



RESEARCH PAPER

Identifying Common Study Habits of High Achievers of Undergraduate Students in Pakistan: A Thematic Analysis

¹Sadi-Ul-Haq ²Ayesha Khalil

1. BS Scholar, Department Psychology, University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Senior Lecturer, Department Psychology, University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: March 21, 2022 Accepted: June 25, 2022 Online: June 27, 2022	To identified common study habits of high achievers students in academics, and to understand what strategies set them apart from others. This study helps students who want to gain high score at undergraduate level as well as assist teachers to develop certain study habits in students. Qualitative research design was employed and sample was recruited through non probability purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured, in depth interviews were conducted with 9 students who scored 3.80 CGPA throughout their degree. By using the thematic analysis nine themes emerged with two subcategories that includes: in-class study habits: regular in classes, listening attentively, taking notes and inquisitive/asking questions and at-home study habits: study solo, study schedule (hours in a day, time of a day and proactive exams preparation), self-reliance, use of the internet and undistracted place. Students should be motivated for developing good study habits because good study habits are essential for success
Keywords: High Academic Achievements, Study Habits, Thematic Analysis, Undergraduate Level	
*Corresponding Author: sadiulhaq123@gmail.com	

Introduction

“Motivation is what sets you in motion, habit is what keep you going” (Jim Ryun). The encouragement of academic success in higher education has obsessed both college students and researchers for ages. In spite of it, it may be hard to accept, it is difficult to deny that receiving good grades is one of the basic concerns of college students, especially in competitive Asian cultures such as Korea, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and some other Asian countries. This practical attention is in the same vein as numerous theoretical endeavors discovering varied predictors of high academic performance at college (Robbins et al. 2004).

Study habits play a pivotal role in the life of students. They determine students' success or failure. Undoubtedly, the study is an art and it demands practice. Some students study hard, but they fail to achieve much whereas, others study less, and they obtain more score and knowledge. The success of each student depends upon the ability, intelligence, and efforts of students. No doubt, regular study patterns bring their rewards in the sense of accomplishments of success. Higher achievers students must have specific study habits which distinguish them from others (Gudaganavar & Halayannavar, 2014).

Study habits are defined as "the sum of all habits, determined purpose and enforced practices that the individual uses to learn"(Rao Study Inventory manual). In the same way, higher achiever students are those who are academically good and their grades are very high. Moreover, they are punctual and try to complete all academic tasks on time and they engage themselves during lecture.

The high academic achievement is defined as the students who have good CGPA through their degree. Simply, it can be said that the students who gain 3.80 CGPA in their bachelor degree.

Education is a lifelong process and through education human beings become civilized. Education plays an essential role to spend a happy and good life. Education is the key elements for the development of any country. The development of the country depends on the level of education among people. According to Swami Vivekananda(1900), education is for collection of ideas, presentation of completed individuality and character building and the urge of spirituality inborn in every mind (Premalakshmi, 2012).

Learning can be excessively enjoyable, but studying customarily involves hard work. Without developing good habits of study, the study cannot be manageable and easy. Once an individual needs to accept the reality that studying does not come naturally then a student can easily set up an organized program to promote sufficient study. This organized program may help to develop good habits to create interest in the study. Furthermore, learning how to study or to develop good study habits is a lifelong process, and a student should be ready to modify his or her method of study according to the need of the time. A little change in study habits makes a huge difference in goal planning and organization of one's life. The achievement of a student depends on the study habits (Lawrence, 2011).

Literature review

“To change bad habits, we must study the habits of successful role models,” (Jack Canfield). A study conducted on who get the good grade at top institutes at top Korean University. The interviews were conducted with the 45 highest achievers. The result of this study showed that the highest achievers had common the following specific cognitive, motivational, and self-regulation strategies: they recorded all of the stuff provided in class, they used motivational regulations strategy as compared to motivation itself, and they were highly managerial in their cognition, emotions, physical condition, time management and interpersonal relationships(Lee & Lee, 2012).

In addition, there are a number of studies that handle both directly and indirectly outstanding performance at college different predictors by multiple points of view. Some studies recommended distinct learning strategies, usually called study skills and these skills suggest techniques that promote effective and efficient knowledge integration and retrieval to gain specific learning objectives (Weistein, 1987). Those skills draw up from behavioral strategies, such as test preparation, lecture preparation, note taking and questioning to cognitive psychological techniques such as rehearsal, summarization, organization, evolution and point out (Wittrock & Alessandrini, 1990).

