

A Multiple Analysis Study of Sri Lankan Tamil Students' Academic Success: Considering Family Support, Teachers' Guidance and Self- Esteem.

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ABSTRACT

Academic success is getting far more important in Sri Lankan Tamil society. Parents and teachers are trying for better educational achievement of Tamil students. Most of the students are blaming their parents and teachers for their failure in academic progress. Students' self-esteem levels have also been a serious concern in academic achievement in many areas of research. Therefore this study was designed to determine the relationship between academic achievements considering with family support, teachers' guidance and self esteem. Qualitative and Quantitative methods were used to collect appropriate data for this study. 96 samples were selected for this study and conducted self esteem scale test also. This study applied multiple analyses as its methodology.

The study reveals that, importantly 100% of students have a perception that self-esteem is a deciding factor for their academic success. (%). Gender different also is a value factoring in self-esteem level in Tamil society. As a main finding of this research is that, students' level of self-esteem has to be building up because only 9% has high self-esteem in the universities. As far as other researchers found it will help them not only for their academic success but also for their personal life development. This research explores to find new ideas in creating suitable methods for Tamil students' academic achievement in psychological and sociological manner. This study shall greatly help parents and teachers of Tamil students to understand the importance of self-esteem in academic performance, and endeavour should contribute to Tamil parents and teachers in getting to know the level of self-esteem of Tamil students and can help to build up this to a required level.

Key Words: Academic Success, Family Support, Teachers' Guidance, Self Esteem, Educational Achievements and Tamil Students

University of Jaffna

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic success is getting far more important in Sri Lankan Tamil society. Parents and teachers are trying for better educational achievement of Tamil students. Among Tamil society, appropriate and correct understandings have to be developed in handling of students' academic attainments. In our society parents and teachers are struggling in dealing with students for better academic achievements. Most of the students are blaming their parents and teachers for their failure in academic progress. Students' self-esteem levels also have been a serious concern in academic achievement as a deciding factor.

There are many factors influencing students' academic attainment. Family support, Teachers' guidance and self-esteem have direct involvement in better educational accomplishments. Supervision of students is carried out firstly by parents and secondly by teachers. Students' behavioural control can be closely monitored by them. Most of Tamil students get straight interaction from their parents and teachers in relation to academic activities, for an example: subject selection, additional classes and financial aid. In many cases parents and teachers do not understand their students' cognitive capacity. This creates very critical circumstances for every student. It is widely accepted that parents, teachers and students should have healthy interpersonal relationship for successful educational environment.

All over the world this type of research has been carried out with different ethnic group of students. For to the knowledge of the researcher no such study has been done among Sri Lankan Tamil students. The findings of this research may help Sri Lankan Tamil society to make suitable and much needed education policies regarding academic success. In my research, participating students were given enough freedom to express their views and

expectations and use the chance to reveal their needs from parents and teachers. This research endeavour gave a opportunity to Jaffna University students to rethink about their support which will make towards higher level of attainment from their parents and teachers. It is a serious matter some students do not know how to gain good support what they needed and some talented students also facing crisis for better academic achievement due to lack of awareness in receiving support.

Literature Review

The literature provides consistent evidence that parent involvement, student – teacher relationship and self-esteem have significant effects in academic success. Research and common sense both indicate that increased parental involvement has positive impact on student academic achievement. Teachers' guidance is directly associated with student success. Different studies have reached the conclusion that academic achievement and self esteem are positively correlated (Bankston and Zhou, 2002, Lockett and Harrel, 2003).

Family support for students' academic success

Research has indicated that Parents' involvement in students' academic achievements is a supporting factor [1]but the level of their involvement is decreasing in students' higher education. Most of the time this lack of involvement is due to a different life style of family structure in which both parents are working to gain sustainable financial status in such instances guidance and time are limited; often there are financial restrains, as well (LaBahn). These factors are being significantly contributed to students' academic success. Students' attendance, using verity of resources like computer facilities and internet, having good standard of psychical and mental health and other important facilities are depend on family support in student academic achievement.

Many researchers welcome family support in students' academic attainments.[2],[1] 'Parental involvement, in almost in any form, produce measurable gains in student achievement'[2] (Dixon, 1992). It is very clear family support is needed for students' higher education especially in exams. Some researchers have even suggested that parental influence on a student's education extends beyond the early years into adolescence[3], strongly claims that increased parental involvement is the key to improving academic achievement of children.

