

University Students Competence in Arabic Language as a Predictor of Performance in the Islamic Studies

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Abstract

The present study investigated student competence in Arabic language as a predictor of performance in the Islamic studies subject. A total of 100 students (50 from Islamic studies subject and 50 from Fine Arts Subject) as a sample were used for the present study from different institutions of the Kashmir valley. The data collected by simple random and purposive sampling method was statistically analysed using descriptive statistics, t-test, correlation, regression and Chisquare test. The study reveals that statistically there is a nonsignificant difference between the performances of Islamic studies students having Arabic subject at graduation level and that of students that do not have Arabic subject at graduation level. Further, data obtained from the fine arts students was compared with the data obtained from the students of Islamic studies students. It has been observed that there is non-significant difference between the students of two subjects in study habits. The results obtained in this study are in agreement with the earlier studies conducted across the globe.

Keywords: Islamic Studies, demographic, Statistics, Fine Arts, academic performance Kashmir

Introduction

Education in the context of Islam is regarded as a process that involves the complete person, including the rational, spiritual, and social dimensions. Islam has, from its inception, placed a high premium on education and has enjoyed a long and very rich intellectual tradition. In Islam knowledge (*'ilm*) occupies a significant position, as evidenced by more than 800 references to it in Islam's most revered book, the Holy Quran. The importance of education is repeatedly emphasized in the Quran with frequent injunctions, such as "God will exalt those of you who believe and those who have knowledge to high degrees" (58:11), "O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge" (20:114) and "As God has taught him, so let him write" (2:282). Such verses provide a forceful

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stimulus for the Islamic community to strive for education and learning. The Quran which Muslims consider the word of God serves as a comprehensive blueprint for both the individual and society and as the primary source of knowledge. Thus, education in Islam unequivocally derived its origins from a symbiotic relationship with religious instruction. In the modern world Islam is seen as many things, but rarely is it viewed as a source of inspiration and enlightenment. Though it is a force of enlightenment and it is not only verses of the Quran that testify to that fact, but also the great body of scholars produced during the Middle Ages. During the golden age of the Islamic empire (usually defined as a period between the tenth and thirteenth centuries), when western Europe was intellectually backward and stagnant, Islamic scholarship flourished with an impressive openness to the rational sciences, art, and even literature (e.g., Michael, 1995, Haye, 1991, Michael, Mirza et al., 1986, Qadir, 1988). Outstanding contributions were made in areas of chemistry, botany, physics, mineralogy, mathematics, and astronomy. It was during this period that the Islamic world made most of its contributions to the scientific and artistic world and finally, passed it on to Europe. Islam unified science, theology, and philosophy. Muslims were commanded to study, seek knowledge, and learn and benefit from others' experiences by Allah (SWT) in the Holy Quran and by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the Sunnah. It was this that inspired the Muslims to great heights in sciences, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, philosophy, art and architecture. In the realm of the arts, the well-known *Hadith* "Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty" encouraged Muslims to beautify the word of Allah through calligraphy and other expressions. Islamic calligraphy began with the kufi styles, then followed *Naskhi*, *Thuluth*, *Muhaqqiq*, *Rayhani*, and *Nasta'liq*. Calligraphy began as a direct response of the soul of Muslims to the descent of the Quranic revelation. Calligraphical art moved from beautifying the Quran and texts to objects, houses and Mosques and eventually to Architecture. Muslim scientists i.e., Abu Ali al-Hussain Ibn Abdallah Ibn Sina, universally known as Avicenna (980-1037 C.E), Hunayn ibn Ishaq, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi (865-925 C.E) , known as Rhazes, Al-Razi, Abul Qasim al-Zahrawi (963-1013 C.E) who is known as Albucasis to the West, Al-Idrisi, abu Muhammad Ibn al-Baitar, Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, Abu Kamil, Al-Samawal, Al-Biruni, Ghiyath al-Din al Kashani, Umar Khayyam known to the west as only a poet actually also was an excellent mathematician, Abu Wafa Muhammad al-Buzanji, Abu Abdullah al-Battani (862-929 C.E.), Abu al-Fath Abd al-Rahman al-Khazini, Abu al-Hassan al Haitham (965-1039 C.E), Al-Kindi (d. 873 C.E), Al-Asma'i (740-882 C.E), Ibn Majid, Jabir ibn Aflah, Imam al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd, Ibn

Khaldun (1332-1395) have a good contributions to Science, Philosophy and the Arts.

