

Study Habits Thesis Introduction

INTRODUCTION

How a student takes his or her studies, greatly determines his/her level of academic achievements. The level of preparation and learning strategies developed and employed consciously by students, go a long way to influence their level of academic performance.

Thus, study habit is one of the greatest students or learning factors that hugely influences students' academic achievements. If undermined by students at all levels, teachers, administrators, parents and guardians, school counselors and the government, then, the trend and menace of students' abysmal performance in both internal and external examinations would continue to boom and become more devastating and alarming.

Mark and Howard (2009) are of the opinion that the most common challenge to the success of students in all ramifications is a lack of effective or positive (good) study habit. They further maintain that if students can develop a good study habit and with good discipline, they are bound to perform remarkably well in their academic pursuit.

Husain (2000) stresses that lack of effective or positive (good) study habits is a critical study problem among students at all levels. Grace (2013) also maintains that the process of learning is still a little mysterious but studies do show that the most effective process for studying involves highly active behavior over a period of time. In other words, to study effectively, one must read, draw, compare, memorize and test himself over time.

The concept of study habit according to Husain (2000) is broad, as it combines nearly all other sub-concepts such as study attitude, study methods and study skills. Attitude is a mental and natural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a direct influence on the individual's response to all objects and situations with which is related.

Attitude towards study has great contribution on academic achievement, and good study pattern. Successful learners adopt positive attitude towards study, and do not waste time or energy over what they have to do. If the learning experience is pleasant, the learner's attitude and motivation is usually positive, and if the learning experience is not pleasant he tends to avoid it.

Negative attitude towards study sometimes finds expression in comment such as "I study but cannot remember what I study" or "the lessons are too long". Attitude serves as index on how we think and feel about people, objects and issues in our environment. Study attitude, according to Husain (2000), refers to the predispositions which students have developed towards private readings through a period of time. According to him, study attitude offers great possibilities for successful achievement in studies. Study method is the knowledge and application of effective study skills or techniques by students. Several study methods have been identified several effective study methods and skills that could be used by students based on the learning environment (Husain, 2000).

Kelli (2009) posits that for students to succeed in their studies, they must be able to appropriately assimilate course content, digest it, reflect on it and be able to articulate the information in written and/or oral form. What is fundamental is the ability of a student to acquire effective study habits. Many students feel that the hours of study are the most important.

However, students can study for hours on end and retain very little. The more appropriate question is how students should study more effectively. Developing good time management skills is very important. Students must realize that there is a time to be in class, a time for study, time for family, time to socialize and time to just be alone. The critical issue is recognition that there must be an appropriate balance. Students should also have vision. A clearly articulated picture of the future they intend to create for themselves is very important and contributes to students' success in school. This will promote a passion for what they wish to do. Passion is critical and leads to an intense interest, dedication and commitment to achieving career goals and objectives.

Marc (2011) explains that students with learning problems, however, may still have generally inefficient and ineffective study habits and skills. Becoming aware of your learning habits or styles will help students to understand why they sometimes get frustrated with common study methods. He observes that good study habits are essential to educational success; as they contribute to a successful academic future. Good study habits lead to good grades while good grades lead to admissions to better colleges and universities, possibly with a scholarship thrown in. This in turn, will lead to a great career. Developing good study habits to Marc is very crucial for every student irrespective of his level of education. It boosts students' ability to be self disciplined, self-directed and ultimately successful in their degree programs.

The sooner a student starts practicing and developing good habits, the better chance he will have that he will continue with them. Procrastination can be overcome with proper study habits and improving one's study habits is the key to better studying. Being organized and having homework routines are the most important things in helping a child/student develop good study habits for life. Developing good study habits help spell success and a student will find himself working more efficiently and experiencing lesser stress in the process. He adds that having effective study habits creates a more efficient academic environment. Planning your study schedule as a student in advance and faithfully sticking to it saves time. When students have good study habits, they tend to be less stressed. Students who are anxious on exam day are typically the procrastinators who come unprepared. Students who organize their lives and stick to their established study schedules are confident and relaxed at test-taking time (Marc, 2011).

