Research Article

IMPACT OF SOCIAL ATTRIBUTES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

The present study examines the relationship between social attributes and academic performance of university students. Social scientists and educationists have to look at the academic performance of students. In this paper social attributes like age, gender, rural-urban background and social origin to mention but a few have been included in order to understand how these factors affect students' performance in the university examinations. Interview method was employed for collecting data from a sample of 250 university students studying in different post graduate departments of Bangalore University. The findings of the study reveal that younger and female students perform better than their elder and male counterparts; urban students outperform rural students. It was also found that there is a statistically significant relationship between social origin and student academic performance.

INTRODUCTION

There has been lots of discussion and debate on why students attach so much of importance to higher grades in university examinations. In Indian society a lot of emphasis is laid on education as it is the only avenue for higher social mobility. Students desire to secure lucrative jobs in the best companies and institutions also depends upon better academic performance. Students' performance and the grades they obtain are often used to grade educational institutions. And educational institutions getting grants and admissions depend upon the performance students as well. It has become a trend, nowadays, for the students to score distinction marks in examinations irrespective of the stage of education they reach, leading to many causes and consequences. Thus, with the rapidly changing educational scenario in the world over, there is an opening for research exploring solutions to the challenge of enhancing student academic performance. Social motivation is an important sociological construct for learning and academic performance of the students in their related subjects. The relationship between social impact and academic performance is still unclear and can only be determined by continued observation of the students. Grades serve a number of important functions and provide information for seeking admission in university and institutions of higher learning.

Students are most essential asset for any educational institute as the social and economic development of the country is directly linked to students' academic performance (Mushtaqand Khan, 2012). According to Alfan and Othman (2005), students' academic performance in institutions of higher learning gentices the concern of organizations which are often assumed to be the "end-user" in the labor market. However, due to the on-going changes that are taking place in the university education there is a need to update and revise the assessment of academic performance.

Importance of Higher Education in influencing economic growth and social development has been acknowledged worldwide. Battle and Lewis (2002) highlighted that education plays a significant role in the growth of human resources and is closely associated with an individual's well-being and opportunities for better living. Education helps individuals to acquire knowledge and skills which intern increase their productivity and efficiency. Similarly, Saxton (2002) noted that the increase in productivity also enables individuals to find new sources of earning and improve the quality of their life. As a matter of fact, it appears the quality of the whole higher education system revolves around and depends upon the academic performance of students. Various other outcomes are also expected, though a lot of time and effort have been made

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to help students achieve better results. Better academic performance shown in higher grades acts as an emotional tonic.

Review of Literature

Jayaram (1984) investigated the social determinants of academic achievement of students in higher education. He stated that there is a close relation between merit and socio-economic factors. He found that both initial merit and latter academic performance are influenced in various degrees by certain socio-economic factors. In the light of these he argued that meritocracy instead of cutting across the ascriptive variables and social stratification tends to superimpose itself and reinforce them. Vast research studies have revealed such factors as Age (Simpson 2006),(Golding and Donaldson 2006), (Vandamme, Meskens and Superby 2007); Gender (Anderson 1994), (Veitch, 2004); Father's education (Vandamme, Meskens and Superby 2007), (Dekker, Pechenizky and Vleeshouwers 2009). Now it again becomes necessary that above assumptions could be subjected to scientific inquiry. Gender is a strong predictor of human conduct and many differences have been documented on attitude and behavior that affect academic performance in between males and females, (Block 2006). Academic performance differs between boys and girls in basic subjects like Social Studies both in primary and secondary levels. Calsmith (2007) highlighted that identifying gender differences in academic performance is a complex task. Messies (2006) contended that there are gender differences in intellectual functioning that attempts to account for both mean differences and differences in the correlation patterns between the genders. Moreover, others scholars who hold the opinion that, males perform better than females in academics, while others argue vice-versa. Veinon (2002) reported that, many comparisons show average scores of boys and girls to be the same on the general intelligence test. He concluded that, girls do a little better on most verbal tests and on tests involving rote memory than boys.