Furthermore, some studies concentrate on the psychological point of view; for instance, academic self-efficacy, regulation of motivation and satisfaction. Self-efficacy means the observation of one's ability to organize and implement the actions needed to complete any task regarding the study. Students who has high self-efficacy take-up challenges activities or task and put much effort to complete them carefully (Bandura & Schunk, 1991). Some researchers have also indicated that satisfaction has an essential impact on college students' academic achievement (Kim, 2005; Kim et al.2002; shin et al. 2008).

In the same way, a study explored different study techniques used by students. The findings of this study indicate that there is a significant relationship between time management skills, reading and note-taking skills with academic achievement. The study

found that high achievers practice several studies skills as compared to students with lower academic achievement (Fazal, et.al, 2012).

Moreover, a study was conducted on study habits and achievement in physics of students of class 12. The main aim of this study is to figure out the difference between boys and girls in their study habits and to identify the relationship between study habits and achievements in physics. The result of this study shows that there is no significant relationship between the study habits of girls and boys while there is the relationship between study habits and achievement in physics (Jagannath & Dange, 2007).

One more study was conducted by Eiselen and Geysler (2004); factors distinguishing between achievers and at risk students. There were two groups, in this study, achievers and at risk students. Researchers asked them about their negative learning experience. It is difficult to believe that they had the same lectures, but there were no similarities in their experiences. Short list of achievers' negative learning experiences are; classes too big and noisy. They were unable to attribute to their sense of self-efficacy. In addition, they did not have enough confidence in their ability to perform course related tasks. Apart from that achiever believe that they can manage cognition, behavioral and social skills to gain desired outcomes (Saenz, 1999).

Whereas, at the risks students identified a longer list of negative learning experience as compared to high achiever students namely: high stress level, the first semester test as an unpleasant, "wake up call", managing their time and studies, humiliation in class. Furthermore, they identified smaller classes, not enough assignments related courses (Eiselen & Geysler, 2004).

Material and Methods

Qualitative research design is used for this study. According to (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) the focal point of qualitative research is to interpret the phenomenon in their natural settings. It tends to focus on the responses and experiences of the subject rather than the perspective of the researcher. Since, the present study is experiential in nature, qualitative design is appropriate to explore this phenomenon

Sampling Technique

Non-probability purpose sampling technique is used to recruit participants. This technique is appropriate for it because only those people was targeted who were high achievers.

Nine participants were recruited according to non-probability purposive sample. Participants were selected from private University Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. Sample size is selected keeping in mind Braun and Clarke (2013). Six to ten participants makes up an ideal size for small project of thematic analysis with short time frame.

Sample Inclusion Criteria

Undergraduate level, final years (7th & 8th semester), CGPA 3.80 or above 3.80

Sample exclusion criteria: students did not take who dropped any course throughout their degree. Students were not included who were from any other university except UCP. Students were not selected who were studying in 6, 5, 4,3,2,1 Semester.

Collection of Data

Semi-structured interview was selected for data collection. Researcher created some questions before interview and some questions researcher asked according to situation. 21 questions were created for interview guide. The interview guide tested against a pilot study with 2 participants who were not partaking in the final project. Entire interviews recorded and researcher also took notes during interview. The duration of interview may vary between 30 to 40 minutes. Informed consent took from the each participant before interview. All questions were open ended. I chose this method because through semi- structure interview, one can collect more rich data and researcher gets to know more things about phenomenon that is being studied.

Data Analysis Procedure

The study was conducted with a qualitative method using inductive thematic analysis approach. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as: "A method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data." The approach to coding plan will be 'semantic, inductive and descriptive' to give voice to the data and to stay close to the data as much as possible. Inductive TA stays grounded in data instead of using any existing theory. Semantic TA focuses on obvious surface meaning and Descriptive TA refers to summarize and describe patterned meaning in the data.

Researcher followed the following 6 steps for data analysis

Read the transcript: Firstly, a researcher read the transcript at least thrice and he got familiar with transcript.

Do the initial coding: After the reading the transcript, researcher identified and extracting essential phrases and then labeling them.

Searching for theme: After identify the initial theme, the researcher transferred the initial coding into short phrases

Reviewing the themes: At this step, the researcher clusters these themes together by identifying and connection or relationships among the codes

Defining and naming the themes: At this step, the researcher wrote the themes' definition and selecting the themes, makes sure names for conceptual clarity

Writing the report: At this step, the researcher translated the themes into a narrative account.

Quality Control

Make sure the validity is the significant part of the research at the end of the research. In qualitative research, researchers' perspectives which are eliminated bias and increase the researcher's truthfulness of a proposition about some social phenomenon (Denzin, 1978).