Ashish (2013) opines that if students must ensure academic success throughout the entire year, it is important to ditch bad study habits and establish good ones. He further maintains that no matter what age or academic level, employing effective study strategies can make all the difference between acing a class, barely passing or worse and failing miserably. She admits that many of today's most common study methods or habits can lead to utter disappointment despite best efforts and intentions. To Ashish (2013), knowing exactly what does and does not work on a personal level, even tracking study patterns and correlating it with related grades and then proactively creating a study plan and schedule around the proven effective methods, is the most powerful study tool of all.

Adeniyi (2011) maintains that good study habits allow students to study independently at home and aspire for higher educational career. The formation of good study habits in secondary school level further serves as the basis for students' performance in external examinations such as West African Examinations Council (WAEC), National Examinations Council (NECO) and Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB).

In the view of Agba (2013), unserious students do study anyhow without specific techniques, and he submits that such students are most likely to perform below average. Thus, he concludes that good study habits help students to: attend classes very often and do so on time. It also helps them to submit their assignment on time, read or prepare very well for tests and exams, take down notes and develop

the points independently, ask relevant questions in class; thereby having good grades at the end of the term or semester. Monday (2008) writing on bad study habits maintains that developing good study habits in school will help students succeed in class and achieve educational goals.

Similarly, Bolling (2000) asserts that good study habit through planning helps students prepare for what is ahead, and accomplish their academic goals. Thus, lack of study habits clearly puts students at a disadvantage, and is one of the main reasons students need remedial classes, fall behind in coursework and drop out of school. Developing good study habits drastically lowers students' risk of academic struggles, and failure to complete a college degree. Hence, Bolling (2000) submits that students who tend to perform high across most of their subjects can be considered to have good study habits by being actively involved in their own learning process, continuous planning and carefully monitoring of the educational task that they are required to complete.

Different students have different and unique study habits. What may be a good study habit to a particular student may be a bad one indeed to another student. As such, it is often difficult to practically pin-point that this is good and that is bad. In the opinion of Katelyn (2013), there is no doubt that different people study in different ways and it is a near certainty that what works for one person may not work for another. John (2010) opines that not all students are alike.

There are several key study habits that are crucial to all students' success. One of such is study in a good environment, a little bit of background music, such as classical with no lyrics are fine and a good studying location. Whether studying in rain or shine, day or night, what is most important is to be consistent and stay on one schedule.

Generally, study habits can be classified into two-good study habits, and bad study habits. Good study habits according to Katelyn (2013) are sometimes referred to as positive or productive study habits. As the name implies, they are those pleasant study habits which have the tendency to improve the academic performance of students or that seem to produce good results. They are the study habits which make students successful in their studies after developing and applying them throughout their academic career.

Good study habits occur as a result of practice and knowing what methods are most effective for you as a student. When studying, stay away from distractions, such as the computer. Instead of procrastinating, work on a long term assignment daily, instead of studying the night before, study a little each night. Review what you learned in class every day when you get home, before starting homework. Also, a good tip is to review what you did in class the previous day at the beginning of class when you have a few minutes before the teacher starts talking. By learning the ways that you learn the best, you will be successful in your studies.

Katelyn (2013) therefore, identifies fourteen positive or good study habits which students can employ in order to improve their academic performance. They are: attending all classes, reviewing your notes daily, reading material prior to it being covered in class, study daily, have at least one conference with the professor, develop and learn a word list for the course, read materials to improve your background in the course (other than text), attend help session, attend learning resource lab when available, develop a list of possible questions, ask questions in class, study an old exam (when available), avoid a last minute cram session, and sleep at least 8 hours the night before exams commence.

