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CORRELATION BETWEENAUTONOMOUS LEARNING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A CASE OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The current study considered the four constructs of the autonomous learning i.e., learner desire, learner resourcefulness, learner initiative and learner persistence as identifies by (Confessore& Park, 2004) and to examine its relationship with academic performance of the students. Thus, correlation research design was followed in this study. For achieving the study objectives, data was collected from the bachelors and masters level students studying at the discipline of education in public and private sectors universities located in Lahore. A sample of 350 students was chosen in the current study from two public and two private sector universities through convenient sampling technique. The findings of the study revealed that all the four constructs were having significant positive relationship with the academic performance of the students. However, the study revealed that desire construct of the autonomous learning shown significant correlation at level of ($p < .01$), indicating that there are 99 percent chances that the results are correct, while the value of the correlation coefficient for resourcefulness, initiative and persistence was significant at ($p < .05$) meaning that there were 95 percent chances that the results are correct. The study recommended that the educational institutions should allow the students and provide them with such environment facilitated with the autonomous learning.

Background of the Study

At the present time, new strategies, and forms for delivering knowledge are focused to enable the learners for directing their own learning. The term

“autonomous learning” is extensively used in education (Hedge, 2017). The core concept of the autonomous learning was introduced earlier by Holec (1996). He stated that autonomous learning is considered as ability of the individual to take charge of own learning. Likewise, as stated by Lee (2016), the meaning to take charge of our own learning is to choose the content of the learning and the methods and procedures that are used in the learning to achieve the learning goals. This means that the autonomous learners can decide their own learning and to decide that when, what, why and how to learn. Thus, the learners take the right and have the power for their own learning (Little, 2018).

The capacity of the autonomous learning is like the concept of the Littlewood (2003), who states that the autonomous learning is the willingness and the ability of the learners for assuming their own responsibility of learning. Such ability contains, the knowledge and the skills to carry out the choices of the learners for the appropriate learning. While willingness of the individuals refers to the motivation that is used by the learners to take responsibility of their learning. Gardner and Miller (2016) stated that the learners having autonomy in their learning are able for initiating and implementing the learning programs for their own self. The autonomous learners set some goals and targets for themselves and then find the opportunities to achieve these targets and goals whether inside the classroom or outside the classroom. This enables the learners to become more conscious towards the leaning and make them more organized and such learners try to avoid the unconscious performance. Thus, the most central and crucial point of the learning is the ability that how to learn independently (Little, 2018).

As indicated previously, there is a need of certain capacity of the leaning for the reason to become successful autonomous learner. While Thanasoulas (2018), has stated in his study that there are certain conditions that needs to be completed for the reason to accomplish the autonomous learning. Like, the learner should know about the strategies of the learning and should be trained regarded the metacognitive and the cognitive strategies of the learning. Likewise, the learners should have the ability to define the way to achieve the learning goals. Similarly, the learning material that are to be used should be authentic and the learners should have the motivation towards its performance. Thus, in order to achieve higher performance by the students in the process of the learning, these activities should be fulfilled. The autonomous learning is thus linked to the academic performance through the higher perceived control over the learning process by the learners (D'Ailly, 2016). Considering the significance of learning autonomy, the current study investigates the relationship between students' autonomous learning and their academic performance at university level. For this purpose, the current study considered the four components of the autonomous learning, as indicated by (Confessore& Park, 2004) in Learner Autonomy Profile Short-Form (LAF_SF) as Desire, Resourcefulness, Initiative, and Persistence.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of students' autonomous learning at university level?
2. What is the relationship between students' autonomous learning and their academic performance?
3. What is the gender wise difference of students' autonomous learning?

Literature review

Autonomous Learning

The concept of autonomy is rooted in the work of Houle (1961), who identified the reasons why adults seem to pursue learning. Some, he argued, saw

learning as a means to an end, while others participated in learning because of an

enjoyment of the activity and interaction. The most immediate predecessors to the construct of learner autonomy are found in the self-directed learning literature. Bandura's (1977) research on self-efficacy, Tough's (1981) focus on learning without the aid of an instructor, Spear & Mocker's (1981) research on environmental factors of self-directed learning, and Long's (1992) championing of the need for the study of self-directed learning. Each of these supporting theories are reviewed here to provide a context for the development of learner autonomy as a construct.

Learner autonomy profile

Confessore (1991) first introduced the concept of learner autonomy in a selection process to choose gifted high school students to participate in an early college summer arts program. In order to make the selections, he used four criteria: Desire, Resourcefulness, Initiative, and Persistence. Desire describes the individual's motivation to participate in a learning experience, while resourcefulness means the learner's intention to be resourceful. Initiative describes the person's willingness to initiate learning and persistence describes the person's intention to continue learning activities. These four criteria later became the four components of a learner autonomy construct that could be measured with the use of an instrument Confessore developed called the Learning Profile Questionnaire (LPQ). Confessore & Confessore (1994) then conducted a series of research studies aimed at solidifying the connection between learner autonomy and the four components.