Member Checking

Member checking is known as participant feedback or respondents validation. It enhances the credibility of the study. Interpretation of the result was given to the participants that were part of research in order to check the authenticity of work and their feedback added in the report. I used this technique in this way, as I finished the interpretation of all

interviews then I shared my results of interpretation with participation and took their opinions.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher took the informed consent from the participants. Participant was able to leave the interview at any stage of the interview. All information kept confidential throughout the research. If any participant does not want to give the answer of any question then researcher was not forced to Participant.

Results and Discussion

The main objective of this investigation was to highlight the common study habits of high achiever students which make them different from others. Gaining good grades is the dream of every student in Pakistan, but few of them can make true their dream, and others are unable to understand what strategies or habits are beneficial for gaining good grades.

This study made an attempt to help those students who tend to perform academically outstanding and this study is also beneficial for parents and teachers to develop those habits in their children which are favorable for them. With the help of semi structure interview guide, student's habits and strategies were asked from students who have 3.8 CGPA and they were ongoing university students of Pakistan. The findings are well explained with the important themes.

The results of this investigation support some of the previous studies that focus on good study habits of high achiever students. Researchers have revealed that the study habits of learners; are an essential factor in determining how flourishing they are with their education (Bartling, 1988, Aluja - Fabregat & Blanch, 2004, Ogbodo 2010).

It was drawn that the study practice and habits of scheduling, note-taking, varying study methods, final term exam preparation, use of other resources during studies, efficient use of time the study habit of reading and library use tend to have an association of differing strengths and nature with the academic achievement (Mubayrik & D, n.d.). The studies about effective study habits of high achiever students are done rarely so this study help to develop such kind of studies with new contribution later on in Pakistan.

This study showed that high achiever students try to avoid skipping classes. They like to attend all classes on regular basis. They make sure that they will be in class before arriving teacher in the classroom. Different reasons were told by high achiever students when asked them why they prefer being a regular student. They said that if we leave class then we need to give extra time to prepare a lecture, and we are unable to understand concepts that are taught in skipping class. The second reason is told by them; when we leave any class then we miss valuable questions that help us to enhance knowledge and fixed our concepts. The third reason they told that we want to maintain a good image in teachers' eyes. They further added, when one has a good image in teachers' eyes then they try to teach in the best way and ensure that students are getting concepts, and they are on the same page.

Moreover, when a teacher expects good performance from a student then automatically a student give his or her hundred percent to meet that expectation. This might be also a reason to not skipping classes. According to Agba (2013), good study habits help students to attend classes regularly. It also enables them to submit their assignment on time, read very well for the test and take notes and develop points independently. As we have seen our results that these same study habits have high achiever students.

The present study also shows that high achiever students pay attention in class as well as taking notes during lectures. They told different reasons for it; they said that we attentively listen to a lecture because we want to understand concepts that are taught in class. They further added that we do not believe in memorizing material without understanding its concepts, and we prefer deep-rooted learning instead of shallow learning just for getting marks.

In the same way, they told that we prefer to note down important points during the lecture, we do so, because it helps us to prepare quizzes and final term exams. Humans cannot keep information in mind just for listening once. So, with fixed concepts in mind, we note significant points.

Previous studies also support that high achievers practice these habits to gain good grades and enhance their knowledge. For instance, Walter Pall (200) is well known for his contributions to beneficial study strategies for students. He presented some significant skills such skill of goal setting, the skill of time management, the skill of concentration, skill note-taking and memory. According to him, these skills are the most powerful for the academic success of adult learners. Beecher's (1998) analysis of note-taking research found a common theme. Researchers such as Stahl, King, and Henk (1991), proposed that encoding is the significant aspect of note-taking and note-taking helps students additional processing of information. In addition, note-taking allows students to review the relevant information in an accessible format when they need it such as preparation for mid or final term exams

The findings of the present investigation reveal that asking questions during lectures and study alone is also a habit of high achieving performers. When asked by them; why they ask questions during lectures and why they study alone instead of group study. They told different reasons for it; for instance, they said that we ask questions, because it keeps entice, and this habit makes us more curious. They also added that when we raise questions regarding any concept that concept is fixed in our mind and we can recall it any time. Apart from that, raising question is a good way to enhance your knowledge and it also helps to know the point of view of your teachers.

They also gave some reasons why they prefer to study alone. They said that study alone helps us to save our precious time and it also helps to study in our style. They further added that study alone helps us to concentrate more than study in a group.

Some past researchers also found that asking questions during lectures and study alone are habits of high achiever students. For instance, according to Chastain and Thurbor, (1989) and Martin, (1985) there are various kinds of effective studying techniques and one very famous technique is called the SQ4R. The "S" stands for survey, "Q" stands for the question and the 4R stand for reading, Recite, Relate, and review. In the same way, there are also many other techniques like listening and asking questions, discussing with others and thinking about the practical application etc.