Significance of the Study

Researchers repeatedly called attention to such social and other factors as students' aptitude, attendance, gender bias, study, talents, the quality of teaching style and etc., have lot of bearing on academic performance. Students' academic performance affects the quality of human resources within the society. Therefore, identifying the factors leading to the students' academic achievement is very important. Social origin, a synonym to socio-economic status is the blend of economic and social measures of an individual's work experience and the economic and social position of an individual or family in connection to others on the premise of caste, father's education and family income. Thus, for the investigation of social origin, the caste, household income, education of father and occupation are checked in addition to consolidated wage contrasted and a person, when their own attributes are assessed.

Objectives of the Study

The Objectives of the Study Include

1. To analyze the educational background of the university students
2. To ascertain the nature and role of social attributes in the academic performance of university students.

METHODOLOGY

The present study has been conducted among post graduate students on the Jnanabharathi campus Bangalore University, Bangalore. A sample of 250 students was drawn from different post graduate departments located on the campus. The data were collected through an interview schedule on the basis of simple stratified random sampling. Data were analysed by means of using frequency distributions, percentages, C test and analysis of variance with SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present research article probes to portray the educational performance of the post-graduate students leading to their present status. Any sociological study on students cannot afford to ignore the educational aspects, dimensions or traits pertaining to their community.

Educational Background

The place of schooling is an important aspect considered in this paper. It can be found from the analysis that 42.8 percent of the respondents have come from village schools. However, an equal proportion (25.6 percent) of them have come from schools in towns and from the city based schools (26 percent). And only 5.6 percent is from the metropolitan area. This is quite expected, because primary education is available in villages and towns. People do not go to cities for primary education unless the family itself is relocated to a city which is a rare possibility. With regard to place of college, a majority (51.2 percent) of the sample has reported to be drawn from town based colleges followed by a significant proportion (34.4 percent) in city based colleges. Generally, colleges are setup only in towns and cities and this is reflected in the place of school and in the place of colleges as well.

In the present study respondents were asked to indicate the type of educational institutions that they have studied since their primary education. The data on the type of educational institution indicate that the majority of the respondents that is nearly 57 (56.8 percent) of them have completed their primary education in government primary schools. More than half of them (54.4 percent) have attended government schools for secondary education.

**Table 1** Types of Educational Institution and Stages

Types	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Intermediate Education	Graduation
Private	43.2	45.6	39.6	34.4
Government	56.8	54.4	60.4	65.6
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

It is quite interesting to state that, the proportion of attending government pre university and degree colleges is increasing as the data indicate that, 60 (60.4 percent) of the respondents completed their pre university education from government pre university colleges and nearly two-thirds (65.6 percent) of them have completed their degrees from government degree colleges. This trend of moving towards government educational institutions as they move to their higher education might be attributed to the fact that, Government of Karnataka has opened more than 183 government degree colleges at all the Taluka and Hobli level with all the facilities and also introduced all the courses in those colleges in the recent past. And also it could be

observed that the government colleges are well equipped with all the basic amenities and qualified staff. At the same time, it could also be attributed to the widely held assumption that, the private institutions demand more amount of donations which they cannot afford. It is argued that normally the medium of education in the pre-college stage being the mother tongue; it is academically unsound to require the students to switch over to English as the medium of instruction as soon as they enter the university campus. Such switch over, affects the quality of education. Contrary to this argument the data on medium of instructions of the respondents since their primary education to post-graduate education indicate that, the percentage of switching over to English medium from regional languages is steadily increasing.

Educational Grades

The marks obtained by post-graduate students in their respective graduate examinations are an important yardstick in determining their academic achievement or performance. Needless to add that the grades they obtain in exams determine their future academic and occupational career.
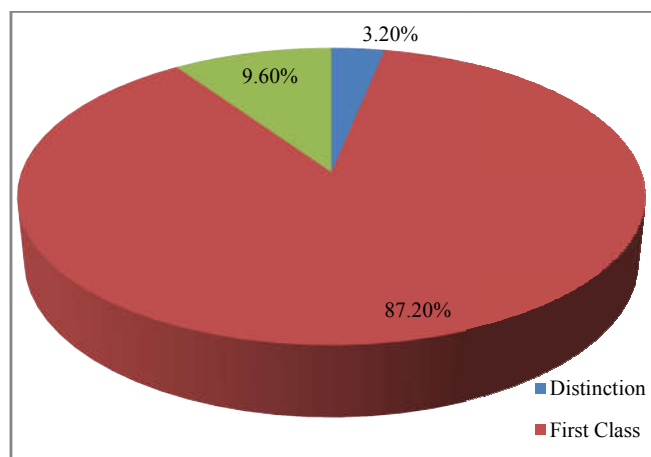
Figure-1 Educational Grades