Arabic language is the language of Islam (Balogun, 1985). Al-Quran, the primary source of Islamic teaching was revealed and written in Arabic language so it is important to get to the root of Islamic literature (Oiadosu 1988), a good knowledge of Arabic language is essential. To ensure a desired achievement, the language of the subject must be understood. For example, physical science may be meaningless to a learner who learns with inadequate knowledge of Mathematics because according to Bilal et. al. (2015), they have mathematically related concepts such that only students who are mathematically inclined are encouraged to offer them. In the literature, we observe that level of performance of students in any subject depends largely on the amount of learning that has taken place in the subject. It is reported that no student can learn ambiguous or meaningless materials.

In Islamic studies, Arabic subject is a part, therefore, to ensure retention in learning Islamic studies the meaningful relationship between it and Arabic must be understood by the students and this has scientific relevance (Crowder 1976, Hudgins 1977). It is obvious that a student to whom Arabic is meaningless will find it difficult to learn Islamic studies, especially Quran and *Hadith*.

Numerous researchers and experts have attempted to determine what factors do influence students' performance in academic environments, with many of these researchers focusing on performance in the college environment. While various factors have been found to be influential, researchers continue to pursue additional research efforts for clarity, as the representativeness of the sample is typically assumed to be a limitation and the sheer amount of personal and environmental variables make it difficult to determine which factors are more likely to affect students in general. Student academic performance is naturally considered a critical aspect for many educationists and others since a long period. Therefore, many research papers looked at specific factors particularly affecting student's academic performance to determine these factors that have major impact on learner's performance. Academic performances for both undergraduate and postgraduate students have been a considerable attention. As a result, universities and colleges should address this issue and focus on improving the quality of students which will have a positive impact on students and society (Shukakidze, 2013, J. Emik, 2000, Doi, 1979). It has been observed that environment is important to the physical, mental, emotional and intellectual development of a student. Home environment refers to the total home circumstance surrounding an individual or groups of individuals. In this study,

we involve home conditions such as parent's social status; parent's abode as well as income that affects their wards study habits. Study habit is operationally defined as a dedicated scheduled and un-interrupted time to apply one's self to the task of learning. The way a student is trained at home influences his or her study habit. Whatever the home life is, it can reflect on the student's work, as a student who is cherished and well cared for, usually study well. On the other hand, student who lack parental affection; love and tender care find it difficult to form a stable relationship with other student's. It is reported in the literature that emotional disturbance helps to take away the appetite to study, unhappiness at home, and resentment towards the teacher also causes poor student study habit.

It is observed that Arabic is interwoven with Islamic studies, students who do not have the knowledge of Arabic subject still enroll for the later. The present study therefore sets out to investigate the influence of Arabic on students' performance in Islamic studies at the University level. The main purpose of this study is to verify in empirical terms, whether knowledge of Arabic subject would influence their performance in Islamic studies at the University level. This research paper examines the academic performance of Islamic studies students in the Kashmir valley at the Higher education level attempting to determine the most important demographic and academic characteristics influencing students' academic performance, and using these to make recommendations for future research and development. In predicting students' performance, previous researchers considered various factors that are associated with students' success such as study effort, attendance, and quality of teaching, age and academic skills. In present study, we extend previous research by examining various factors such as age, gender, residence, subject choice for examining students' academic performance. Thus, the objective of this study is to explore all these factors and determine if they are significantly related to students' academic success across the areas of Arabic, fine arts among students studied in Kashmir valley.

Material and Methods

In the present study the survey included 100 students, 50 from Islamic studies subject and 50 from Fine Arts Subject studying in Kashmir valley. To collect information a well-designed questionnaire was prepared keeping in view the literature available on the topic and the characteristics of the respondents viz., age, education level of parents, profession, type of family, family income etc. Each participant selected at random was asked to fill out a questionnaire which asked questions about their socio-economic condition and academic performance. The participants who participated in this study were

given a verbal explanation regarding the purpose of the present study and were assured that confidentiality would be carried out throughout this study. The subject that was the focus of this study is Islamic studies. The data collected were tabulated and analyzed with the help of appropriate statistical tools using statistical software MINITAB.

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant difference between the Academic performance in Islamic studies, of students who offer Arabic along with Islamic studies at graduation level and those who offer Islamic studies alone. In order to test the Hypothesis 1, Students t-test (with usual notations) was used and is given by

$$t = \frac{\bar{x} - \bar{y}}{\sqrt{s^2 \left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}} \text{ Where } s^2 = \frac{[\sum (x_i - \bar{x})^2 + \sum (y_i - \bar{y})^2]}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}$$

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between the contributions of student variables to the academic performance of students in Islamic studies subject. In order to test Hypothesis 2, we use correlation and regression analysis. Correlation coefficient with usual notations is estimated as

$$r_{xy} = \frac{S_{xy}}{\sqrt{S_{xx} S_{yy}}},$$

Where $S_{xy} = \sum xy - n\bar{x}\bar{y}$, $S_{xx} = \sum x^2 - n\bar{x}^2$, $S_{yy} = \sum y^2 - n\bar{y}^2$.