The literature on achievement clearly has shown that parent education is essential in creating students academic success in the educational system. In many ways parent education can influence children's education

via different routs, through the transmission of cognitive competencies, creating chances, and beliefs and attitude regarding values and benefits of education. ' Parents' view on school and education which are observed by children may effect children's views either directly or through such indirect process as parents' engagement in cultural or educational activities [4]. The level of parental education has a great role to play in students' academic success. According to Georgiou [5] 'Parents with high education degrees are typically more involved in their children's academic careers, thereby placing more emphasis on academics than those parents with lower education degrees and less involvement in their children's education. Tavani and Losh [6] found that parental education was an important variable in predicting high school students' academic success.

There is also enough evidence to support the premise that parents' education plays a very significant part in children's lives in various cultures. Hortacsu [7] investigated the relationships between parents' education levels, parents' beliefs concerning children's cognitions related to themselves and their relationship, and academic achievement. Hortacsu [7] found the level of mother's education was directly related to child perceptions of external control, and academic achievement. The level of father's education was directly linked only to child perception of efficacy.

Many researches which were carried out all over world demonstrate the importance of parental education to students' academic achievement. A considerable relationship was also found between parental education and academic achievement of Xhosa children from South Africa regardless of whether the family was polygynous or monogamous (Cherian, 2001). Parents can support to children for their academic achievement in various ways such as intellectual support, providing resources(e.g. computers, books), financial support, monitoring and structuring their children's time around academic activities, spending time discussing academic related matters, and assisting them with academic works.

Style of parenting has important impacts on children's academic success. It can be differentiate between behavioural control and psychological control. Behavioural control is considered to assist development by providing necessary supervision, therefore psychological control is seen inhabiting development via an excess of control [8] . Active parental involvement happens through behavioural control which can be maximizing children's academic success across grades, gender, and ethnic groups. Psychological control helps to children's academic success in several ways, such as thinking

process, self expression, emotions and attachment to parents. These factors make child's ability to become independent and to develop a healthy sense of self and personal recognition.

Family is a basic and first social structure of a child and makes direct and strong interactions especially in academic achievement. Therefore family support is considered as primary context for students' in cognitive development.

Teachers' guidance and students' academic attainments

Teachers are directly involved in students' academic progress in school and Universities. Their guidance is completely influenced in students' performance. It is believed that best teacher makes best student. Teachers' knowledge, experience, teaching style, making classroom in comfortable manner, preparation and guidance for exams are mostly expected for student academic success. In my opinion most students expect that their teachers should think more extensively about their behaviour and its potential effects upon students. Ames [9]. emphasised that 'Teachers make attributions about their own performance in responses to their own behaviour and beliefs as well as to student performance'.

Many researchers [10] established through their research that teachers' use of attributions in the academic performance domain had a positive impact on children ratings of academically-related norms. In many occasion students reveal that proper teachers' guidance helped them for higher level of academic success. It is also strongly believed in Tamil community. Students are trying to get brilliant and skilled teachers in schools and personal classes.

Schools and universities provide important context for formal learning. Once students are in school or university, their academic engagement and achievement outcomes become influenced by many factors associated with the context. One of these main factors is the quality of relationship with teachers with whom students have direct interactions often during the study period. Due to this circumstance, students may expect teachers to support significantly for their academic progress. In fact teachers' adverse interactions can lead to students for better academic attainments.

Teachers guide students in several ways for better academic achievement. Giving feed back, exam preparation, personal appointments to clear doubts in subjects, and maintaining healthy inter personal relationship. All these activities can make students

more confident for studying hard for academic success. It is generally believed quality teachers make good students towards higher academic target. When teacher approaches students in motivational ways students also try to gain for better achievement. Psychological control by teachers on students will make change even next level of attainments from previous level. Schools and Universities concentrate on teaching skills of teachers for increasing students' academic success. Teacher- student relationship inevitably plays an important role in student academic success. In a student perspective teacher is a main guide not only for academic achievement but also overall personality development of every student.

Self esteem and academic achievement

The literature provides consistent evidence that self esteem has the most important effect or relationship with academic achievement (Miraei, 2005; PourSina, 2003). Different studies have reached the conclusion that academic achievement and self esteem are positively correlated [11],[12],[13] found that self esteem is related to some components of success, either academic or verbal. He concluded that there is continuous interaction between self esteem and academic achievement.

Concept of self esteem

There are different definitions of self esteem: It refers to an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, or the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes him or her self [14] esteem is a set of attitudes and beliefs that a person brings with him or herself, when facing the world. It includes beliefs as to whether he or she can expect success or failure, how much effort should be put forth, whether failure at a task will hurt, and whether he or she will become more capable as a result of difficult experiences [15]. In basic terms, self esteem is an internal belief system that an individual possesses about one's self.