While analysing the educational grades of post-graduate students, it was found that an overwhelming majority (87.2 percent) of them got first class, whereas a small proportion (9.6 percent) of them secured second class and only 3.2 percent got distinction, which is above first class. It is assumed that competition to perform better in the modern world commensurate with the grades achieved by them.

To begin with, the educational grade or academic achievement or performance of post-graduate students at their graduate level, which is a determining factor in joining or securing a seat at university post-graduate department of studies, is taken into account. An attempt as such, is made in this paper to ascertain the extent of level of the educational grades by considering their marks obtained in their degree examinations and variations along with such traits as age, gender, rural-urban background social origin. Thus, it is intended to examine whether age of students has anything to do with the educational grade they achieve.

Table 2 Educational Grade achieved at Graduation and Age

Educational Grade	Age Composition			Total
	Young	Moderate	Old	
Distinction	7 (3.8)	1 (2.1)	-	8(3.2)
First Class	166 (90.7)	38 (80.9)	14 (70.0)	218 (87.2)
Second Class	10 (5.5)	8 (17.0)	6 (30.0)	24 (9.6)
Total	183 (100.0)	47 00.0)	20 (100.0)	250 (100.0)

X^2=16.82; d.f=4; C=0.259; Significant at 0.01 level.

It can be found from the table-2 that a relatively higher proportion of young students that is 3.8 percent have got distinction. Whereas the third category called elder students got no distinction, and only 2.1 percent of middle category got distinction. It means younger the age of students higher is the chances of obtaining higher grades. Similarly, a higher proportion of elder students that is 30 percent getting low grades that is second class. Even with regard to achieving first class at the graduate level, which is a decisive factor in getting entry into post-graduate courses, young students have an upper hand (90.7 percent) compared to their moderately aged (80.9 percent) and elder (70.0 percent) counterparts. Thus, age is significantly correlated with a student's performance in examinations is reflected in their higher grades. Lower is the age higher is the grade, higher the age lower the grade.'

Further, an attempt is made to analyse the correlation between educational grades and gender of the respondents.

Table 3 Educational Grades and Gender

Educational Grade	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Distinction	3(2.4)	5(4.0)	8(3.2)
First Class	103(82.4)	115(92.0)	218(87.2)
Second Class	19(15.2)	5(4.0)	24(9.6)
Total	**125(100.0)**	**125(100.0)**	**250(100.0)**

X^2= 9.32; d.f= 2; C= 0.193; Significant at 0.01 Level.

It could be observed from the data presented in table-3 that slightly higher number of girls that is 5 post-graduate female students getting distinction when compared to 3 male students getting the same. Further, with regard to the matter of getting first class, female students have an upper hand (92.0 percent) compared to their male counterparts (82.4 percent). Further, relatively higher proportion (15.2 percent) of male students have got second classes, compared to negligible proportion (4 percent) of female students getting the same class. It is generally believed that female students get higher grades than male students, so the correlation between gender and educational grades is found through statistical significance. Thus, boys are associated with relatively low grades when compared to girls. The study finds that a smaller number of female students manage to enter higher education and when they do so, they enter with higher scores. Once they are admitted, they excel in their studies and outperform their male counterparts. Such trend could also be attributed to the fact that female students are liberated from their domestic obligations and compulsion to perform better.

Another aspect analysed here is whether place of origin is anything to do with grades. Since it is generally assumed that urban students perform better than the rural students. This seems to be borne out by the data presented in the following table-4.