High achievers also mentioned some other study habits that they practice. When asked by them, they told that they schedule their work such as hours in a day, time of the day and proactive exams preparation. According to data, they told that we studied 3 to 4 hours in a day and a few of them told, we study 1 to 2 hours in a day, but they mentioned, we study 6 to 7 hours during exams. They told the reason; 3 to 4 hours study every day is good for gaining high grades and they also said that we try to prepare our all lectures daily and we easily prepare all lectures within 3 to 4 hours. They said that we are also involved in other activities such as spending little time with friends and with family or anything another important task that is necessary to do.

Nausheen (2002), proposed that the proper investment of time in the life of a student is essential. The actual amount of time depends on students and activities he or she is engaged. For instance, some students take more time and some take less time to accomplish the same task. It depends on students' adaptability and his or her speed and efficiency in the work and his or her preparation. It is assumed that learners give two hours of self-study for every period of class at the higher level of education and students should regular these hours for a day or a week. And they also make time limits to accomplish each task.

In the same way, when I asked what time they like to study, most of them told that we prefer to study at night and only two participants mentioned that we studied early in the morning. They gave a reason why they prefer study at night. At night, there is no distraction, and concentration level is good at night, and second reason is that we are unable to wake up early in the morning. They further added that we also like to study at night because no one is texting us and no one asks for any home chores. According to Crow and Crow (1992), the beneficial study habit of study includes place a definite timetable and taking well-organized notes.

The findings of this study are also shown that all high achiever students are proactive regarding exam preparation. All of them mentioned that we like to start exam preparation before 15 days. They told different reasons for it such as: they said that we like to prepare the whole syllabus, and we do not leave anything on choice. They also mentioned that being proactive regarding preparation reduces stress and anxiety. They further added that this habit helps us to study deep-rooted as compared to shallow study. They said, in the last week of exams there are also other activities to do such as: assignments, presentations and projects etc, and due to these activities we are unable to focus on the preparation that is why we prefer to start preparation before 15 days of the exam. A past study is also found that high achiever students read the material before lecture and they also start their preparation before 15 days of exams (Cerna & Pavliushchenko, 2015).

Furthermore, the present study is also identified some other essential study habits of high achiever students such as relying on oneself, choosing a non-distractive place and use of the internet for study purposes. According to data, high achievers rely on themselves instead of anyone else. They said, we rely on ourselves because everything is available on the internet and if one wants to get extra knowledge then one has to put extra effort. They also told that it helps one develops confidence and this habit make you independent in life and you also learn how to do accomplish the task without having the help of others.

Similarly, they also mentioned that we choose non-distractive places for study due to different reasons; for instance, it helps to remove all distractions and it is also good for privacy. They further added that we study at a non-distractive place then our concentration level is enhanced and our productivity is also fabulous. Because of the above reasons: they like to study at a non-distractive place. Some previous researches also identified that successful students prefer to study at non-distractive places; for instance, studying habits are qualitative techniques as compared to quantitative (Nonis & Hudson 2010). High achiever students prefer to study at a place that is less distractible and more inquisitive (Blumner & Richard, 1997). Along with their good study habits they need to succeed motivation.

In addition, this study is also found that high achievers use the Internet for study purposes. They told that how the internet is beneficial for them for illustration internet helps us to make our assignments, projects and presentations in a more creative way such as; we take different ideas from the internet to make our work unique. They also mentioned that some concepts are very difficult and we are unable to understand them and we just visit Google and read from different websites and clear our concepts.

They said that we avoid the use of the internet on mobile phones because when we use the internet on mobile phones then we use more social media rather than work on the study. According to Dryliand Kinnaman (1996), the Internet helps students to figure out the required information as well as make them think critically and creatively. It also makes them collaborative and cooperative workers and find out solutions to problems.

Conclusion

The study identified various research-related study habits of students with the help of qualitative research methods. This research explored the common study habits of high achiever students who were from a private university, UCP, in Pakistan. Participants revealed all the study habits that they practice during the study to gain high grades at the university level.

The results of this study showed that high achiever students practice different study habits which help them to gain good grades. Those study habits are divided into two main categories including; class study habits and at-home study habits and discussed in 9 different themes along with sub-themes such as regular in classes, listening attentively, taking notes and inquisitive/asking questions. The home study habits are solo study, study schedule (Hours in a day, time of the day, and proactive exams preparation), self-reliance, use of the internet and undistracted place. As all of the samples have common habits that high achievers practice to gain high scores in exams. There are number of students who want to success academically and they work hard as well despite of it they are unable to gain desired marks and these study habits help students who have dreams to gain good marks.

