



Identification of the Remedial Strategies to Improve Low Academic Achievements of Students at Higher Secondary Level

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Abstract

The present qualitative study was aimed to identify and develop strategies to improve students' low academic achievements at the higher secondary level. For this interviewee, were selected purposively. Individually semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirty interviewees and were audio-recorded. Thematic analysis was applied, and the following themes based on teachers' suggestions were identified: The establishment of the career counselling center, Standardized class size, Enhance academic session, Ban overnight internet package and awareness program, Focus on a mother tongue to clear concepts rather than rote learning, Revisit curriculum and subject combination, Revise evaluation system, Enhance time management skills. This study concluded and proposed a flow chart of remedial strategies to implement. This study is an effort to save the dark future of our future leaders and helpful for policymakers, educationists, psychologists, and principals to practically implement the proposed strategies to overcome this situation.

Key Words: Suggestions, Remedial Strategies, Low Academic Achievement, Students, Higher Secondary

Introduction

Exploration of the suggestions and development of strategies to cope with students' low academic achievements has theoretical, empirical, and practical decisions and actions. The theoretical viewpoint refers to the contribution to the literature at a higher secondary level. This study highlights suggestions for remedial strategies to cope with the low academic achievements of higher secondary students. Therefore, this study contributes an effort to identify and develop strategies to reduce the situation. Study findings are evident to be helpful for the department of School Education, the parents, the teachers, and the students.

The objectives of this study are:

1. To find out the suggestions for the improvement of students' academic achievements.
2. To identify remedial strategies to cope with the low academic achievements of students.

Literature Review

Low academic achievement of students is the most challenging dilemma. Students are the chief assets for educational institutes (Llie & Ciocoiu, 2010). In academic life, students' achievements have a pivotal role. The students' attainment and progress are determined by the level of achievement. The reviewed literature addressed several studies related to the low academic achievement of students at different levels.

Counselling is very significant for the choice of career. There are some characteristic of career counselling (Soumeli, 2012). It is a help for an individual for the choice of career according to the skills and capabilities to decide profession. In the present era, career becomes difficult; therefore, help in choosing the subjects is needed for career selection. The school counsellors can play a significant role by providing helpful assistance to students (Sari, 2010; Stone and Dahir, 2006). The school counsellor provides counselling on multiple issues, including

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the academic of students (choice of subjects). Therefore, counsellors help and support students in their choices for the program so they can make decisions accurately with parents' collaboration ([Shoffner and vacc, 1991](#)).

Standardized class size is very significant for the academic achievements of students. One of the important causes affects students' performance that results in low academic achievements is class size. Many studies found small class size has better performance than large class size. [Fabunmi, Brai-Abu, and Adeniji \(2007\)](#) pointed out that three factors, namely class size, space, and utilization of class rate, affected students' performance in class and result accordingly for the achievements. [Tremblay, Ross and Berthelot \(2001\)](#), viewed that the academic achievements of students studying in elementary grades were related to the size of the class. Poor conditions of academics, classrooms overcrowded, weak interaction, and relationships between the students-teacher and peers influenced the academic achievements of students ([Ongori and Agolla, 2008](#)). Institutes' physical building i-e good quality seating arrangement and buildings can produce high academic achievements or vice versa. A study in Ghana concludes a class size of 40 students is ideal, but above 40 students have negative effects on the academic achievements of students ([Kraft, 1994](#)). [Adeyela \(2000\)](#) viewed larger size are non-conducive and results in a low academic outcome. Therefore, weak management structures of education are ineffective to provide a good system and result in low achievements.

No doubt technology plays a significant role and helps mankind to handle thing in a better way. Internet social packages affect the lives of teenagers negatively ([Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009](#)). The easy excess of 'social networking sites' Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, and Instagram, etc. are available on easy and accessible packages ([Peter, 2015](#)). Petre, 2015 cited Stone and Brake (2010) viewed that "social networking sites, like much else on the internet representing a moving target for researchers and policymakers". Students now a day are too much connected socially by the use of networks and websites, and these sites distract students towards non-educational and negative activities including text messaging i-e chatting ([Kuppuswamy and Shankar, 2010](#) ; [Peter, 2015](#)). The students spent excessive time on various media and networking as addictiveness ([Kuss & Griffiths, 2011](#)), and consequently; as a result, they are unable to perform well academically ([Peter, 2015](#)). Therefore, the major distractions of the young generation are the use of social media sites. This distraction affects negatively the learning of students and a waste of time.