Self esteem is literally defined by how much value people place on themselves. It is the evaluative component of self knowledge. Thus Self esteem is perception and does not carry definitional requirement of accuracy, but future researches may define the concept of self esteem in different ways with some cognitive factors.

The concept of self esteem has been researched by several social scientists. One major area of research has been the relationship between self esteem and academic achievement. Many researchers have specifically identified academic achievement as an important factor of self esteem. Harter (1985) identified self-perceived competence in scholastics as one of the five major

dimensions those individuals use to evaluate themselves. Erickson [16]. specifically found academic performance as a vital component in forming a healthy self image. Academic self esteem is operationally defined as the evaluative appraisal of the experience of being capable of meeting academic challenges and being worthy of happiness. Academic self-concept or academic self esteem can be broadly considered to be how a student views his or her academic abilities when compared with other students [17]. However, other evidence indicates the members of stigmatised or disadvantaged groups also protect their self esteem by selectively devaluing those domains in which the out group is advantaged and selectively valuing those domains in which their in-group has advantages (Major, Sciacchitano , Crocker, 1993).

The relationships between self esteem and academic achievement have received much attention amongst several educational and cognitive psychologists. Some researchers investigated the relationship between the self esteem and academic achievement and found that high self esteem facilitates academic achievement [18](Maruyama, Rubin, Kingsbury 1981).

Different studies have reached the conclusion that academic achievement and self esteem are positively correlated [11],[12].For example , West,]Fish and Steven (1980) cited a correlation ranging from 0.18 to 0.50 between general self esteem and academic achievement. Another study conducted by Carr, Borkowski and Maxwell (1991) found self esteem to be a significant predictor of reading awareness. Purkey [13]. found that self esteem is related to some components of success, either academic or verbal. He concluded that there is a continuous interaction between self esteem and academic achievement. Reynolds [19] found in his research that academic self-concept is related in a positive and significant manner to grade point average in college student. Covington (1980) reports that as level of self esteem increases, so does the level of academic achievement scores, but as the level of self esteem decreases, achievement declines. He concluded can be modified through the direct instruments which can lead to achievement gains.

Alternatively, some researchers [20] debated that there is no significant relationship between self esteem and academic performance. According to their studies [21] only a limited relationship was revealed between self esteem and academic achievement. (Maruyama et al [23]'s study reveals that self esteem and academic achievement were not 'casually' related to each other. Even though some researchers argue that students who perform higher in school do so to possess positive self esteem, while others argue that positive self esteem is

necessary for achievement. Reasoner (2005) explained there is a general agreement among researchers that there is a close relationship between self esteem and academic achievement but that there are considerable disagreements among them as to the nature of the relationship.

2. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not there is a relationship between independent variables and academic success which determined by grades of University Examination of Sri Lankan Tamil students. Independent variables are Family support, Teachers' guidance, and Self-esteem.

This research aimed to find out the answers for the following research questions.

- a What do Tamil student expect as Family support for their academic success?
- b What types of guidance do they like from their teachers?
- c What level of self-esteem do they have?
- d What grades did they get in last semester examination in the University?
- e Are there any relationships in between these variables (Family support, Teachers' guidance and Self-esteem) to academic achievement?

The results of these research questions will provide important information for Tamil community to increase their students' academic success. These results will impact on students, parents, and teachers' relationship.

The population of this study consisted of 2nd year University students who are following Humanities and Social science subjects in University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Students who participated voluntarily in this study had recently completed their second year first semester examination and obtained their results. All participants were Tamils from different religions and family backgrounds. Mostly female students including male students had been contributed to this research. Altogether ninety-six students finally participated.

This study used three types of instruments for data collection. Questionnaire had been utilised to collect data regarding family support and teachers' guidance with some demographic details. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale used for measuring students' self-esteem level. Last semester examination results were obtained from register of University of Jaffna as academic achievement of participated students. All instruments were translated in

English by the staff of Department of English University Of Jaffna. Tamil and English version of these tool were given to participant for clear understanding. Several activities had been completed for data collection of this study. Humanities and Social science students from University of Jaffna have identified as research participation in this study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to identify Tamil university students' expectations for their academic success, based on factors including their family support, teacher guidance, self-esteem, student grade average, and to identify significant correlates of academic achievement. When considering about Tamil student's expectation as Family support for their academic success, the majority of Tamil students' have parents who were educated below G.C.E. Ordinary level, suggesting that these parents may lack sufficient academic knowledge to help students with their coursework. In terms of parental employment, the majority of fathers were self-employed (42%), and mothers were most likely to be housewives (86%). As far as parental monthly income, the highest frequency (48%) was in the lowest income category, indicating that the Tamil students may be poor.

