and positive academic attitudes required to study effectively and attain high academic achievement.

Study group includes the inclination of any student to study with other students for the sake of learning effectively. Group study is a committed and cooperative group of students who share the same goal of learning the material in the most effective and efficient way. And so, study group becomes one of the most productive ways to study, that is, in a group with other reliable classmates. Therefore, a group study is helpful when students are trying to learn information and concepts, and preparing for class discussion and tests (Mangrum & Strichart, 1997). This is why Fleming (2013) posited that group study pays off

because it brings about changes in two ways: it forces students to alter their old ways of thinking and it changes their less effective patterns of behaviours, especially in learning. This proves that assisting students to form good and committed study groups can improve their study habits and then impacts positively on their academic performance.

The implication is that students, besides classroom learning and independent studies, should be encouraged to engage in meaningful group study or discussions. This will complement what is taught in the classroom and motivate them for independent studies. Study group holds numerous benefits for students while in school and after. This includes understanding material in a deeper way, improving students' note taking skills, taking advantage of each student's strength, sharing the workload, increasing students' motivation, solving complex problems, and preparing students for the world of work.

Based on the foregoing, and the fact that good study habits is indispensable part of an effective learning process, this study therefore investigates the predictive effects of study skills, student attitude and study group on the study habits of the study participants.

Research Questions

To achieve the earlier mentioned objectives, the following questions were raised and answered in the study:

- i. Is there any significant relationship among study skills, student attitude, study group and study habits of the study participants?
- ii. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (study skills, student attitude, and study group) to the prediction of study habits of the study participants?
- iii. What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (study skills, student attitude, and study group) to the prediction of study habits of the study participants?

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed descriptive research design of the ex-post facto type to determine the predictive effects of study skills, student attitude, and study group on the study habits of the study participants.

Participants

The target population for this study included all secondary school students in Itesiwaju Local Government Area of Oyo State. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select six schools out of ten public secondary schools in Itesiwaju Local Government Area from which 300 senior secondary school 2 (SS 2) students were drawn based on class attendance during the questionnaire administration and the participants' consent. The demographic information of the participants showed that 144 were male while 142 were female. The participants' age ranged from 10 to 24 years old with mean age of 17.4 and standard deviation of 1.68.

Instrumentation

Four self-report instruments were used to elicit information from the study participants. These include Study Habits Inventory (SHI) by Bakare (1977), School Attitude Assessment Survey – Revised (SAAS-R) by McCoach and Siegle (2003), Study Skills Assessment Questionnaire (SSQ) by the University of Houston-Clear Lake Counseling Services (UHCL Counseling Services) (2013), and Study Group Involvement Scale (SGIS) adapted from the Group Work Questionnaire developed by Gilbert (2013). The first part of the questionnaire elicited participants' demographic information on school name, age, gender, class, arm and religion.

SHI (Bakare, 1977) was constructed to identify defective or poor study habits in students of secondary school age. The SHI enables the individual student to describe the situations, habits and conditions which affect his/her use of study time and his subsequent performance on tests and examinations. The inventory consists of 45 items in form of direct questions to which the student is required to provide answers on a 5 point Likert scale (Almost Never = 1, Less than half of the time = 2, About half of the time = 3, More than half of the time = 4, Almost always = 5) of how frequently he/she behaves in that way. The questions on SHI are grouped into 8 sections: Sections A -Homework and Assignments, B – Time Allocation, C – Reading and Note Taking, D – Study Period Procedures, E – Concentration, F – Written Work, G – Examination and H – Teacher Consultation. The test-retest reliability of the SHI was estimated to get the reliability coefficient of 0.83, while another study reported test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.64.

SAAS-R (McCoach & Siegle, 2003) was developed as a new instrument to identify academically able students who underachieve. It was intended to measure adolescents' attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, goal-valuation, motivation, and general academic self-perceptions that could be used to explore the underachievement of academically able secondary school students. The SAAS-R consisted of 35 items scale placed on a five-point Likert-type ranging from 5= Strongly Agree to 1= Strongly Disagree. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of the instrument by the authors was 0.85 on each of the five factors, Comparative Fit Index of 0.91 and Tucker Lewis Index of 0.92. The researcher confirmed this by conducting a pilot test which yielded Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient of 0.96.

SSQ (the University of Houston-Clear Lake Counseling Services (UHCL Counseling Services), 2013) was developed to help students examine their academic skills and their need for counselling. The questionnaire contains 40 items scale on a 4-point Likert scale: Never = 1, Sometimes = 2, Usually = 3 and Always = 4. The SSAQ was pilot tested by the researcher which yielded Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient is 0.92.

