



Teachers' Soft Skills and Students Academic Performance: An Exploratory Study in the Context of Secondary School Level in District Mardan

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Abstract: The Head masters' Perception of Influence of Soft Skills (PPISS) 36-item structured questionnaire, with a reliability coefficient of 0.89, was used as the instrument for data collection in this study to investigate the impact of soft skills on students' academic achievement. The study used a descriptive survey design and a sample of 236 Head masters and SSTs (168 Head masters and 168 SSTs) of 268 public secondary schools in District Mardan. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the study's hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using the t-test statistic. It was discovered that a student's academic achievement is greatly influenced by their capacity for time management, problem-solving, communication, self-motivation, conscientiousness, and enthusiasm to study. Governments, educators, and other stakeholders were advised, among other things, to make sure that a significant portion of the school curriculum is devoted to the development of soft skills in order to assure students' success in their chosen occupations and to improve their academic performance.

Keywords: Academic success, self-motivation, conscientiousness, problem-solving abilities, communication skills, and time management.

1. Introduction

Any nation's drive for growth is greatly aided by education, which is a crucial component of any destination (Adnan et al., 2023). Nobody can dispute the importance of education since teachers are essential to the growth of education, and Plato once stated that teachers are good markers of a country's success (Ibrahim, 1997). Ali (2017) added the secondary schools' useful contribution, further corroborating the assertion that was mentioned. According to Adnan et al. (2023), a supportive learning environment can help pupils reach their full potential. Unfortunately, environmental education does not play such a significant role in Pakistan's educational system.

Teaching effectively entails more than just imparting knowledge; it also entails fostering a positive learning environment, developing rapport with students, and adjusting to their varied requirements. In this context, teachers' soft skills—such as empathy, communication, and emotional intelligence—are extremely important. Studies have indicated that educators possessing robust soft skills can have a favorable effect on students' motivation, involvement, and scholastic performance (Hattie, 2009; Marzano, 2007).

Internationally, soft skills are acknowledged as crucial personal qualities that support a person's success and well-being (Heckman, 2011; the European Commission, 2016; the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research [MIUR], 2018; the National Research Council, Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). They have an impact on wellbeing and academic success in terms of life satisfaction, which is defined as an individual's cognitive assessment of their level of contentment with life (Diener et al., 1985). Taking life satisfaction into account allows us to view students more holistically, seeing them as more than just learners who can learn and work toward improving their well-being (Suldo et al., 2006; Weber et al., 2016). Put differently, examining life satisfaction and academic success together may enable us to better understand how activities, learning-related variables, and soft skills interact to support them. This will give educators, school psychologists, and policymakers important information about what factors to consider.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study was:

- a) To what extent does students' ability to solve problems affect their academic performance?
- b) Is there a strong link between the academic success of students and the soft skills of teachers?

1.2 Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁. There is no evidence that students problem-solving abilities have a significant impact on their academic performance?

H₀₂. There is no a strong link between the academic success of students and the soft skills of teachers?

1.3 Statement of the Problems

It is well known that employers are beginning to place a greater value on soft skills. Therefore, it's critical that students recognize the importance of soft skills and make a concerted effort to develop them in order to maintain and advance in their careers after they land a job. Regretfully, our schools are not giving our pupils' soft skill development the attention it deserves. As a result, this study examined the degree to which soft skills affect students' academic achievement and offered suggestions for how to help them acquire these abilities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Academic success, soft skills, and life satisfaction

As was previously indicated, the literature on the relationship between academic accomplishment and soft skills is poorly organized, and prior research treated the different soft skills as separate entities without taking into account the potential commonalities across them. All six soft skills—and particularly persistence, curiosity, and adaptability—have a direct correlation with academic success, according to the substantial body of documented research (Credé et al., 2017). However, recent data indicates that there may not be a direct correlation between academic success and soft skills. Other elements like emotions, scholastic motivation, and SRL would moderate their impact (e.g., Chan et al., 2012; Muenks et al., 2017; Wolters & Hussain, 2015). Previous research has demonstrated the clear connection between students' individual soft skills and the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive aspects of education, which may act as a complete mediating factor in the impact of soft skills on academic performance. This would be consistent with the notion of soft skills, which include the ability to control one's emotions, behavior, and cognition (Robles, 2012).

A person's sense of contentment and wellness should be enhanced by soft skills (Bruna et al., 2019; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). All six of the soft skills that have been taken into consideration have been found to be significant correlates of life satisfaction, and this relationship has been observed frequently across all age groups (Bruna et al., 2019; Credé et al., 2017; Kashdan & Steger, 2007; Martin et al., 2012; Robitschek & Keyes, 2009; Stevic & Ward, 2008).

Thus, the primary goal of the current study was to investigate the relationship between life happiness and academic accomplishment and soft skills while also taking other significant learning-related aspects into consideration (Ben-Eliyahu, 2019).

2.2 Soft skills

Soft talents are adaptable personality traits that control our emotions, actions, and thoughts to help us accomplish

our objectives. The outcomes of the labor market are mostly influenced by soft skills, which increase people's chances of finding work, succeeding at work, and producing creative works. International institutions are now concentrating on them and how to raise them starting in school as a result. However, their place in education has not yet been well investigated, and the literature presents a confusing array of soft skill frameworks (Bhagra& Sharma, 2018).