Language anxiety affects students' academic achievements. [Ying \(2008\)](#) found that students' majority face language anxiety during student-teacher interactions, Students' perceptions of language learning, procedures of classroom, and testing a language. He further indicated language anxiety specifically occurs in a foreign language context. [Cooley \(2007\)](#) founded that students with anxiety at lower levels perform better in comparison to students who had anxiety with high levels in the language learning class. The instructional medium i-e English language affects learning outcomes ([Elliot & Joyce, 2005](#)). Several studies reported students' second language is not good; it troubles their learning capacity and they don't express their views ([Andrade, 2006](#); [Jacob et al., 2012](#); [Versaevel, 2014](#)).

The subjects' combination is creating over-burden for students so curriculum planners should reduce subjects and studies are evident that "curriculum should be based on conceptual learning instead of rote memorization". Fair and justified evaluation are significant to the discovery of learners' acquired skills in the process of learning. To maintain educational standards, external evaluation is very useful. [Rasul and Bukhsh \(2011\)](#) viewed as

"Examinations are conducted to test the ability of the student and find out if he has reached a certain standard of academic learning and knowledge. They scrutinize and measure the students' capabilities against skill in answering a question under the condition imposed by the examiner."

There is a need to include new programs/subjects to provide chances for management skills. Numerous changes affect learners' learning outcomes ([Howard, Schiraldi, Pineda, and Campanella, 2006](#)) and the psychological well-being of learners. [McDonald, Pritchard, and Landrum \(2006\)](#) point out workshops should be arranged frequently to develop strategies based on behaviours, for example, time management skills, and interpersonal skills, etc. Lack of management skills regarding time creates a disturbance in students' capacity and ability to deal with negative effects ([Heady, 2003](#)).

[Michael & Wumi \(2016\)](#) conducted a study “*Causes and Remedies to Low Academic Performance of Students in Public Secondary Schools: A Study of Ijero Local Government Area of Ekiti State*” found various factors cause low performances among school students. They suggested that teachers should use relevant and recent materials, pay more attention to students, employ unique, and latest teaching methods, start simple to complex, and parents' attention and monitoring to children are essentials to ensure understanding and better performance. These studies were diverse in social and geographical settings. In the Pakistan scenario, there is hardly a study found in literature addressed to the question raised in the current study. Therefore, this study is needed to conduct to contribute to knowledge by adding other dimensions and fill the gap in the literature.

Methodology

Study Design and Settings

This qualitative study design was conducted in public higher secondary institutions in the district Bahawalpur affiliated to the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Bahawalpur. According to the Education Department (2018), there were public (27) Higher Secondary Schools and (25) Colleges in district Bahawalpur. The study was qualitative; therefore, by using a semi-structured interview schema, an in-depth face to face interview was conducted with thirty teachers of schools/colleges.

Study Instrument

An interview based on semi-structured two questions with probes was conducted. Before the conduct of interviews, piloting of the first draft undertaken to test and ensure uniformity of questions. It was conducted with four teachers. The purpose was to make sure that questions were understood by the participants as posed to be.

Recruitment and Data Collection

A purposive sampling technique was utilized to enlist the participants of the study. They were approached to get consent for interviews. Based on their consent, the researcher then contacted thirty teachers (fourteen male and sixteen female) for the administration of the research instrument. For interviews, the researcher personally visited and took the teachers' interviews by semi-structured interview protocol to get detailed information for further exploration from them. The researcher intended to analyze the facts and features wherever comprehensive data regarding this matter was requisite from each teacher on the basis of their teaching experiences. Before the conduct of the interview study participants were assured about the information provided by them will be kept confidential, and the provided information by them would be used only for research purposes. Further, keeping an ethics permit was taken for the recording. The participants did not allow video recording. But participants did not have objection for their audio recording. An audio recorder was used for recording. The recorded interviews were saved with the name of the institute.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by thematic analysis. Interview files were transcribed by using MS Word. The researcher read transcripts several times to code according to the texts. The developed themes were analyzed by steps to construct code, and they were merging into sub-categories, and categories to explore themes. Major themes with several sub-themes were consequently obtained; the analysis was carried out based on data. Data reliability was checked for valid, and a reliable result by studied it repeatedly to confirm that it reflects the objectives of the study. Data credibility was crosschecked and undertaken to confirm themes.