The students were more likely to view their parental style as democratic (33%) and morality based (33%). Their parents were most likely to have a minimum (40%) to average (40%) basic understanding of the subjects they study at university.

In terms of supervision (behavioural control), the majority of students reported that they receive good enough (45%) or adequate supervision (41%). Most of the Tamil students were staying in a hostel/private rooms (46%), but for those students at home, 42% of their parents had allocated a separate place in their house for their child to study. Students reported that their parents sometimes (64%) to regularly (21%) had regular dialogue with their student child concerning their academic achievement, which is a very positive finding, suggesting good open communication between parent and student.

Another positive finding, in terms of family satisfaction, is that the majority (53%) of students were satisfied to some extent, and 11% were always satisfied, with their family support in all aspects of their university studies. Only 1% of students reported dissatisfaction with this. The majority of students were rewarded sometimes (58%) when they had a significant academic achievement, 11% were always rewarded, 13% not now, and 17% were never rewarded.

Importantly, 100% of the Tamil students agreed (37%) to strongly agreed (63%) that the level of their self-esteem is a deciding factor for their academic success (Fig 1). This part of the survey will be tested to validate the proposition as to what relationship exists between academic achievement and self-esteem. Finally, a very positive finding is that the large majority (94%) of students feel their lecturers maintain healthy interpersonal relationships with them. Six percent of students responded 'yes all', 88% responded 'yes some', and 6% responded 'no,' as shown in Figure 4.8 (below).

Do you see the level of your self-esteem is a deciding factor for your academic success?

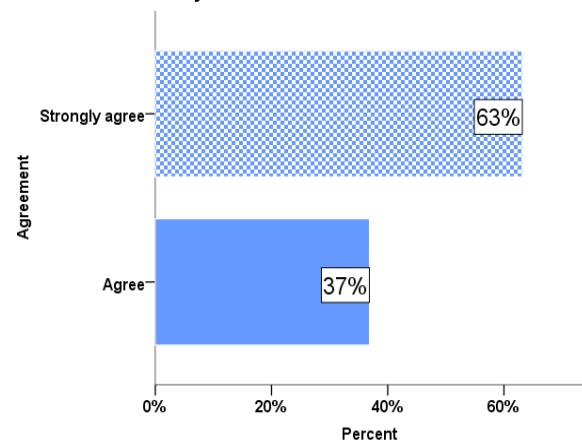


Fig. 1: Perception of self-esteem as a deciding factor for academic success.

Another positive finding is that the majority of students' parents (91%) avoid disturbance (such as watching TV, having party, loud talking) during their child's study time, which suggests that the parents provide most students with a good study environment.

According to the research findings about what types of guidance the Tamil students need from their teachers, overall, the students' perceptions of teachers' guidance are less positive than their perceptions of parental support. The lecturers mainly sometimes give the students appointments to clear their doubts in their respective subjects (64%), although one-quarter (25%) said that lecturers never give appointments, which may be a cause of stress for some students who need one-to-one guidance or support. Sixty percent of the students reported they receive guidance sometimes (38%) or yes (22%) to access to additional learning resources (references, databases & E-journal), however 28% of the students feel they do not receive adequate additional learning resources, and 11% of students never do. Students' views were largely negative regarding whether lectures offer enough guidance to tackle student examination papers, with 89% of students stating not remarkably (38%) to not as I would

need (36%) to not at all (6%). In terms of satisfaction with guidance (subject wise) given by lecturers for examination, the large majority (74%) were satisfied to some extent. Similarly, a large 73% of students reported that their lecturers provide additional materials relevant to extent of their knowledge. Surprisingly, 59% of students feel that their lecturers lack adequate knowledge in the subject matter, and only 9% of students stated ‘yes’ to this. In addition, 67% of the students feel that not every one of their lecturers have good teaching skills, and only 10% of students agreed that they did. Furthermore, 62% of students reported that their lecturers seldom give feedback on their academic performance.

Table 1: Frequency of self-esteem levels among Tamil students (N=96)

Self-esteem Level†	Frequencies (n)	Per cent (%)
High self-esteem	9	9%
Normal self-esteem	75	78%
Low self-esteem	12	12%

Self-esteem scale ranges from 0-30, with higher scores reflecting higher self-esteem. Scores between 15 and 25 are within the normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

Chi-Square Analysis

Chi-square (χ^2) analysis was performed to examine if there are significant relationships between the outcome of academic achievement (as measured by student grade average in their last semester exam) and students’ perceptions of their parental support, lecturers’ guidance, and students’ level of self-esteem. Five significant associations were found at the $p < .05$ level, between academic achievement and (1) father’s education level, (2) mother’s education level, (3) student satisfaction with lecturer guidance, (4) students’ perception of teaching skills, and (5) student perceptions of lecturers’ feedback, as reported below.