3. Methodology

The survey research design was used in the study. Survey research is defined by Kolovos (2010) as a developmental field study that methodically gathers, examines, and synthesizes quantitative data on a sizable representative sample of a specific community. 236 Head Masters and SSTs, 168 head masters, 168 SSTs, and 168 pupils from public schools make up the study's population. There are 236 principals and vice principals in the study's sample. The method of census sampling was applied. Every unit or member of the population is examined in a census sample. As a result, 168 Head Teachers and 168 SSTs took part in the research. Head teachers' Perception of Influence of Soft Skills was the tool used to collect data (PPISS). The research issues were addressed using the mean and standard deviation, and the study's hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using the t-test statistic.

4. Data Analysis

Research Objectives1: To what extent does problem solve influence the academic performance of students?

Table 1: Mean rating of the extent to which problem-solving influences students' academic performance (N = 236)

Respondents	n	S	Decision
Head Masters 168	3.33	0.72	High value
SSTs 168	3.29	0.87	High value
Total 236	3.31	0.80	High value

Below 1.50 = Very Low Extent; 1.50-2.50 = Low Extent; 2.50-3.50 = High Extent; Above 3.50 = Very High Extent
 Table 1 shows that Head Masters and SSTs collectively have a mean of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 0.80 on their rating of the degree of influence of problem solving on academic achievement of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Head Teachers and SSTs have total means of 3.31 and 3.22, and standard deviations of 0.82 and 0.68, respectively. Both the Head Masters and SSTs have extremely low standard deviations, which suggest that scores are closely clustered around the mean. Additionally, means that fall between 2.5 and 3.5 suggest that problem solving has a significant impact on students' academic progress in Rivers State's public senior secondary schools. This suggests that pupils' academic performance in the public schools of the Mardan district is influenced by their ability to solve problems.

Research Objective 2: Is there a strong link between the academic success of students and the soft skills of teachers?

Table 2: Mean rating of the extent to which willingness to learn influences students' academic performance

Respondents	n	S	Decision
Head Masters 168	3.32	0.77	High value
SSTs 168	3.41	1.17	High value
Total 236	3.37	0.97	High value

Below 1.50 = Very Low value; 1.50-2.50 = Low value; 2.50-3.50 = High value; Above 3.50 = Very High value
 According to Table 2, when it comes to the degree to which students' academic achievement at public senior secondary schools in the Mardan district is influenced by their willingness to learn, Head Masters have a mean of 3.32 and a standard deviation of 0.77; SSTs have a mean of 3.41 and a standard deviation of 1.17; and Head Masters and SSTs together have a mean of 3.37 and a standard deviation of 0.97. All of the means fall between 2.5 and 3.5, suggesting that students' academic progress in District Mardan's public senior secondary schools is greatly

influenced by their motivation to learn. Thus, a major factor influencing pupils' academic success in Rivers State's public senior secondary schools is their enthusiasm to learn.

From the above results it is concluded that there is a strong relationship between students' academic success with soft skills. So the hypothesis was strongly rejected.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The impact of soft skills on students' academic achievement was investigated in this study. The study discovered that a student's academic progress is greatly influenced by their abilities in time management, problem solving, communication, self-motivation, conscientiousness, and eagerness to learn. It was discovered that pupils' ability to manage their time had some bearing on how well they do academically. Nyatyowa (2017) provided support for this conclusion by highlighting how time management will improve a student's academic performance by helping him or her become more organized, focused, and socially able. Better academic performance is the result.

Academic achievement has been demonstrated to be significantly influenced by pupils' problem-solving abilities. The results of this study are consistent with Wittrock's (2006) assertion that problem solving is essential to education because teachers care about raising students' achievement levels. Therefore, in order to improve pupils' academic achievement, parents, instructors, and the school must instill in them sound problem-solving techniques.

The study also discovered that pupils' academic achievement is significantly influenced by conscientiousness. Poropat (2008) contended that conscientiousness is the most reliable and stable personality predictor of academic success, which is congruent with this study. It includes a number of qualities that are essential for learning successfully, including self-control, ambition, perseverance, diligence, and dutifulness.

Academic achievement has also been demonstrated to be significantly influenced by pupils' enthusiasm to learn. Brook (2016) provided support for this conclusion by stating that successful people are lifelong learners and that those who are prepared to acquire the skills necessary to keep up with the latest developments and in-demand abilities will survive in this dynamic world. For success in any endeavor—at job, school, or otherwise—continuous learning is essential.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study have demonstrated that students' soft skills—such as time management, problem solving, communication, self-motivation, conscientiousness, and eagerness to learn—had a significant impact on their academic accomplishment. Therefore, it is essential that the school curriculum include provisions that guarantee the development of these talents in children, as these will benefit them in both their future employment and better academic accomplishment.

5.1 Recommendations

Every parent or guardian wants their children or wards to graduate with honors and become outstanding professionals in their fields of choice. Soft skills are proven to be the secret to a stellar academic record and prosperous job. If it were feasible, parents and guardians would impart these soft skills to their wards and children at home. However, accountability rests with the school. Thus, educators need to make sure that curriculum includes instruction in soft skills. Students' academic performance is improved and job success is ensured in this way.

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