Results

The following themes were drawn from the data.

Establishment of Career Counseling Centers

Students, unfortunately, have very less information and guidance for further careers, our education system did not provide any clear guidance to our students for career selections,

“Educational system fails to provide proper guidance and counselling to students. They often choose the wrong subjects, and usually the chosen subjects didn’t match with their aptitude”.

This is one of the reasons for students' low grades in the first-year examination.

Almost all (29) participants agreed that for choosing subjects at the level of higher secondary, there is a need for counselling of the students as well as parents. They recommend they should have liberty for subjects' choices according to their capability. An assistant professor suggested this notion as,

“There is a need to establish career counselling centres at both secondary and higher secondary level but not only for students but parents too”.

There is a need for meetings between parents and teachers for the improvement of student's marks. A male teacher expressed that the most essential is,

“Nothing but counselling for subject choice is very important”.

There should be freedom for students for the selection of subjects. Parents are needed to be involved and play a vital role in their studies.

Many agreed measures are needed to reduce the irregularity of students. In this regard, the parents' cooperation is needed. Students having less attendance should allow sitting for the exam but, as you know,

“Under social and political pressure, it is in practice”.

Therefore, parental cooperation for not giving undue favour by any type of approach. To control this situation, *“institutions head should not be a local citizen”* so; there would be no social pressure for him/her.

Standardized Class Size

Almost all (28) participants suggested to get desired learning outcomes, *“Class should not exceed forty numbers of students”* in this regard teachers, can engage the class in multiple activities for fruitful learning outcomes. One comments by saying,

“Number of students should be less than forty like secondary classes”.

It will enhance good learning outcome as teachers will be feasible to interact with every student easily that is not possible for large class sizes.

An English professor suggested that if we follow the law of the learning environment, we are flexible to overcome this scenario. He further added that the ideal is,

“In Government institution, teachers should be provided according to the strength of students by standardizing teacher-student ratio that is 1-40”.

A lecturer in chemistry added the same idea that,

“Institution student-teacher ratio must be according to standards”.

So, the researcher agreed and favoured this notion *“Standardized class size”* to get positive learning outcomes.

Ban Overnight Internet Packages and Awareness Program

Almost all (27) Participants viewed that cheap and overnight packages are needed to be banned. Steps towards it should be taken by the Government for the safe future of the young generation based on psychological and physiological parameters. Healthy activities should be arranged for students' sense of relaxation of mind.

Many participants commented that they have a lack of playgrounds for teen-age; this compels them towards the internet by using social media sites to consume time. The use of these internet sites engages them overnight, and these cheap packages don't let them go for a sleep-in time. A senior subject specialist commented,

“Early to bed early to rise will make healthy wealthy wise”.

Science has also proved, the efficacy for work is enhanced by *“sleeping and waking up early”*, and they will have no issues.

For this, many participants suggested the awareness program and the utilization of technology positively. It will be helpful for both students and teachers. He further added,

“Training of teachers and learning of the latest technology to refresh and cope with the latest technology”.

There is a need to introduce and improve Instructional Technology and communication skills by arranging workshops, seminars, and discussions to overcome usage of technology negatively.

Enhance Academic Session Duration

Majority with (25) participants said that time is an important factor. If it is not managed properly, it will have a negative effect on academic results. The participants with the majority agreed at this point. A Chemistry lecturer said that it is a social dilemma that we do not have enough time for the completion of study courses,

“Educational session is too short; it should be started in time and ends just two weeks early for board examinations.”

For successful learning outcomes. One male respondent suggested,

“There is need of academic calendar that must be given annually for all institutes to follow accordingly”.

The increase in an academic session will be helpful to enhance the interaction level of student-teacher. He suggested that there should be,

“No interference during academic sessions that disturbs the teacher performance, as they already have a short academic session”.

Therefore, it is important to increase the time duration of an academic session for fruitful results.

Focus on Mother Tongue to Clear Concepts Rather than Rote Learning

Majority with (26) participants focus that for the clarity of concepts mother tongue should be used. It will be helpful to avoid rote learning. Fear of language generates a communication gap, and the communication gap generates learning problems. The concept can indeed be comprehended in easy and understandable language. Therefore, teachers should use the mother tongue on a priority basis. Science and arts subjects should be available in both English and Urdu medium. The majority of science and art teachers agreed and said,

“The English language is a big issue for students’ learning” so steps should be taken by the government.