There was no significant relationship between students’ self-esteem level and grade average ($\chi^2(2)=2.16, p=.340$). Table 2 shows that grade A students were more likely to have low self-esteem (44.4%), followed by normal self-esteem (36%), and only 16.7% had high self-esteem. In contrast, the B or C grade students were more likely to have high self-esteem (83.3%), followed by normal self-esteem (64.0%), and low self-esteem (55.6%). The results suggest that Tamil student’s self-esteem level is not related to their grade average, although grade A students appear to have lower self-esteem than grade B or C students.

Table 2: Cross tabulation of Student’s Self-Esteem Level by Grade Average

Grade Average	Self-Esteem Level			Total
	Low	Normal	High	
A	44.4%	36.0%	16.7%	34.4%
B or C	55.6%	64.0%	83.3%	65.6%

Pearson Chi-Square ($\chi^2(2)=2.16, p=.340$).

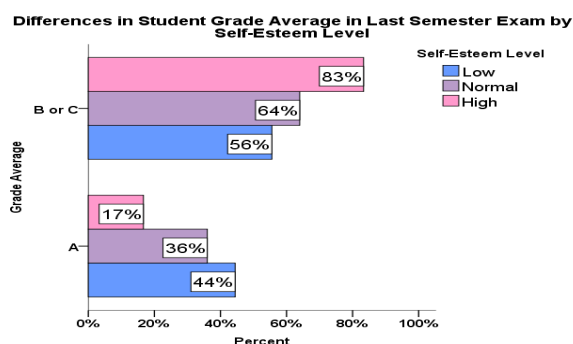


Fig 2: Relationship between student’s level of self-esteem and their grade average in last semester exam

4. CONCLUSION

Tamil students’ academic success has been considered as an important factor in this research. Even many aspects are influencing in their academic attainments this research concentrated in family support, teachers’ guidance, and self-esteem. According to my research results this chapter reveals some conclusion. In gender base female students (58%) are more likely to follow Arts subjects in their advanced level studies which will decide their University admission than male students (42%). The majority of my respondents are female. And 99% were age of 21- 25, in same percentage were single.

Many students (67%) were from village where infrastructure is less likely developed and as a first generation to Universities. Students who have more (Over 5) brothers and sisters have rare chance to come for further education.

Most of the parents [Fathers (58%), Mothers (57%)] have Ordinary level education, this shows parents’ educational level will impact in the students’ subject’s selection and their academic support to their children. Many of them are not in higher professions this also indicates their family income has an important role in their studies whereas 48% family income less than Rs 10000 per month. This clearly explains students from poor financial background come to studies social studies subjects for their first degree.

Overall students feel that they do not get enough teachers' guidance in their University period. 89% of students' views were negative in getting guidance for exams. Only 9% of students said their lecturers have adequate knowledge in their subjects. These findings Tamil students expect more guidance from well qualified lecturers for their academic success. On the other hand lecturers have to update themselves according students' expectations and current knowledge.

Importantly 100% of students have a perception that self-esteem is a deciding factor for their academic success (Strongly agreed 63%, Agreed 37%). This result shows students anticipate more ways for boosting their self-esteem level to achieve higher academic achievement. Gender different also is a value factor in self-esteem level in Tamil society. Male students had higher self-esteem than female students. As a main finding of this research I can conclude students' level of self-esteem have to be build up because only 9% has high self-esteem in the universities. As far as other researchers found it will help them not only for their academic success but also for their personal life development.

5. RECOMMENDATION

This research suggests the following recommendations:

- Male students also should be motivated for their higher studies
- Gender equality is really important in family
- Developments are needed in villages
- Number of siblings will effect students' academic success
- Parental support should be given to every students
- Family income influences in academic success
- Parental style should consider children's views
- Supervision will help for academic achievement
- Regular dialogue with students by parents is really important
- Students expects separate place for studying
- Family satisfaction will help for academic success
- Rewarding motivate students
- Avoiding disturbances by parents will improve suitable study environment
- Lectures can provide more appointments to students
- Additional learning resources need to be given to

students

- Exam guidance is very much needed for every student
- Lecturers want to update to current knowledge and teaching skills
- Students expect to build up their self-esteem level
- Lecturer – student healthy relationship will make difference in academic success

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