In the same vein, Harper and Row (2009), highlight good study habits as thus:

1. Studying every day

2. Creating a quiet place at home or anywhere to study
3. Turning off the phone, TV and other devices that may disturb you when studying
4. Listening to soft music or white noise
5. Studying in a way that suits your learning style
6. Taking regular breaks
7. Studying early (do not wait for last minutes)
8. Studying the hardest things first, spending more time on topics you find difficult
9. Asking for help if one is struggling with his studies, taking notes as one study as well as organizing notes in a notebook or folder.

On the other hand, bad study habits according to John (2010) are negative or non-productive study habits which are undesirable and counter-productive to students' academic performance. When developed and utilized by students at all levels, they tend to hamper academic progress and performance of the users. Due to the peculiarity and uniqueness of individual student, what may be considered as bad study habits to student "A", may seem to be very productive and efficient for student "B".

However, bad study habits generally range from procrastination, truancy, not taking note, selective reading, studying while watching television or what is generally regarded as distractive study etc. Nikki (2013) identifies bad reading habits to include studying with friends, listening to loud music, studying in uncomfortable conditions, cramming, etc.

There are several factors that tend to affect students study habits. Anything can affect students' study habits. Their ability to study and concentrate can be increased by finding a quiet place where they can concentrate. Distractions such as phones, chat rooms, TM and text messaging, TV, video games, music and computers can all decrease students' ability to learn. Whatever is going on around and within a student's own mind is going to affect his study habits.

According to SheeRa (2012), study habits can be affected by factors such as:

1. Age of a student
2. Home environment
3. Studying materials
4. Television and computer games
5. Social network (face book)
6. Students' determination and aspiration
7. Financial and economic status of parents
8. Surrounding such as entertainment center, games center etc.

9. The rule of the schools
10. The teaching style of teachers
11. The leisure of the students
12. Some activities in schools
13. Availability of library
14. The nature friends and peer group
15. Assignments and homework restriction
16. Students' parents educational background
17. Parents not interested and supportive in helping their children study
18. Household chores
19. Family problems
20. Procrastination and poor time management
21. Students' comfort level
22. The noise level
23. The lighting level and the availability of items that might be necessary to study or to enhance concentration.

Statement of the problem

The extent to which a student excels or performs in his or her studies depends on the kind of study habits he or she develops and uses to a very large extent. A student who develops and utilizes good study habits is likely to perform better in his studies when compared with the one who has bad study habits. Thus, study habit is very instrumental to the academic success of every student at all levels.

However, one wonders the extent to which students in recent times develop and use their study habits; as most of the students in secondary school hardly know how to study. This position is further stressed by Mark and Howard (2009), who are of the opinion that the most common challenge to the success of students in all ramifications is lack of effective or positive (good) study habits. Most students do not have study plan to guide their studies. Some hardly attend classes, do their homework and prepare for their exams etc. This may not be unconnected to the recent abysmal performance of students in both internal and external exams.

Objectives of the study

This study focused on study habit and its impact on secondary schools students' academic performance in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Specifically, this study sought to ascertain relationship between study habits and secondary school students' academic performance in Biology.

Research question

Does study habit have significant relationship with students' academic performance in Biology?

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between study habits and secondary schools students' academic performance in Biology.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The choice of this design was informed by the fact that a group of respondents considered to be the representative of the larger population were used for the study. The sample of the study comprised of 1050 secondary school students drawn from 30 schools within the study area. A simple random sampling technique of probability sampling approach was used. In order to gather valid data from the respondents (secondary school students), a close ended questionnaire designed in a four point likert rating scale of strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed was employed by the researcher. Considering the relatively large size of the sample of the study and the spread of the schools used, the questionnaires were administered on the respondents by the researcher in conjunction with two trained and learned research assistants. The respondents were visited in their respective schools and two weeks were used to gather the data. Thus, data gathered from the respondents were collated and analyzed with chi-square statistical technique.