Hypothesis of no linear relationship is tested by using student t-test and test

statistic is defined $t = \frac{r_{xy} \sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r_{xy}^2}} \sim t_{(n-2)}$. which is Student's *t* distribution with

n-2 degrees of freedom. It may be noted that n stands for number of observations. Further, to test the hypothesis, scores on all the identified predictors (students' variables) of academic performance constitute the independent variables while students' academic performance represents the dependent variable. These set of scores were subjected to statistical analysis using multiple regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

The regression model is specified as follows:

$$Y = f(x)$$

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6 + b_7X_7 + b_8X_8 + b_9X_9 + b_{10}X_{10} + b_{11}X_{11} + b_{12}X_{12} + b_{13}X_{13} + b_{14}X_{14} + b_{15}X_{15} + U_i$$

Where

X_1 = Age, X_2 =Gender, X_3 =Residence, X_4 = Father's Education, X_5 =Mother's Education, X_6 =Profession of Father, X_7 =Profession of Mother, X_8 =Family type, X_9 =Family Size, X_{10} =Family Income, X_{11} =Subject Choice in Graduation, X_{12} = Marks in Graduation, X_{13} =Time spend in Prayer/ day, X_{14} =Time spend in watching T.V/day, X_{15} =Time spend in reading/ day and Y =Total marks obtained in Islamic studies examination

b_i = slope

U_i = stochastic error term.

Hypothesis 3: There is no association between study habits and subjects chosen for the study.

To compare academic performance, we use t-test and check the association between subjects and study habits, we use chi square test. To test the Hypothesis 3, we use

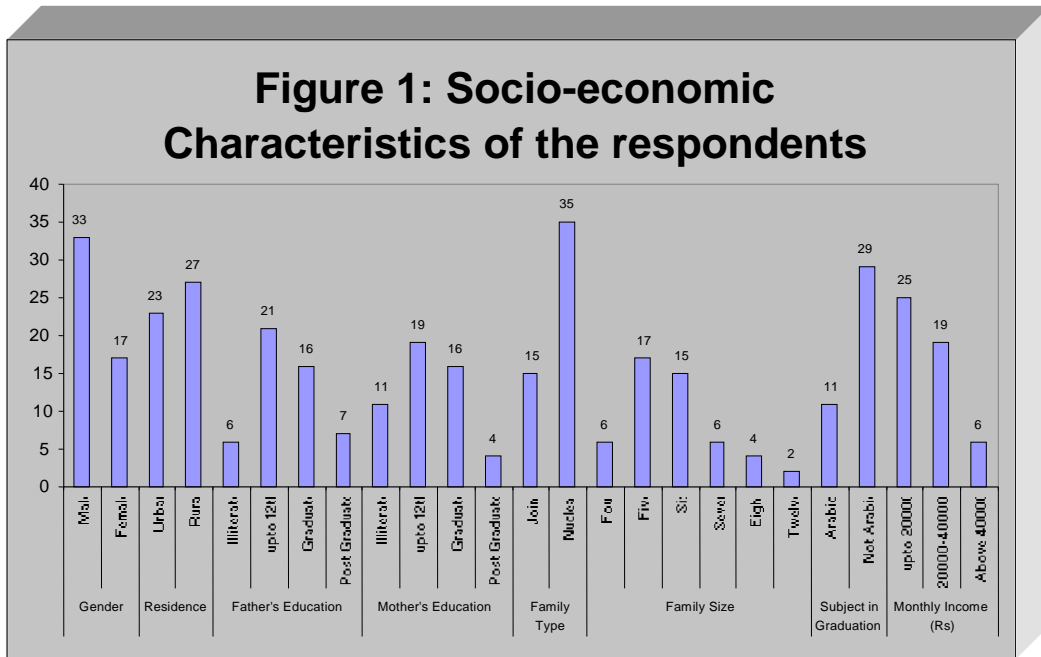
$$X^2 = \sum_{i=1}^2 \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i}$$

Chi square test (with usual notations) as given by

Where $X^2 \sim \chi_1^2$, o_i and e_i are observed and expected frequencies. We reject H_0 if p-value is less than specified level of significance.