SGIS was adapted from the Group Work Questionnaire developed by Gilbert (2013) to identify some important factors that affect group work effectiveness such as attitudes about working in groups or behaviors that reflect such attitudes. The SGIS contains 9 items requesting the participants to respond on 5-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87 was gotten from the pilot test conducted after three weeks.

Procedure

Administration of the four questionnaires to the study participants lasted for two weeks. The researcher sought the permission of the school authorities and cooperation of the teachers. The administration sections were within 20-30 minutes beginning with short introduction to explain the purpose of and the instructions on the questionnaires followed by the distribution of copies of the questionnaires. The

researcher also trained and utilized a research assistant who helped in the administration process.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analyses tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Based on the research questions, the following results are presented below:

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Matrix of the Independent Variable (Study Skills, Student Attitude and Study Group) and the Dependent Variable (Study Habits)

	Study Habits	Study Skills	Student' Attitude	Study Group
Study Habits	1.000			
Study Skills	.301**	1.000		
Student Attitude	.186**	.164**	1.000	
Study Group	.100	.190**	.639**	1.000
Mean	1.4788	1.0908	1.3877	33.6833
Standard Deviation	14.74611	21.67850	25.64171	7.49156

Table 1 shows that there was a significant relationship between study habits and study skills ($r=.301$, $p<0.05$), study habits and student attitude ($r=.186$, $p<0.05$) while study group did not have significant relationship with study habits ($r=.100$, $p>0.05$).

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Result of Independent Variables on Study Habits

Multiple R = .337					
Multiple R ² = .113					
Adjusted R ² = .104					
Std Error of the Estimation = 13.95598					
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE					
Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig

Regression	7365.208	3	2455.069		
Residual	57651.709	296	194.769	12.605	.000
Total	65016.917	299			

Table 2 shows that the joint effect of the independent variables (study skills, student attitude and study group) on study habits of the study participants was significant. The multiple regression also yielded a coefficient of $F = 12.605$, R of $.0337$ and adjusted R^2 of 0.104 which accounted for about 10.4% of the total variation in the participants' study habits.

This indicates that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in the model could have accounted for the remaining variance.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis Result of Relative Contributions of the Independent Variables to the Prediction of Study habits of the Study Participants

Model	Un-standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	116.724	5.633		20.723	.000
Study Skills	.194	.038	.285	5.100	.000
Student Attitude	.107	.041	.187	2.68	.009
Study Group	-.144	.141	-.073	-1.024	.307

From Table 3, it is evident that study skills and student attitude were significant predictors of study habits of the study participants while study group did not significantly predict it. The table also shows that study skills is the most significant predictor ($\beta = 0.285$, $t = 5.100$, $p < 0.05$) of study habits followed by student attitude ($\beta = 0.187$, $t = 2.618$, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

The findings of this study have revealed that study skills is the most significant predictor of study habits of the participants. This result is in consonance with the finding of Hattie, Biggs and Purdie (1996) that the quality of study skills training interventions available to students would determine the quality of their study habits and practices. This further corroborates Ortinero's (2000) postulation that good study habits lead to enhancement of learning, "as ability improves and sharpens through mastery of principles and by means of training, exercise and constancy of application". The justification for this result is that students who have acquired study skills through school training or personal effort will learn effectively and study regularly which in turn improves on their study habits.

In the same vein, the findings also confirmed that student attitude was a significant predictor of the participants' study habits. This result corroborates Ansari (1980) who found that study habits and study attitudes are both significant variables which determine the academic performance of the students. This result also supported a research finding by Russell and Petrie (1992) which reported that there was positive correlation among study attitude, study habit and academic achievement. Possible explanation for this result is that if students have positive attitude to study, they tend to see learning as a means of self-enhancement and they are motivated to engage in regular act of studying. This helps them build good study habits.

In addition, this study has confirmed that study skills, student attitude and study group, when pulled together, were significant predictors of study habits of the study participants. This implies that in any attempt to improve on study habits and skills, these three variables should be considered.

However, the study has revealed that study group was not significantly correlated with study habits of the participants. This means study group is not a significant predictor of their study habits. This result could be blamed on the fact that the study participants were not engaging in group studies and discussions.

Implications of the Findings & Recommendations

This study has found that study skills and student attitude are significant predictors of study habits as strategies for effective learning

and high academic achievement. This implies that if students will assume responsibility for their own learning, study effectively and achieve higher academically, they should be assisted to build good study habits as early as they start school by incorporating study skills acquisition training and other student intervention strategies into school curriculum.

It is also necessary for teachers to do more than just go to classes to present subject content. They should help students appreciate their need for good study habits, skills and attitude.

Concerted effort should be made by government and other stakeholders to discourage placing undue priority on academic performance. More emphasis should be placed on enhancing factors and conditions (good study habits, skills, attitude, etc) that make learning process effective.

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