Revisit Curriculum and Subject Combination

Participants (25) expressed that the combination of the subject’s overburdens students. Therefore, curriculum planners should work to reduce subjects. There is no proper education policy. A senior professor who said,

“Please re-visit curriculum, and it should reflect our ideology and based on practical skills”.

An assistant professor recommended,

“Curriculum should align with equal weightage to theoretical and practical learning”.

The need emerged for the curriculum to be based on fifty percent learning with practical skills.

A Lecturer Commented that

“If students are studying pre-medical, physics is irrelevant to his/her to study; similarly, chemistry is irrelevant for students who move to electrical engineering. The statistic has no interference for the student who is thinking her/his future in banking etc.”

Omega and Alpha, two elective subjects are enough instead of the three at a higher secondary level. For this, “*vision and the vigilant officer*” should be supervised this honestly and are supported by the government on merit instead of supporting leg pullers who do not want to work “*such honest policymakers*”.

Revise Evaluation System

Almost all (29) participant suggested that there is a need to develop an interest in studies based on conceptual

learning instead of rote learning. The majority of the teachers agreed that the evaluation system should be based on,

“to be focused on 21st-century learning skills, i.e. collaboration, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving and conceptual learning so that the students would be successful in every walk of life” instead of rote learning.

An English professor very pathetically said that our evaluation system is creating clerks by rote learning and memorization. He added his words,

“I flatly like to say, you just stuff in the material and vomits in the exam”.

Learning is judged by marks, and the grading system is just result-oriented not knowledge, we are producing just degree holders. As far as evaluation standards are concerned, an assistant professor gave her view about examination standards,

“Improvement is needed in terms of the exam system as well as the evaluation of students. Here examinations are conducted to test the ability of a student, not find out his standard regarding academic learning and knowledge”.

Evaluator’s focus is on quantity instead of quality to make money

“Even the rechecking process is observed as invalid in my experiences based on observations”.

There is *“Lack of sincerity and commitment”*.

The condition is that sometimes the teachers do not award the students, who answer on a conceptual basis so,

“If a student has written correct concept other than the book wording instead of awarding based on the concept, he /she is awarded low grades”.

Concluding this situation, the existing system of examinations is only encouraging rote learning, memorization with cramming to get an education by obtaining the quest of obtaining high marks instead of knowledge through the intellectual ability of students. Therefore, the evaluation standards of examination boards spoil our education standard.

“Evaluation standards of Board have a flaw in the system in terms of awarding marks”.

There is a need to revise the evaluation system based on the standards of evaluation, such as while checking the papers, the evaluators focus on the quality of the paper, not on quantity.

Enhance Time Management Skills

The majority (18) expressed that many factors are involved in students’ low achievements. However, to cope with students’ low performance, a teacher needs to work hard more than the students. *“Time management”* is necessary for many subject syllabi which remained uncovered and teachers should *“never discourage them”*. Teachers should provide a relaxed environment but also try to make improvements by giving incentives, prizes, and claps.

Discussion of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The study was an effort with a prime aim to find out the suggestion and identify strategies for the improvement of students’ low academic achievements at the higher secondary level. This study finds and suggests the establishment of the career counselling center at schools for the guidance of students for the choice of subjects according to their interests and mental capability. This study provides evidence that by practising standardize class size, ban on internet overnight cheap packages, and increase in the academic session duration, promoting conceptual learning, revising the evaluation system this alarming situation, can be reduced and gradually overcome.

Based on suggestions by teachers following measures are explored for the improvement of students' low academic grades.

- There is a need to establish student counselling centers based on career choices at the institutional level.
- Policymakers should work on established paramount of 1-40 ratio of class size.
- This study concludes to ban on internet free and overnight cheap packages.

- There is a need to increase academic sessions' duration and provide an academic calendar.
- To reduce the language barrier teaching, should be based on conceptual learning and taught in national dialect.
- This study concludes the need to revise and re-visit the curriculum.
- Teachers recommend introducing skill-orient subjects based on the practical approach to learning.
- The conclusion emerged the need to revise the system based on the evaluation of both examination conduct and evaluation process.
- Based on the conclusions and visual observations of researchers, a flow chart of the proposed strategies is provided in figure 1 for implementation to cope with the alarming situation.

Based on the identified strategies, it is recommended to implement these proposed remedial strategies for education at the higher secondary level on a small scale by assigning project.



Figure 1

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