This was followed by development of separate instruments to test each component (Carr, 1999; Ponton, 1999; Derrick, 2001 and Meyer, 2001). When combined, these separate instruments form a Learner Autonomy Profile (LAP) that seeks to understand a learner's behavioral intentions rather than simply their observed actions.

Academic Performance

Academic performance has been a central issue in education throughout recorded history (Plato, *Apology*, 399 B.C.). While it is daunting to try to make sense of all the literature in this area, the dialogue tends to be centered along four major themes: (1) meaning and measurement, (2) summative vs. formative measurement, (3) underperformance and overperformance, and (4) predictors of performance. This section seeks to review the issues centered on these themes.

Lavin (1965, p. 18) provides a useful definition of the term academic performance: "As traditionally used, the term 'academic performance' refers to some method of expressing a student's scholastic standing. Usually this is a grade for a course, an average for a group of courses in a subject area, or an average for all courses expressed on a 0-to-100 or other quantitative scale." In most cases, according to Bruce and Neville (1997), "accomplishment" is sometimes used in place of "achievement". According to them educational achievement is measured by standardized achievement test developed for subjects. What this means is that academic achievement is measured in relation to what is attained at the end of a course, since it is the accomplishment of medium or long-term objective of education. The bottom line in academic achievement discourse is based on grades and test scores. Students may not be permitted to graduate from high school, for example, if they are unable to maintain a specific grade point average or percentage score (Steve, 2000).

The most highly valued method of determining whether a successful completion has taken place for a learner is quantitative in nature. In other words, numbers (in the context of grading and testing) are used to indicate whether a student has been successful or unsuccessful in mastering academic content and skills (Simpson and Weiner, 2003).

Method and Procedure

The correlational design with quantitative approach of research was chosen in this study. A sample size of 350 students was determined. At first stage, two public and two private sector universities were selected located in Lahore, then students of BS, Master and M.Phil in discipline of education were selected from each university through convenient sampling technique. The Learner Autonomy Profile-Short Form (LAP-SF), developed by Confessore and Park (2004), was adapted to measure the students' autonomous learning. The instrument measures the four components of autonomous learning i.e., desire, resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence that were identified by Derrick (2001), Ponton (1999), Meyer (2001) and Carr (1999). Academic Performance was measured through CGPA of the students. Demographic analysis was used for determining the attributes of the study respondents. In descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation were used to determine the level of the autonomous learning in the students. Independent t-test was also

used in the study. Finally, Pearson product moment correlation (Pearson r) was used for the reason to determine the relation between students' autonomous learning and academic performance of the students.

Results

Research Question No 1:

What is the level of students' autonomous learning at university level?

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics for sub scales of students' autonomous learning*

Sub scales	Mean	S. D
Desire	3.97	0.65
Resourcefulness	3.74	0.65
Initiative	3.69	0.68
Persistence	4.09	0.60

The above table is showing that the value of the mean for desire construct was 3.97, and value of the standard deviation for the desire construct was 0.65 (Mean=3.97, SD=0.65). Similarly, the value of the mean for resourcefulness construct was 3.74, and value of the standard deviation for the resourcefulness construct was 0.65 (Mean=3.74, SD=0.65). The value of the mean for initiative construct was 3.69, and value of the standard deviation for the initiative construct was 0.68 (Mean=3.69, SD=0.68). Likewise, the value of the mean for persistence construct was 4.09, and value of the standard deviation for the value of the standard deviation for persistence construct was 0.60 (Mean=4.09, SD=0.60s). The above results show that the level of the students was higher towards the persistence sub-scale of the autonomous learning. While of the level of the students towards the initiative was the lowest.

Research Question No.2:

What is the relationship between students' autonomous learning and their academic performance at university level?

Table 2: *Relationship between students' autonomous learning and their academic performance*

Variables	CGPA	Learner Desire	Learner Resourcefulness	Learner Initiative	Learner Persistence
CGPA	1				
Learner Desire	.24**	1			
Learner Resourcefulness	.30*	.10**	1		
Learner Initiative	.31*	.21**	.27*	1	
Learner Persistence	.13*	-.10**	.38*	-.21**	1

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The above table is showing that value of the correlation coefficient between the learner desire construct of autonomous learning and CGPA of the students is 0.24 ($p < .01$), showing that there exists significant positive weak relationship between learner desire and academic performance of the students. Likewise, value of the correlation coefficient between the Learner resourcefulness construct of autonomous learning and academic performance

of the students is 0.30 ($p < .05$), showing that there is a significant positive moderate relationship between learner resourcefulness and academic performance of the students. Similarly, value of the correlation coefficient between the Learner initiative constructs of autonomous learning and academic performance of the students is 0.31 ($p < .05$), showing that there is a significant positive moderate relationship between learner initiative and academic performance of the students. Finally, the table is showing that the correlation coefficient between the Learner persistence construct of autonomous learning and academic performance of the students is 0.13 ($p < .05$), showing that there is a significant positive moderate relationship between learner persistence and academic performance of the students.