Results and Discussion

The data presented in Figure 1 shows the distribution of study population as per the characteristics gender, residence, education level of parents, profession of parents, type of family, size of family and family income. Majority of the respondents having joint family, were male residing in rural areas. Maximum parents of the respondents were qualified upto 10+2. Further, maximum respondents have family size 5 having Arabic subject in graduation and were from the income group of Rs 20000.



The data presented in Table 2 shows the correlation between various study variables in case of respondents. It is observed that family income, choice of subject and time spend in watching T.V of the respondents are positively significantly correlated with gender. Residence and family size, monthly income and time spend in reading and marks obtained in examination, time spend in prayer and marks obtained in examination, time spend in reading and marks obtained in examination are significantly positively correlated. Further, it is observed that the other variables studied show low and non-significant correlation. The results obtained in our study are in agreement with the earlier studies.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis of the studied variables

Variables	Gender	Residence	Family Type	Family Size	Monthly Income (Rs)	Subject Choice	Time spend in Prayer	Time spend in Watching T.V	Time spend in Reading
Residence	-0.524**								
Family Type	0.193	-0.342*							
Family Size	-0.248	0.439*	0.158						
Monthly Income (Rs)	0.334*	-0.101	0.019	0.124					
Subject Choice	0.281*	-0.201	0.074	0.197	0.127				
Time spend in Prayer	-0.265*	-0.030	0.242	-0.008	0.203	0.196			
Time spend in Watching T.V	0.781**	-0.350*	0.143	-0.139	0.148	0.147	-0.312		
Time spend in Reading	-0.551**	0.189	0.017	0.242	0.298*	0.101	0.751*	-0.578	
Total Marks	-0.098	-0.070	0.245	0.221	0.564**	0.014	0.136	-0.277	0.408**

*= significant at 5% and **= significant at 1% level of significanc

Regression Analysis: Academic Performance in Islamic studies subject versus socio-economic characteristics

The regression equation is given by

$$Y = 1092 + 4.4 X_1 + 97.7 X_2 - 73.2 X_3 - 20.9 X_4 - 78.8 X_5 - 87.1 X_6 - 9.7 X_7 - 65.9 X_8 + 12.3 X_9 - 32.3 X_{10} - 32.4 X_{11} - 0.486 X_{12} - 92.9 X_{13} + 59.7 X_{14} + 103 X_{15}$$

Where

X_1 = Age, X_2 =Gender, X_3 =Residence, X_4 =Father's Education, X_5 =Mother's Education, X_6 =Profession of Father, X_7 =Profession of Mother, X_8 =Family type, X_9 =Family Size, X_{10} =Family Income, X_{11} =Subject Choice in Graduation, X_{12} = Marks in Graduation, X_{13} =Time spend in Prayer/ day, X_{14} =Time spend in watching T.V/day, X_{15} =Time spend in reading/ day and Y =Total marks obtained in Islamic studies examination.

The result of regression analysis is contained in Table 3 and gender, residence, mother’s education, father’s education, father’s profession, family type, marks obtained in graduation, time spend in prayer, watching T.V and reading by the respondents were found to have significant effect on the respondent’s academic performance in Islamic studies. The $R^2 = 90.3\%$ indicated that the factors in the model account for 90.3% of the variation. The results obtained are in agreement with the earlier studies (Hamilton-Ekeke et al, 2013).

Table 3: Regression for the effect of socio-economic characteristics on academic performance of students

Predictor	Coefficient	SE Coefficient	T-value	P-value
Constant	1092.5	113.6	9.62	<0.01
Age	4.42	16.94	0.26	>0.05
Gender	97.73	44.35	2.20	<0.05
Residence	-73.24	21.99	-3.33	<0.01
Father’s Education	-20.93	24.97	-0.84	>0.05
Mother’s Education	-78.81	31.03	-2.54	<0.05
Profession of Father	-87.08	25.38	-3.43	<0.01
Profession of Mother	-9.66	11.90	-0.81	>0.05
Family Type	-65.95	24.78	-2.66	<0.05
Family Size	12.33	6.58	1.88	>0.05
Family Income	-32.33	20.55	-1.57	>0.05
Subject Choice in Graduation	-32.44	18.13	-1.79	>0.05
Marks in Graduation	-0.49	0.06	-8.76	<0.01
Time spend in prayer	-92.88	24.11	-3.85	<0.01
Time spend in watching T.V	59.74	14.26	4.19	<0.01
Time spend in reading	102.94	19.33	5.33	<0.01
Multiple $R^2 = 90.3\%$, Adjusted $R^2 = 86.4\%$, $F = 23.25$, Sig. $F = 0.000$				

Dependent Variable: student academic performance.