Recommendations

In the light of analyzed data and based on findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Students should be motivated for developing good study habits because good study habits are essential for success. There are enormous researches have shown that there is strong relationship between study habits and academic achievements. They should know importance of study habits because study habits can make study easy and they can save their precious time to develop study habits.
- Students should be encouraged for using good techniques of study that may be an example of other students. Students should be energized by teachers and parents that they implement different study habits and share those study habits with their class fellow as well.
- Parents and teachers should aware their children of the importance of good study habits. They should give awareness them how study habits are pivotal for getting success academically. They should guide them on how they can easily develop study habits. To giving awareness regarding study habits since their childhood because in childhood any habit can be developed easily without putting much effort. Moreover, the habits one develops in childhood are long lasting. Parents and teachers can use different techniques in order to develop study habits in students for instance; they can use reward and punishment. Teachers can arrange a general lecture during week to develop study habits in their students.
- Schools and universities can hire a counselor who gives awareness to students about study habits and help them to develop them an easy way.

References

- Agba, R. (2013). *Why students must develop study habits*. Calabar: Rixmas Publishing Company.
- Bandura, A., & Schunk, D. H. (1991). Cultivating competence, self- efficacy, and intrinsic interest through proximal self-motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 41(3), 586–598.
- Bartling, C. (1988). Longitudinal changes in the study habits of successful college students. *Journal of Educational Psychological Measurement*, 48, 527-535.
- Beecher, J. (1988). *Note-taking: what do we know about the benefits: ERIC Digest number 12* <https://www.ericdigests.org/pre-929/note.htm>
- Blumner, H. N., & Richards, H.C. (1997). Study habits and academic achievement of engineering students. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 86(2), 125-132.
- Cerna, M. A., & Pavliushchenko, K. (2015). Influence of study habits on academic performance of international college students in shanghai. *Journal of Higher Education Studies*, 5(4), 42-55.
- Chastain, G., & Thurber, S. (1989). *The chameleon effect: The perception- behaviour link and social interaction*, NCBI
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners*. London: Sage
- Crow, R.D. (1992). *Educational Psychology*. American Book Co., N.Y., USA.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Dryli, O. E., & Kinnaman, D. E. (1996). Energizing the classroom curriculum through telecommunications. *Journal of Technology and Learning*, 16(4), 57-70.
- Eiselen, R., & Geysler, H. (2004). Factors distinguishing between achievers and at risk students: a qualitative and quantitative synthesis. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 17(2), 118-130.
- Fazal, S. et. Al. (2012). The role of academic skills in academic achievement of students: A closer focus on gender. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 27(1), 35-51.
- Gudaganavar, N. V., & Halayannavar, R. B. (2014). Influence of study habits on academic performance of higher primary school students. *International Journal of Science and Research*, 3(2), 277–280.
- Jagannath, M.C., & Dange, K.K. (2007). Study habits and achievement in Physics of students of class XII. *Journal of Humanities*, 10(3), 33-50.
- Kim, H. (2005). Exploring new explanation variables for college students' academic achievement. *The Journal of Korean Education*, 32(2), 247–274.
- Lawrence, A. S. A. (2011). Relationship between study habits and academic achievement of higher secondary school students. *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, 4(6), 143–145

- Lee, H. J., & Lee, J. (2012). Who gets the best grades at top universities? An exploratory analysis of institution-wide interviews with the highest achievers at a top Korean university. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 13*(4), 665–676.
- Mubayrik, H. F. B. (n.d.). The relationship between the study habits and the academic performance of adult learners in preparatory year. *Learners in Preparatory Years, 209-231*.
- Nonis, S.A. & Hudson, G.I. (2010). Performance of college students: impact of study time and study habits. *Journal of Education for Business, 85*, 229-238.
- Norman, A, King, J & Henk, W. (1991). Enhancing Students' Notetaking through and Evaluation. *Journal of reading, 34*(8), 614-622.
- Premalakshmi, K. (2012). Study habits and academic achievement of higher secondary students. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies, 1*(3), 551-565.
- Steven B Robin et all (2004). Do psychosocial and study skill factors predict college outcomes? A meta- analysis. *PubMed.gov, 130*(2), 261-88.
- Weistein, C. E. (1987). Fostering learning autonomy through the use of learning strategies. *Journal of Reading, 30*(7), 590–595.
- Wittrock, M. C., & Alessandrini, K. (1990). Generation of summaries and analogies and analytic and holistic abilities. *American Educational Research Journal, 27*(3), 489–502.