Research Question No 3:

What is the gender wise difference of students' autonomous learning at university level?

Table 3: *Difference in autonomous learning of Male and Female students*

Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	df	p-value
Male	131	118.42	20.71	.580	741	.555
Female	219	117.45	21.15			
Total	350					

The above table is indicating the results of the Independent Sample t-test. The results given in the table showed that there was no significant difference in autonomous learning of male (Mean=118.42, SD= 20.71) and female (Mean= 117.45, SD 21.15; $t(350) = .580$, $p = .555$). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean differences = 1.25, 95% CI: -2.90.09 to 5.39) was very high (eta squared = .005).

Discussion

The Concept of the autonomous learning lies in the four constructs i.e., desire, resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence (Carr, 1999; Derrick, 2001). The autonomous learner has these four attributes in him while learning. Findings from the present study shown that the respondents of the study were associated with the autonomous learning. As it is a common practice that the students of university level are more independent and become autonomous in their studies. The study indicated that the overall the components of the learner autonomy profile short form (LAP-SF) were having positive relation with the CGPA of the students. These results are in consistence with the results from (Lowe, 2009). This positive relation is due to the reason that the constructs of the autonomous learning i.e., desire construct, resourcefulness construct, initiative construct, and the persistence construct are generally considered as the contributors towards the academic success. Similarly, the agreeableness of the respondents towards the desire, resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence construct shows that the learner autonomy profile short form (LAP-SF) is a best tool for the measurement of the students' autonomous learning.

Similarly, as generally CGPA is regarded as the most appropriate proxy for the measurement of the academic performance (Grove, Wasserman, 2006).

But this stands for a fraction of the change in the academic performance overall thus CGPA is a single measure. Conversely, LAP-SF that correlated significantly with the CGPA having four constructs and allowed a meaningful relation for the academic performance of the students.

The study also revealed that all the four constructs were having significant positive relation in which the desire was significant at ($p < .01$) and the resourcefulness, initiative and persistence were significant at ($p < .01$) showing that the chances that the results of desire are correct are more i.e., 99 percent while there are 95 percent chances for the resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence. This finding is in line with the study of Yaushua (2004) stating that the desire drive behavior of the individual to lead towards certain attitude that drive the intention of the activity.

The relation of the four constructs of the autonomous learning with the academic performance especially in the traditional setting of measurement in in line with previous studies (Mouw&Khanna, 2003). It is evident through the literature that the learning autonomy predicts the positive attributes of the students and thus having significant relation with the academic performance of the students.

Conclusion

Being a vital part of the learning process, autonomous learning aims for developing lasting learning behavior that enhances the performance of the students. the current study intended to explore the relationship between students' autonomous learning and their academic performance at university level. The current study considered the four constructs of the autonomous learning i.e. learner desire, learner resourcefulness, learner initiative and learner persistence as identifies by (Confessore& Park, 2004) and to examine its relationship with the CGPA of the students. The findings of the study revealed that all the four constructs were having significant positive relationship with the academic performance of the students. However, the study revealed that desire construct of the autonomous learning shown significant correlation at level of ($p < .01$), indicating that there are 99 percent chances that the results are correct, while the value of the correlation coefficient for resourcefulness, initiative and persistence was significant at ($p < .05$) meaning that there were 95 percent chances that the results are correct. The study recommended that the educational institutions should allow the students and provide them with such environment facilitated with the autonomous learning.

Recommendations

Although the current research has several recommendations. Firstly, the current study was limited to the students of the discipline of education and considered only the bachelors and masters level students so it is recommended that other studies should include more disciplines in the investigation. Similarly, the academic performance was measured through one measure i.e., CGPA. More studies should consider other proxies for the measurement of the academic performance. Similarly, the current study was confined to the universities in Lahore, while future studies should also include students from

other locations and contexts. Likewise, Based on the findings of the study, below sections presents the theoretical and practical implications of the study.

Theoretical Implications

Firstly, most of the literature relevant to the autonomous learning is associated with the measurement tool of the autonomous learning and thus the relation of the autonomous learning with the academic performance of the students is not determined especially in context of Pakistan. Thus, the current study has significance in a way that it relates the autonomous learning with the CGPA of the students empirically. Like, the literature on the autonomous learning is mostly focused on the needs of the lower grade students while the current study provided in-depth investigation in the context of the higher education.

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