It has been observed by using t-test statistically there is non-significant difference between the marks scored by Islamic studies students who have Arabic subject in graduation and those who do not have Arabic subject in graduation ($p > 0.05$).

The data presented in Table 4 reveals that majority of the respondents from both subjects spend at least one hour daily in prayer. It is observed that maximum of the respondents from Islamic Studies subject spend daily at least one hour in watching T.V and respondents from Fine Arts subject spend daily

two hours in watching T.V. Further, it is observed that maximum of the respondents from Islamic Studies subject and Fine Arts subject spend daily at least two hours in studies. Statistically, there is a non-significant difference in study habits of the students studying two different subjects ($p>0.05$). The results obtained are in agreement with the earlier studies (Shukakidze, 2013) as environment plays the role in study habits.

Table 4: Study habits of Islamic studies students and fine arts students

Study Habits	Time Spend (Hrs)	Number of Respondents (Islamic Studies Subject)	Time Spend (Hrs)	Number of Respondents (Fine Arts Subject)	Chi-square	P-value
Time Spend in Prayer/daily	≤1 Hr	33	≤1 Hr	28	3.564	>0.05
	Up to 2 Hr	9	Up to 2 Hr	17		
	> 2 Hr	8	> 2 Hr	5		
Time Spend in Watching T.V/daily	≤1 Hr	27	≤1 Hr	17	4.061	>0.05
	Up to 2 Hr	18	Up to 2 Hr	26		
	> 2 Hr	5	> 2 Hr	7		
Time Spend in Reading/Internet daily	≤1 Hr	5	≤1 Hr	9	1.594	>0.05
	Up to 2 Hr	27	Up to 3 Hr	23		
	Up to 3 Hr	12	> 3 Hr	13		
	> 3 Hr	6	> 3 Hr	5		

Conclusion

The art of drawing valid conclusions depends on how the data have been collected and analyzed. Depending upon the objective of the study, researcher has to choose an appropriate statistical method to test the hypothesis. There is a general assumption that students who combine Arabic with Islamic studies will perform much better than their colleagues who do not offer Arabic at the graduation level (Balogun, 1985). The findings of our study have shown that such an assumption cannot be generalized to all cases. With the present system of entrance examination in Kashmir valley, where objective tests are conducted to measure students' academic achievement, and with so many other factors at play, such as students' interest, exposure, etc, students who combine Arabic with Islamic studies may not demonstrate significant academic superiority over their counterparts who do not offer Arabic in Islamic Studies. The present system of examination create impression in Islamic studies students that they may not after all necessarily need to know Arabic to perform well in Islamic Studies tests. This, if happens, portends danger for whoever intends to pursue his/her study of Islamic studies

further because, the farther one goes in the study of Islamic studies the more necessary it becomes to have the knowledge of Arabic. From experience, it is this same erroneous impression that made many students to elect to offer Islamic studies initially at higher levels only to drop it later for deficiency in Arabic. A student who is bereft of knowledge of Arabic but relies solely on his/her proficiency in English language to get through in Islamic studies at higher level, will have what Doi (1979) referred to as academic problem. To avert this problem, there is the need to sensitize students of Islamic studies to the necessity of knowing Arabic language. In the present study, we find that socio-economic factors and home environment is directly related to the academic performance of the students. It has been observed that academic performance of Islamic studies students at the University level does not depend on the subjects chosen at graduate level. Further, on comparing study habits of students of Fine arts and Islamic studies students, statistically non-significant association was observed ($p>0.05$). This means home environment is very important and not subject choice for the intellectual development of a student. The results obtained in our study are in general with the agreement of the earlier studies. To conclude the results obtained in our study indicate that Arabic subject at gradual level does not play a significant role in academic performance of students in Islamic studies subject at university level. Further, study habits of students of Kashmir valley from different subjects does not vary significantly. Future research with the increased sample size may give clearer picture of the topic under study. To conclude the results obtained in our study indicate that Arabic subject at gradual level does not play a significant role in academic performance of students in Islamic studies subject at university level. Further, study habits of students of Kashmir valley from different subjects does not vary significantly. Future research with the increased sample size may give clearer picture of the topic under study.

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Recommendations

- i. The students should be encouraged to offer Arabic subject along with Islamic studies.
- ii. The fact that Arabic and Islamic studies subjects are interlined should not make Arabic student to be overconfident in any competitive examination in Islamic studies. English is the language of Institution

and this may not make any significant difference to those who do not offer Arabic subject at graduation level

- iii. It is strongly recommended that essay writing that involve writing in Arabic should be included in the examination system that will sensitize the students to the necessity of knowing Arabic subject
- iv. Religious peaceful home environment and not subject choice is important for the Intellectual development.

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