Table-4 Educational Grades and Rural Urban Background

Educational Grade	Rural Urban Background			Total
	Rural	Semi Urban	Urban	
Distinction	2(1.4)	1(2.0)	5(8.2)	8(3.2)
First Class	120(87.0)	43(84.3)	55(90.2)	218(87.2)
Second Class	16(11.6)	7(13.7)	1(1.6)	24(9.6)
Total	138(100.0)	51(100.0)	61(100.0)	250(100.0)

X^2= 11.85; d.f= 4; C=0.217; Significant at 0.05 Level.

As can be seen from the data that an overwhelming majority (90.2 percent) of the urban post-graduate students have secured first class marks compared to their semi-urban and rural counterparts. Further, they are also in the frontline to obtain distinction marks as well. However, the students drawn from rural areas are relatively found more in the second class category (11.6 percent) compared to their urban counterparts (1.6 percent). Thus, in the case of students getting different educational grades, the place of birth of students appears to be very significant. Irrespective of the place of origin overwhelming majority of the students getting first class is something which needs to be explained. One possible reason seems for getting first class is very easy than achieving distinction. This is made possible partly due to erratic valuation, and partly due to both students and teachers taking first class as taken for granted. Students getting first class and second class might have happened by almost the default. On the whole, education grades do not really matter much, given the situation encouraging the practice of liberal evaluation and declining standards in the university educational scenario.

Further, the data pertaining to educational grades and social origin have been cross tabulated. It is interesting to observe whether educational grades at the degree level of the post-graduate students have anything to do with their socio-economic status. It is generally assumed that students of higher social origin tend to perform better and vice versa.

Table 5 Educational Grades and Social Origin

Educational Grade	Social Origin			Total
	Low	Moderate	High	
Distinction	1(1.3)	-	7(12.3)	8(3.2)
First Class	70(88.6)	104(91.2)	44(77.2)	218(87.2)
Second Class	8(10.1)	10(8.8)	6(10.5)	24(9.6)
Total	79(100.0)	114(100.0)	57(100.0)	250(100.0)

X^2= 20.06; d.f= 4; C= 0.283; Significant at 0.01 level.

It can be seen from the table-5 that; this assumption is reiterated by the data presented. Comparatively, seven students of the sample with high social origin got a distinction, while only one student of low social origin got the same result. In case of first class, the correlation is slightly different that is students from moderate social origin (91.2 percent) and low social origin (88.8 percent) have performed better compared to their counterparts from higher economic status (77.2 percent). In the case of students getting second class, there is not much significant correlation because more or less 10 percent of the students of all the three categories are distributed in the second class category of performance. Overall, there is not much significant correlation barring a high percentage of high social origin students getting distinction.

The study basically seeks to explore the distribution and the effects of social origin on achievement of post-graduate students. In the light of the findings, two observations could be inferred here; on the one hand, we have more students achieving distinction from higher social origin, which means they enjoy the conducive atmosphere both at home and outside to perform better and a sizable proportion of low social origin achieving first class may be due to their competitive spirits. However, it is recommended that a campaign may be lunched for creating awareness among parents to enhance their socio-economic status in order to see their children are able to perform at distinction level as well.

CONCLUSION

Generally, University Education, is designed primarily to produce professionals who are capable of creatively applying knowledge, skills and techniques in their concerned area of knowledge in public and private sector organizations in order to achieve national and international competitiveness. The educational grades, in the form of distinction, first and second class marks, achieved by the university students at their graduate level were taken in to consideration for measuring their academic performance. The academic performances of the students that have gone through the program form the crux of the study. Specifically, this study examines the impact of social variables such as age, gender, rural-urban background and social origin on the students' academic performance. The study found that these social attributes do significantly influence students' academic performances. The findings reveal that the young students at higher level of education tend to perform better in their examinations. Now there is a growing trend of higher number female students seeking entry in the field of higher education. Apart from this, it is heartening to note that female students outperform their male counterparts. The social origin, being a composite variable, composed of caste, father's education and family income, have a say in determining the academic performance of the students at higher level of education. These findings will be useful for teachers, parents, administrators and other stake holders to engage in interventions in educational institutions of higher learning to boost the students' academic performance.

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